

“... A Change is Gon’ Come”

Community Women Against Hardship

2017 Winter Edition

There’s a beautiful richness to LaTonia Manneh’s voice. The timbre, the measured pace, the clarity convey a passion borne of deep personal pain, wisdom, and a new-found confidence and commitment to success. And -- like the lyrics of the song by the soulful Sam Cooke -- for Tonia, “. . . it’s been a long, long time comin’, but a change is gon’ come”.



The determination in Tonia’s voice leaves little doubt that this 40 year old mother-of-one will achieve her lifelong dream of becoming an R.N. She’s currently attending Forest Park Community College in the Registered Nursing program, and supporting herself temporarily with a job she loves as a school bus driver for the Francis Howell School District. But “change” – both good and bad -- is the operative word in Tonia’s story.

Loss of innocence is a natural passage that eases us into the hectic world of adulthood. If we are fortunate, the process is gradual and reasonably painless. If we are not, the impact can be devastating.

Tonia’s experience was the latter, and resulted in her dropping out of high school, decades of depression, loss of focus, and an aimless wandering through life. Following the deaths of her mother and grandmother and the birth of her son, she “hit a brick wall”.

“I always wanted to go back to school,” says Tonia. “I had good intentions, taking jobs here and there as a CNA, but couldn’t seem to put it together and overcome all the hurdles and obstacles.” A seemingly hapless trip to HDC to register for a typing class, however, marked a different trajectory of change in Tonia’s life.

“I don’t remember exactly how I got connected with CWAH. On the trip to HDC I passed by CWAH’s facility, saw the name and just stopped by to see what they offered.” (An aside here: there have been far too many “seemingly hapless” stop-ins from future CWAH clients to call it anything other than a spiritual, guiding hand). “The class list was interesting, and the reception and encouragement from Ms. Clarice was wonderful. I’ve always loved learning, so I registered my son and myself for a number of classes.”

For several years, Tonia and her son participated in classes and events at CWAH. Soup for the Soul was uplifting and provided camaraderie and support from women in similar circumstances, but the inner conflicts that Tonia was battling continued. She shared her concerns with Gloria Taylor and, by the end of the day, was referred to a personal counselor – Claire Martin.

“Mrs. Martin is like a mother, sister, friend, coach, advisor and counselor. Through goal setting, she showed me how to assign dates of completion to my goals. My greatest challenge was getting back into school and getting my GED.” That connection has changed Tonia’s life. “I completed my GED and am now attending college, have more confidence and focus, and am more assertive,” she says.

Faith has played a major part in her life. “Without faith, I couldn’t have done it.” Faith and support from Mrs. Martin helped Tonia most recently in making the difficult decision to send her son to live with his father while she completes her education. “It’s an ongoing pain, but I’ve learned that it’s okay to do what’s good for you. For me, education is a ticket out of poverty.”

Her advice: Love, forgive and be patient with yourself. It’s a process. You can do anything, but you gotta put in the work! It might seem like a long time comin’, but you have to believe that “a change is gon’ come”.

Story by: Gwen Swan



Karla Evangeline Frye, PhD

Community Women Against Hardship is pleased to welcome Dr. Karla Frye to its team. Frye assumed the position of Chief Operating Officer January 1. And she knows something about teamwork, having worked in numerous capacities requiring coalition building, collaboration and cultivating relationships. Frye is also passionate about fostering opportunities for women and their families. As the Welfare Reform Coordinator, she worked with ARCHS to usher in the new TANF programs in St. Louis City and County. From there, she served as Area Administrator in St. Louis City and Jefferson County for the Family Support Division, and coordinating with St. Louis City, Missouri Department of Economic Development, the MET Center, other area agencies, schools, businesses and institutions of higher learning to implement new Welfare to Work policies and procedures. In 2003, Frye formed the St. Louis African American Healthy Marriage Coalition (later named Coalition for Healthy African American Relationships and Marriages -CHAARM), coordinating more than 30 community and faith based organizations to help bring millions of dollars to the area to implement programs and services to strengthen marriages and families.

