



Jacqueline Fitch

Black woman is named Coast Guard Cadet leader

By Danyel Jones

Special to the NNPA from the Afro-American Newspapers

BALTIMORE (NNPA) - For the first time in the United States Coast Guard Academy's 133-year history, an African-American woman is leading the cadets.

Jacqueline Fitch, 22, of Catonsville, Md. made her debut as regimental commander, the academy's highest-ranking cadet, on Sept. 26 when she led the Corps of Cadets in a parade on the academy's Washington Parade Field.

The regimental commander acts as a liaison between the commandant of cadets and the cadet corps. Fitch will be responsible for maintaining good order and discipline, overseeing welfare of the student body and ensuring cadets comply to the regulations and policies established by the superintendent and commandant of cadets.

"This feels great, it's probably my greatest accomplish-

ment so far," Fitch said. "It makes me feel happy because it's something that I did for my people and those who come into the academy after me."

Fitch said she did not initially realize her appointment made history.

"I didn't know I was the first," she said. "I applied and I knew we previously had an African-American male but after people started asking me if I was the first, it made me wonder. Then I found out and it just feels great to be like a trailblazer."

Fitch has held leadership roles since she attended high school at Western School of Technology and Environmental Sciences in Baltimore. She said she has enjoyed her family's support from the beginning.

"In high school she was a class representative, so she had leadership skills she carried into the academy from school," Fitch's mother, Judy, said. "When I first heard the news I was so happy for her. She called me and said 'Mom, they chose me for the position!' and I am just proud of her."

Restoration has begun on historic city community mural in Harlem

Edited by Audrey J. Bernard
Lifestyles/Society Editor

Work has begun on the restoration of *Homage to Seurat: La Grande Jatte* in Harlem, the 1986 community mural by Eva Cockcroft. Over 20 years of sun, wind, rain and wall repairs have rendered the mural a ghost of its former self—the brilliant, high-intensity greens, turquoise, reds, purples and yellows now dull, faded and abraded. Located on West 142nd Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Hamilton Place in West Harlem, the mural is adjacent to the Hope or Stevens Community Garden. A dedication ceremony for the completed restoration is planned sometime this month.

The restoration is a project of Rescue Public Murals—an innovative, national program based in Washington, D.C.—and has been made possible by Friends of Heritage Preservation, a private charitable group that seeks to promote cultural identity through the preservation of significant endangered artistic and historic works, artifacts, and sites. Rescue Public Murals has also received support from the Getty Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Suzanne Deal Booth, president of Friends of Heritage Preservation states, "We are pleased to partner with Rescue Public Murals in order to restore this mural which plays an important role in its community. Committed to serving as agents in the preservation process, we strive to bring awareness to the concerns of cultural heritage." Golden Artist Colors has also provided support for the project.

The American tradition of outdoor community murals—collaborations between artists and neighborhood groups—began in the late 1960s and over four decades has contributed vibrant landmarks to cities and towns across the country. As the years have passed, many of these fragile artworks have deteriorated markedly.

Rescue Public Murals was launched in 2006 to bring attention to the significant historic and artistic value of community murals. The program brings pro-



Condition of The Mural in August 2009 (Photo by Tomie Arai)



Photo taken in 1986 when The Mural was painted

(Photo by Eva Cockcroft)

fessional conservators together with artists to ensure that these murals will survive for several more decades.

A muralist, studio painter, writer and teacher, Cockcroft (1936-99) was an important figure in both the New York and national community mural movements. *Homage to Seurat* is her only remaining mural in New York City.

In addition to *Homage to Seurat*, Rescue Public Murals has identified and assessed important and endangered murals in Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia, Santa Fe, El Paso, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco and is planning to work with these communities to secure the funds necessary to restore them.

New York City muralist Janet Braun-Reintz, who has painted over 50 murals in New York City, several states, and abroad, is directing the restoration and is working in collaboration with muralists Rochelle Shicoff and Maria Dominguez.

Apprentices from local arts organizations are assisting the muralists. They are Alexandra

Unthank from Harlem Arts Alliance, Jessica Guzman from CAW4Kids (Creative Arts Workshop), and Ariel Mercado from Children's Art Carnival. Consulting on the project is New York City conservator Harriet Irgang Alden of Rustin Levenson Art Conservation.

