



American Fascism and White Supremacy

by: Gardis Watts



State reps. Justin Jones (left) of Nashville and Justin J. Pearson of Memphis held a moment of solidarity in the rotunda outside of the legislative chamber on Thursday where hundreds of constituents gathered to support the lawmakers ahead of a house vote on their expulsions. Source: Photo by Andrea Morales for MLK50

Last month, Republicans from the Tennessee House of Representatives put a resolution on the floor to expel three of their fellow legislators. Justin Jones is the representative from the 52nd district which encompasses the Nashville area. Justin Pearson Jr., a legislator from the 86th district representing Memphis. And Gloria Johnson, a member of the Tennessee House from the 90th district of Knoxville. The reason for their expulsion was improper behavior. These three lawmakers participated in a protest held on the house floor regarding having stricter gun laws for the state. Back in March, Covenant School, a Christian private school in the Nashville area, was victimized by a mass shooting by one of its former students. The perpetrator killed six and injured one using an AR-15

as one of their weapons. Police eventually killed the perpetrator. The three Tennessee representatives felt that stricter gun laws need to be in place to prevent these types of events.

When the resolution for the expulsion of the members hit the floor for a vote, not only was the results unprecedented but it verified the underlying truth of American politics. In separate resolutions for each representative, the vote to expel Justin Jones and Justin Pearson Jr had passed. Gloria Johnson's resolution to expel her had failed by a slight margin. While all three politicians share the political identity of being part of the Democratic Party, the majority-controlled Republican House did not see them all the same. Justin Jones and Justin Pearson Jr., who were voted to be expelled are Black males, while Gloria Johnson, the lone representative who did not get expelled is a white female. Johnson told the press that the only reason she was spared was because she is white. Their expulsions did not last long as both Representatives Jones and Pearson were reinstated to their seats upon the intervention of state councils and commissions that saw this as an act of fascism.

Many state legislatures, including Tennessee, have used their power to expel fellow members of their chambers. However, in many of those cases, they use this because of egregious and criminal actions by the member in question. None of the representatives in this case broke any laws but they were still subjected to being cast out of their positions due to their political opposition to the majority body. What we do know is that racism would be the primary motive for this move. Whenever Black men stand up in some form of protest against the white collective, there is a backlash that subdues them. In this case, the Tennessee Republicans used fascist means to subjugate the two Black lawmakers.

Continues on page 2





In the history of this country, Black men are no strangers to fascist state governments that uphold the politics of white supremacy. Since the time of the Reconstruction Era, Black men in southern states have been and still are politically disenfranchised by violent means. Black elected officials were refused to be seated by their white counterparts. The state of Georgia has two such cases. In 1868, Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, and twenty-six other Black men, were elected to the Georgia Legislature. They were all refused a seat in the white Georgia House of Representatives. After the federal government had to intervene on behalf of Bishop Turner and the Black lawmakers, they were seated in the Georgia As-

sembly. Another incident was the 1965 case of Julian Bond, one of the original members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Bond was elected to a seat in the Georgia House, but the White Assembly of Georgia took a vote not to seat him because of his stance against the Vietnam War. After the Georgia Supreme Court upheld the state's vote to deny Bond his seat, it was taken to the U.S. Supreme Court where there was a 9-0 decision to seat him in the Georgia Assembly because his first amendment rights were violated.

Throughout the course of history, we have plenty of examples of Republican dominated governments that have used fascist means to repress black political officials. However, Democrats has also been on hand to apply fascist tactics to uphold white supremacist politics. Wilson Frost was victimized by a white fascist Democratic Party in Chicago. When long time mayor, Richard J. Daley, died in office in 1976, the acting mayor is supposed to be the Pro-Tempore of the city council. At that time, the Pro-Tempore of the city council was Black alderman Wilson Frost. The city council refused Wilson's legal claim. When Wilson tried to access the mayor's office, he was locked out and refused entry by the Chicago Police. The Chicago City council ended up appointing Michael Bilandic as the acting mayor.

White political mob rule has always been the rule of this country, especially when it comes to the repression of Black politicians who represent progress. Justin Jones and Justin Pearson are not unique in this, and their examples serve as a reminder of fascism's relation to white supremacy. Let us also remind ourselves that Representatives Jones and Pearson are political officials in a state that is the historical foundation of organized racial terrorism. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK), the longtime white supremacist organization, was founded in the state of Tennessee. It is important to recognize them in this situation because not only do they promote white supremacy but also espouse anti-Catholic sentiment as well. One of the Black men in this case, Justin Jones, not only would make him a target because of his race but also, because he was raised Catholic.



