

A JUNE TO REMEMBER

Revisiting a month of history.



The Black Lives Matter movement dominated our news coverage over the past month, as thousands of people gathered for protests and rallies in Harrisburg demanding justice and civil rights.

Online, we featured numerous stories, editorials and photo galleries dedicated to the many events that took place. We now want to share snippets of our web-only work for our magazine readers.

Visit www.theburgnews.com to read the full stories from these excerpts.

WHY WE'RE HERE

Unity. Peace. Justice.

Those words were heard over and over during Sunday's rally at the PA Capitol, the latest in a weeklong series of protests following the death of George Floyd and demands for equal rights and fair justice.

Several hundred protestors gathered at the state Capitol and marched along downtown Harrisburg streets and over to City Island before returning to the Capitol steps to rally again.

Along the way, the diverse crowd held signs decrying police violence and engaged in chants such as "Say His Name: George Floyd" and "Hands Up, Don't Shoot."

"This march is one of solidarity," said community activist Kevin Maxson, speaking to the crowd. "We demand change. That's why we're all here today."

—Lawrance Binda

JUNETEENTH PLAN

It was just last year that Gov. Tom Wolf signed a bill officially recognizing June 19 as a state holiday celebrating freedom from slavery, known as Juneteenth.

In the wake of the death of George Floyd and other black men and women at the hands of police, Juneteenth takes on special meaning this year in the midst of protests and calls to action.

The Harrisburg Young Professionals of Color, La Cultura, Capital Rebirth and The Bridge are joining forces to host festivities in Harrisburg this Friday.

"It's a celebration," Mikell Simpson, founder of the nonprofit Capital Rebirth, said. "We have gained a lot of momentum. Now, let's take a break for a day and celebrate."

—Maddie Conley

AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC APPRECIATION MONTH

If you live in central PA, you've probably heard of Shawan Rice and her band, Shawan and the Wonton. The singer-songwriter has brought her melodic voice and heartbreaking lyrics all across Pennsylvania and the east coast.

There is no other way to describe the 25-year-old's voice but soulful. Her music, featuring traces of blues, R&B and folk laced together with her autobiographical lyrics, will probably wreck you but help you heal all over again.

"It's soul music—music made for the soul," she said. "You can feel it inside you."

—Yaasmeen Piper

EDITORIAL: "WE STAND IN SUPPORT"

We at TheBurg stand by the principals of this historic movement. We join this community in opposing racism and police brutality and in supporting equality, civil rights and black-owned businesses.

It is my greatest hope that this movement results in substantial and lasting change. I am amazed at what has already been accomplished in such a short time and look forward to seeing genuine progress towards greater equality and more opportunities in our community and our country.

—Lawrance Binda

CONVERSATIONS

Every so often, the Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC hosts a seminar, but this one was different.

It was one that chamber board Vice Chair Meron Yemane has waited years for.

Today, the Chamber held a webinar entitled, "Chamber Live: A Conversation about Systemic Racism."

Yemane explained how he believes this is the beginning of the process towards change for the chamber. He pointed out the power structures within the organization itself and the hope he has for positive movement towards inclusivity.

"Next year, I'll be the first black chair of the chamber, and that doesn't mean anything if there's not a second," Yemane said. "The chamber can lead in this."

—Maddie Conley

STORIES OF THE PAST

The weather may have been gloomy, but the day was filled with celebration as the state recognized Juneteenth, the holiday commemorating the freedom of enslaved African Americans.

As part of the day's events, members of the IIPT Harrisburg Peace Promenade presented the City of Harrisburg with a bronze map replica of the historic Old 8th Ward.

The bronze map shows houses, churches, synagogues and other landmarks from the neighborhood that was demolished for the expansion of the Capitol grounds. The Old 8th Ward was primarily an African American and immigrant community that was displaced with the expansion.

"The future is judged by how well we preserve the true and just stories of the past," said Lenwood Sloan, director of the project.

—Maddie Conley

EDITORIAL: "THIS REMARKABLE WEEK"

A month or so ago, I told a colleague how disappointed I was with my generation—the Gen X/Baby Boomer crowd. When I was young, I attended many protests, thinking that our voices could lead to change. Looking back, however, I felt like we failed to make much progress toward a better, more equitable society.

But now this time has come like a bolt, a renewed era of activism and optimism, led by young people and people of color, but including a broad swath of society across cultures and generations—and now with, of all the unimaginable twists, assists from the U.S. Supreme Court.

Life remains unsettled. There are still plenty of questions, struggles and unknowns, especially as the global pandemic grinds on. But suddenly, the world seems so much more hopeful, so much brighter. For this incredible, history-making week, we can believe again in Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous quote: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

—Lawrance Binda