Frye considers her management style highly compatible with the CWAH team. "The staff, board and volunteers here are highly committed and motivated. I am excited to be a part of the CWAH team. This is one of the best organizations in the city working to strengthen families. I have long admired the work they do and the strong community and volunteer-based approach. I look forward to building on the foundation laid by Betty Lee and Gloria Taylor." She adds that the personalized and caring way that staff and volunteers work with clients is the key to CWAH's success. "Ms. Taylor has never worried about numbers, but cares about people," Frye notes

Helping others overcome obstacles is nothing new to Frye. She considers this position a natural progression in her life. "No one who has known me for any length of time is surprised that I am here and loving it. Since I can remember, I have always had a desire to help others. Throughout my career, that has always been the number one criterion: will this work allow me to make a difference in oth-

ers' lives?" Frye attributes this passion in part to her parents, both teachers, whom Frye says, "were always giving and helping others, whether it was food, clothes, help going to college, a place to live, tutoring, or a listening ear – and they expected their children to willingly do the same, without hesitation. "It was not pretty if my dad found out that one of us ignored an opportunity to help someone," she recalls.

Frye is an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and views her work at CWAH as an extension of her ministry. She quickly and enthusiastically attributes her role here to her calling as a servant leader. This is a community based organization whose work I love, but it was not ever my plan to work here. I know that God has placed me here not only to use my gifts to bless others, but to be blessed. I know part of my blessing will be what I learn in extending myself to the families here at CWAH.

Frye is an experienced grant writer and has worked as a consultant in strategic planning, organizational capacity building, program development and public engagement with businesses, church, faith based and community based organizations as well as governmental agencies. Her previous work as a staff and freelance journalist for the St. Louis Sentinel, St. Louis American and Riverfront Times newspapers, as a policy analyst for the St. Louis City-County Board of Freeholders and the Missouri House of Representatives, and as a nonprofit executive director combine to give Frye a broad view of St. Louis, its people and the issues that affect them. She brings a wealth of leadership and management experience to the position, – but what Frye hopes will have the most impact is connecting with people on what she calls a "heart basis. If I can form genuine relationships, and have authentic experiences with each person," I will end each day knowing I have done what I am supposed to do.

"It's only been one month, but every day has just reinforced what a wonderful journey I am on."



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A SPECIAL THANKS TO KSDK 5 ON YOUR SIDE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE TEGNA FOUNDATION FOR APPROVING A COMMUNITY GRANT OF \$5000 FOR OUR SUMMER SHOW ME SERIES ANNUAL YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROGRAM AND TRIP.

PICTURED ABOVE : MARSHA D. WILLIAMS, CLARICE EVANS, GLORIA TAYLOR, MICHELLE LONDON, AND DARRA CUNNINGHAM.

Photo By: Roscoe Crenshaw


THREE SIMPLE RULES IN LIFE

1. IF YOU DO NOT GO AFTER WHAT YOU WANT, YOU'LL NEVER HAVE IT.
2. IF YOU DO NOT ASK, THE ANSWER WILL ALWAYS BE NO.
3. IF YOU DO NOT STEP FORWARD, YOU WILL ALWAYS BE IN THE SAME PLACE.

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- Teen Rap Sessions
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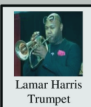


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Harris Stowe College of Education , under the direction of Dr. Betty Porter—Walls, along with community partners', St. Louis African American Authors of Children's Literature and Metropolitan St. Louis Alliance of Black School Educators, (MSLABSE) parents and CWAH staff.

Community Women Against Hardship
Black History Benefit Concert

**Tickets
\$40**



Special Guest
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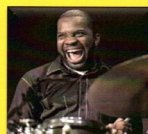
Adam Maness, Piano



Jeffrey Anderson, Bass



Anita Jackson, Vocalist



Montez Coleman Drums

Sunday February 19, 2017

The Harold & Dorothy Steward Center for Jazz
3536 Washington Ave.
St. Louis, MO. 63103

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8:00 Registration
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