Since the rise of Donald Trump to the highest political office of the land, white conservatives are back to using extreme tactics that have not been seen since the Jim Crow era. The attempted expulsion of the Tennessee lawmakers should be looked at as an extension of the event that happened in the nation's capital on January 6, 2021. And with the climate of politics becoming more extreme, we should start seeing these acts as a system and not isolated events.

Black Catholic Initiative State of The Black Catholic Church in Chicago

by: Deacon James Norman



Holy Angels Catholic Church circ 1970s
Source: Wikicommons

On Saturday, February 4th leaders of the Black Catholic initiative, invited the pastors and parish leaders from the Black Catholic Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago together to provide an overview of the State of the Black Catholic Church in Chicago, as well as, solicit ideas and suggestions on how to move forward to grow the Black Catholic Church in Chicago.

More than 100 attendees came together

to understand the impact of Renew My Church on Black Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago and to share how Black Catholics could come together, collectively to create a new reality for themselves and for the future Black Catholics.

Seven years ago, the Archdiocese of Chicago embarked on an initiative called Renew My Church. Renew My Church is an effort to renew the local church in order to: make disciples, build communities and inspire witness. The renewal is both structural and spiritual. Structural renewal was necessary to ensure that our parishes have adequate resources for long-term vitality and viability. Spiritual renewal is necessary to ensure that Catholics have an encounter with Jesus Christ.

Renew My Church was necessary because our culture has become more secular. We live in a culture that is hostile to faith. We live in a culture that actively discourages people from living out their faith, undermines formal religion and its practices. Unfortunately, each of us knows someone- a family member or friend- that does not know or accept the love of Jesus Christ. Each of us knows someone who has left the church. Each of us knows someone we pray will one day return to the Church.

There are stark realities today within the US Catholic Church: Catholic marriages are down 55%. Since 1980, baptisms have decreased by 30%. 1 in 5 children baptized do not receive first communion. 2 in 5 children baptized are never confirmed. 85% of the children confirmed stop practicing their faith by the age of 21. In Chicago, Mass attendance has decreased almost 30% over the past 20 years. More than 180 of our priests will retire in the next 10 years with fewer and fewer men being ordained to the priesthood. 28% of our parishes require financial support from the Archdiocese for basic operations. Many parishes were under investing in the capital needs of their facilities and the ministerial needs of their faith communities.

In our Black Catholic parishes, we've seen a 60% decrease in Mass attendance as a result of the deaths of aging parishioners, migration out of the city and out of the state, the closure of parishes and the Covid Pandemic.

Prior to 2016, there were 29 Black Catholic Parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Today, there are nine Black Catholic Parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Those 9 remaining parishes are better able to invest in ministry to make disciples, invest in people to build community and invest to inspire witness. Those nine parishes have over \$7 million in cash assets that can be used for ministry expansion ministry outreach, capital improvement and ongoing operations. Additionally, there's almost \$7 million in properties listed for sale and pending sales that will return to the nine Black Catholic parishes for further investment.

The Renew My Church initiative was necessary. Many archdioceses outside of Chicago experiencing similar challenges have engaged in similar efforts to make structural changes. The parish closures were painful but it has resulted in parishes with the leadership and resources to build a future for our grandchildren's grandchildren. With the support of the Black Catholic Initiative and the leadership of the Archdiocese of Chicago, we can and will create a new reality and a renewed Church.



Deacon James Norman, the current vicar for deacons, was a Kraft Foods executive for over 3 decades before joining the Archdiocese of Chicago as director of Vicariate VI operations until July of 2022. Deacon Norman was ordained in 2013 and currently serves at Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica on the Westside.

Celebrating Haitian Flag Day



Every year on May 18th, Haitians from around the globe gather to celebrate Haitian Flag Day in places such as Haiti, Canada, Miami, New York, Boston, and Indiana to name a few.

During the Haitian flag day celebrations, you will find many Haitians decked out in red and blue, proudly displaying the Haitian flag as they make their way to neighborhood barbecues, parties, parades, and annual fests containing a long line of Haitian entertainment, soccer games, food, and fun!

Haitian flag day is a national holiday in Haiti that historically occurred on May 18th, 1803; when the flag was established during the Haitian revolution (National Today, 2023).

The Haitian flag was first designed by Jean - Jacques Dessalines, a leader of the Haitian revolution, and has since been altered several times throughout history. The Haitian flag currently displays a horizontally divided vibrant red and blue background, along with the coat of arms that is displayed within the center of the flag. The coat of arms is incredibly significant to the Haitian community due to it representing "the country's readiness to defend its freedom (National Today, 2023)".

The Haitian flag means a tremendous amount to the people of Haiti because it gives the Haitian people a huge sense of pride, hope, and resilience which also stands true to many Haitians throughout the diaspora today. In addition to celebrating Haitian flag day during the month of May, Haitian Heritage month also takes place nationally during the month of May. Haitian Heritage Month is considered a treat for all because it allows "everyone" to explore Haitian culture through Haitian food, music, and entertainment.

You will find Haitian Heritage Month is widely celebrated in places with a large Haitian population such as Miami, New York, and Boston to name a few. During Haitian heritage month, Miami is well known to host festivals, parades, traditional Haitian dance classes, introductory Creole courses, and tours throughout Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood.

If you are in the Chicago land area during the month of May, there are a few ways you can celebrate Haitian Heritage Month.

You can visit the Haitian American Museum of Chicago to learn more about Haiti, Haitian art, and Haitian culture. The Haitian American Museum is located at 4410 Clark St. Chicago, IL 60640. If you are visiting the North side of Chicago, you can stop by the Kizin Creole Haitian restaurant located at 2311 W. Howard St. The Haitian restaurant is well known for its Griot (fried pork), and Pate (Haitian puffed pastry filled with chicken, fish, or beef).

If you are willing to travel to Indianapolis, the Midwest 15th annual Haitian Flag Festival is taking place at Garfield Park, 2450 Conservatory Dr. Indianapolis, IN 46203. The Midwest flag day festival is expected to have a long line of Haitian entertainment, vendors, food, and fun!

-Shannon Ambroise

Reflections on Motherhood

by: Tina L Carter



One of the most difficult, exhausting yet rewarding jobs in the world is that of a mother. God and women share one important thing in common; the miracle to bring forth life. When we think of the all-encompassing love of God, the closest experience we have of that love on earth is that of our mothers. With the great blessing of motherhood come the unconditional love, worries, joys, pains, and frustrations that go with raising and taking care of her children.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, experienced this firsthand. As a young woman barely a teenager, she said “Yes” to motherhood understanding the great risk to herself and her unborn child because she trusted in her relationship with God. Mary experienced worry when Jesus was missing from the group on their way back from Jerusalem when he was twelve. Her anguish was great when she saw her son paraded through the streets like a common criminal, battered, bruised, and carrying his own cross only to be later crucified on it. The helplessness that many mothers know all too well when their children are hurt or killed.

Mothers by their very nature nurture us; they are our protectors, our champions, and our shepherds. They push us when we need pushing, correct us when we need correcting and remind us day in and day out whom we belong to. The tears of a mother are especially joyful or painful because we know that the tears are not for her alone. They are

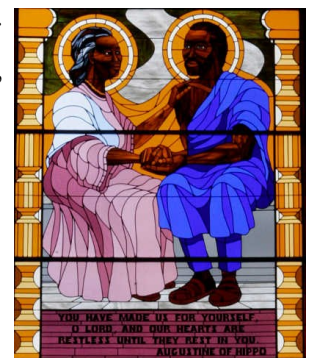
for her children. We will always be their babies no matter how old we are. They will always be our teachers no matter how many degrees we may have or how much we think we may know.

St. Monica was another mother who through the strength of her prayers and the power of her faith, inspired her wayward son Augustine to come to the Lord and live a life of prayer, and service for God and God’s people. Like many mothers, Monica quietly shed tears for her son’s health, peace, and well-being. She was quietly frustrated when Augustine was lazy and out in the streets and yet she prayed. Monica prayed day in and day out for her children. Her prayers were so determined and steadfast that St. Augustine is now considered a doctor of the church.

Nothing gives us more joy than the look of pride our mothers possess when we accomplish a goal or more shame than the look of disappointment when our mothers remind us that we are not living up to our full potential. We are tied to them, and it is not just the scar of our belly buttons that remind us that we shared a body with them at one point. It is also the tug in our own hearts that we feel when our mothers embrace us so tenderly. We love our mothers completely and wholly.

When our mothers return to God, we know that she is still watching over us, praying for us, shaking her fingers at us, and always eternally loving us. She reminds us that we are never, ever alone because we are a part of her, and she will always remain with us.

To All Mothers, Have a Happy and Blessed Mother’s Day!





“God’s Footprints Through My Life”



Joycelyn “Joyce” King is a widow, a mother of 6, a grandmother of 11, and a great grandmother of 6. She has worked in ministry for 40 years. Currently, she worships at St. Moses the Black Parish and is a R.C.I.A. team member.

Raised in the Baptist church, Joyce’s introduction to Catholicism came when she and her husband, Bishop decided to enroll their first child in a Catholic school. Admission required that they study the faith as a family. After catechism classes, Joyce and her husband decided to convert and raised their children in the Catholic faith. Eventually, Joyce felt called to ministry and while she taught music at The Ancona School, she began to pursue ministry work at St. Clara-St. Cyril Parish. She recalls while Bishop prepared for the Diaconate, she attended classes with him; and the experience prompted her to get her Master’s in Religious Education at Loyola University. Joyce would later put her degree into action at St. Clara-St. Cyril where she coordinated the parish Sunday school, and assisted the teachers with school worship, family masses and student sacrament preparation. After receiving certification through the Office of Religious Education, she became the Director of Religious Education (DRE).

Over the years, Joyce’s ministry has taken her to five parishes, a Catholic high school, and a retreat center. She also worked as a parish musician, taught scripture, prepared catechists to work in the Black community, led faith formation for church families and served on the Archdiocesan commission to certify catechists and principals. However, Joyce reflects that her greatest achievements were coordinating the annual Archdiocesan Black History Mass (developed by her husband, Deacon Bishop King), and receiving a certificate for the first Lay Ecclesial Ministers in the Archdiocese.

Another accomplishment she is proud of is motherhood. She says, “Just as God called Mary and Sarah, he calls each of us to love, nurture and train children in his ways.” Joyce considers motherhood a ministry which prepared her for her role as a minister. She says her ministry goals were shaped from her family values of God first, then family, followed by education. Joyce’s mother, husband and children were all part of her support system. Her mother’s assistance and her husband’s encouragement enabled her to attend conferences, continue her education and be a better mother. Her older children helped with the younger children and the younger children aided her by being part of her Sunday school and choir.

When reflecting on Black mothers and the family structures of today, Joyce points out that there are notable challenges. Parents have little time because of having to work so hard to make ends meet. However, Joyce notes that despite this, it is important to be intentional and to carve out time to be with family.

In her concluding thoughts, Joyce speaks about how as a mother, she has always tried to unconditionally model the values of God, family, and education. Additionally, she is very proud of her family and her children’s accomplishments.

Stephanie Garrison



The sacred gift of motherhood can come to people in unique ways. For **Barbara Edwards-Hill**, a parishioner at Our Lady of Africa, the power of faith and family brought her the gift of her two daughters. Barbara was a single woman making her way through corporate America. Barbara’s younger brother and his girlfriend were young when Naomi and Rachael came into the world.

When the girls were ages of 2 1/2 and 1 1/2, Barbara made the decision to step up and help. After much prayer and discussion, The Hill Family came together in support of Barbara seeking guardianship over the girls to give them a chance to have a good and stable life. This was also a chance for her younger brother and the children’s mother to continue their matriculation into adulthood.

In reflection, Barbara says that this would not have been possible without the love, prayer, strength, and support of her parents, siblings, and church family. When Barbara said “Yes”, she knew that many adjustments needed to be made and that the needs of the children would need to take priority. She moved out of her studio apartment to a larger place to accommodate the girls, she made sure that they were involved in activities like Girl Scouts and the Jr. Daughters of the Knights of Peter Claver. Most importantly she made sure that her daughters knew who their biological parents were and that they had a relationship with them. What was most important for Barbara was that her daughters knew that they were loved, cared for, and supported.

The gift of motherhood gave Barbara the strength to become an advocate for herself and most importantly, her children, and it also gave her the courage to take a new direction in her life. Barbara decided to leave corporate America and become an Early Childhood Educator where she currently works for the Chicago Public Schools. As she raised her daughters, the lessons that she learned from them helped her become a stronger teacher in the classroom.

When looking for support, Barbara turns to her parents, especially her own mother, Mrs. Velma Hill, for advice. The number one thing that her mother reminds Barbara of is not to be afraid to ask for help. It takes a village to raise a child, and this cannot be done alone. Second, don’t give up on yourself. Parenthood does not come with a manual; each situation is unique, and each child is unique.

Barbara offers this advice to new parents. One, it is ok to be nervous. Taking care of another person is a huge responsibility. Two, trust in the goodness of your own upbringing. The lessons that your family has taught you will only carry you forward. Three, your kids are not you. Each child that God has given us to take care of is uniquely made in the image of God, not you. Four, pray, pray, pray! It is through your own relationship with God that can strengthen you when times are tough but also it serves as a model for your children to develop a relationship with God through prayer. Barbara’s daughters are in their 20s now and she is so full of pride and joy over the wonderful women that they have become thriving in this world.

Tina L Carter

A Mother's Embrace

by: Lofton A Emenari



During Sunday morning Mass, besides people watching, there are some arresting moments that catch my attention. The to-and-fro, the comings, and goings as parishioners scurry between pews, genuflecting, crossing themselves, bowing, lighting candles, dipping their fingers in holy water fonts, kneeling, praying, and placing flowers at the feet of church statues of Mary and saints. Catholic cultural mien and traditions abound, some of them resonating ethnically or even socially Catholic is expressed in a panoply of spiritual approaches and flavors.

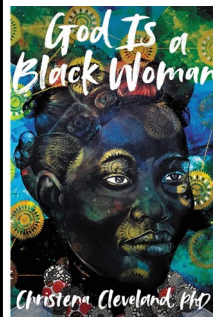
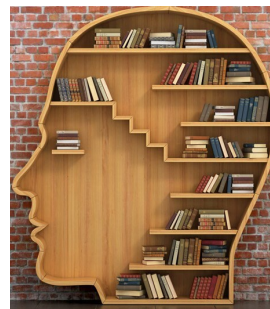
It was during the priest's rather lifeless homily where he reached for light humor to defray house indifference that I noticed a young boy jump from his seat on the Gospel side of the nave to a pew on the Epistle side. Bustling as he was skirting right past two reposed elderly women without, 'excuse me' or 'I'm sorry' or 'my fault ma'am'.

He fitfully slung his arms around a waiting woman who might have been his mother. Or was she an aunt or another relative? He held her with a sure steady hug as if never to let go. He buried his head against her as if he were crying and only she consoled, only she could assuage his fear as if now that he was tightly hugging her only her and her alone has the balm of solace in her embrace. He seemed to hold her as if it were a matter of life and death.

A single tear streaked my cheek as I marveled at their love, for I thought of how I longed to once again embrace my dearly departed mother. Her hugs would fend off all doubt. Her hugs would soothe and assure. As sure as anything earthly it was a mother's embrace - the embrace of God.

Lofton A. Emenari, veteran journalist/broadcaster with over 40 years experience is a recent convert to Catholicism. His first book was, 'Living While Black: Poems, Prose & Proverbs' (Amazon 2021); and is a contributor to the new best seller, 'Ain't But A Few of Us: Black Jazz Writers Tell Their Stories' (Duke U Press 2022); and is soon to release his story of conversion, 'Trying To Make Heaven My Home: A Spiritual Journey' (Amazon). He is a current member of St. John Neumann parish, Homewood, Il formerly St. Joseph's).

Literary Corner



For this month's book review, I had the pleasure of reading "*God is a Black Woman*" by Dr. Christena Cleveland published by Harper One in 2022.

Although I questioned the author's thoughts on certain things, I generally found the book to be beautifully written and thought-provoking.

Within the book, Cleveland doesn't shy away from expressing the pain she experienced during her lifetime surrounding numerous negative experiences with Caucasian people. In the book, Cleveland goes on to point out how she even lacked trust in God, whom she refers to in the book as "White male God"; the God she was taught to worship since birth. In the book, Cleveland notes how the "White male God" seems to empower White men, despite his claims to love all.

Because of this, Cleveland heads on a journey to France in search of the Black Madonna, whom she believes contains "a healing power of the sacred Black Feminine", which gives Black people a sense of hope, and a way to connect with the Divine.

I found Cleveland's love for the Black Madonna to be beautiful. I was very inspired by Cleveland's voyage, and I would love to go to France to personally witness the Black Madonna myself. I read this book during my Black Catholic discussion group, and although many people considered Cleveland's book to be very controversial, as a Black woman I could relate to certain experiences and understood the author's point of view. I would recommend giving this book a try, I would suggest reading this book within a group, or with friends, as this book is a great discussion piece.

-Shannon Ambroise



The rich tapestry of the illustrations is only matched by the inspiring and soothing words of Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow's latest book *Hold Them Close: A Love Letter to Black Children*. With simple yet powerful text children are encouraged "when happy things come to you, hold them close and never let go...hold on to good tastes and good laughs on your tongue...hold on to the stories the grown folks tell of your greatness." This mellow reminder to Hold On is reinforced with images that uses photos, collage and

drawings to bring the reader in as they get a glimpse of the heritage that we have in this world. This book would be an excellent addition to any family's library and can serve as a starting point to share one's own stories of how to hold on and hold them close. Recommended for children ages 4 and up.

Tina L Carter

Habari gani

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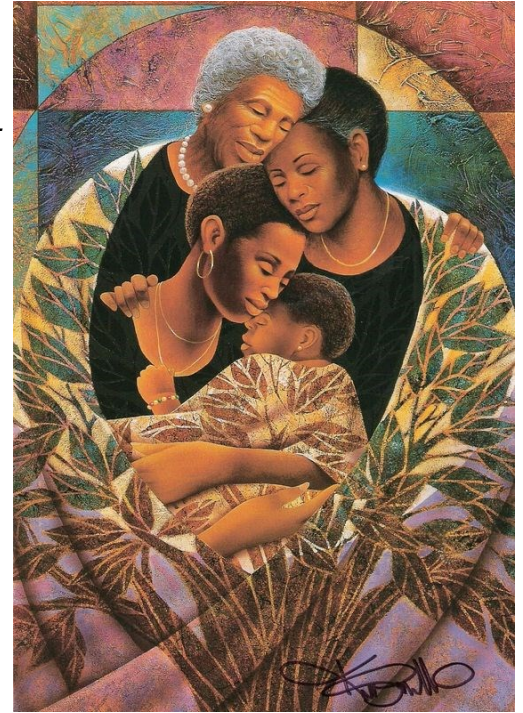
A Prayer for Mothers

Good and gracious God, we pray for mothers during this month of May.

We lift them up to you all women who have nurtured us, shared their wisdom, and have loved us unconditionally. We ask you, Lord, to place a hedge of protection around them that protects them from the crown of their head to the soles of their feet. Let no hurt, harm or danger come to them. Provide them with divine health in their mind, body, and spirit. Lord, give those mothers that are stressed out, worried, or overwhelmed, the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. Supply all their needs according to Your abundance. Loving God, let them feel the reassurance of Your love and care towards that will be with them throughout their lifetime. Remind them that You will not leave them nor forsake them in their time of need.

Loving God, we pray for those who are hurting because they cannot conceive or have miscarried and those whose mothers are no longer here on earth, those who have lost their children to gun violence, or any other circumstance. Only You, Oh God, can turn their mourning into dancing.

Lord, we ask you to bless all women whether they are biological mothers, surrogate mothers, godmothers, play mothers, or in whatever "mothering" role that they are. Keep them close to your heart. Lead them, and order their steps in your Word, so they can finish strong in the purpose you have given them. We pray in the matchless, mighty, and magnificent name of your son Jesus. Amen



Source: <https://www.tuttartpitturascultrapoiesiamusica.com/2012/01/keith-mallett-1948-pennsylvania.html?m=1>

-Dr. Kim Lymore

Who are we?

Created by current and former Tolton scholars, **The Pulse** is a monthly newsletter to provide information about the concerns and happenings in Black Catholic Chicago. It will be made up of articles, profiles and information about events and programs happening throughout the archdiocese of Chicago. If you are interested in contributing or have any questions or concerns please email us at chicagoblackcatholics@gmail.com

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