"The fading and flaking of the paint is largely due to the fact that the wall was neither primed before painting, nor sealed after the mural's completion," explains Alden. "Moreover cracks and leaks in the building required the replastering of a large section of the wall, obliterating imagery."

Fortunately the original mural was well documented. Braun-Reintz adds, "We are applying a clear coating of Golden's Soft Gel Gloss to the existing mural which seals the original paint and serves as a primer. This way we can replicate Eva's precise colors and shapes. As much as possible, we are using the same Golden Artist Colors Eva used, although she mixed many of the hues herself which we need to replicate."

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Many Black, Hispanic retirees, unable to meet basic economic needs

By Pharoh Martin

NNPA National Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Black and Hispanic retirees on fixed incomes are among those hit the hardest by the economic recession due to skyrocketing health care prices and fall outs from economic setbacks. Many fear they won't be able to meet basic medical and living expenses in the future.

This according to a new study released by AARP last week that highlights the impact of the economic recession on Social Security recipients.

● Of those surveyed in AARP

Closer LookSM, more than a quarter (27 percent) of individuals age 45 to 64, as well as 38 percent of African Americans and nearly half (43 percent) of Hispanics, report that they still have problems paying for essential items such as food and utilities," states a release that summarizes the study.

"In addition, 41 percent surveyed, including over half of African Americans (53 percent) and nearly three-fourths of Hispanics (71 percent) surveyed, were not confident that they would have enough money to cover medical and living expenses in their retirement," the AARP study notes.

And things will only get worse

as those who are Social Security beneficiaries will see no cost of living increases for the first time ever, the group argues.

Data shows that medical prices have risen during 2009, and Medicare beneficiaries with higher than average health care costs are hardest hit by not having a Cost of Living Allowance increase (COLA) next year.

"Seniors face rising costs, but today have fewer resources to pay for them," John Rother, AARP's Executive Vice President for Public Policy and Strategy, said in a statement. "We urge Congress to address this issue quickly, so that seniors will not face reductions in their Social Security checks, or at least

be compensated for increasing medical costs so vital to their well-being."

According to AARP's "Closer Look" survey, more African-Americans and Hispanics reported having problems paying rent or mortgage and having problems paying for essential items such as food and utilities such as electricity, heat and the water.

Also, fewer African-Americans and Hispanics than Whites reported being confident in their ability to handle potential expenses related to health care.

AARP expects that, for the first time since it was established in 1975, there will not be a Social Security COLA next year. Because of COLA, Social

Security checks have gone up automatically every year since 1975, according to website factcheck.org.

They report that COLA will not be increased this year and possibly next because the "official measure of the cost of living has gone down, not up" due mainly to the decreased price in oil from the previous year. It's a reverse to what happened in last year when oil prices went through the roof and Social Security beneficiaries enjoyed the largest COLA increase in 27 years at 5.8 percent.

While the cost of goods and services fell, the cost of medical care rose by 3.3 percent, according to

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WHAT'S GOING ON

By Victoria Horsford

NY AND THE WORLD

NYC: Why do Mike Bloomberg commercials attack Democratic mayoral hopeful Bill Thompson as being ineffective because of his stint at NYC Board of Education President.

Board presidents did not run the public school system. The schools chancellor did. School chancellor at that time was normally an educator and African American or Latino. Under the old system, Mayor Giuliani controlled the purse strings.

Full mayoral control of public schools, ceded to Bloomberg, by the NYS legislature is vastly different from the structure in place when Thompson was Board chief. To compare Thompson's at Board of Ed with full mayoral control is specious.

Has our school system really improved under mayoral control? The jury is still out! But if that line of thinking is to have any legitimacy, then one could argue that the Bloomberg mayoralty was ineffective, having oversight of the local government during the banking and real estate collapse of 2008.

Could the global economic meltdown be attributed to deals between NYC city government and the real estate and banking industries for the past 8 years? New Yorkers want more solutions-oriented campaign ads about a vision for the city moving forward. I look forward to next week's first tv mayoral debate.

Brazil will host the 2016 Olympics, edging out our beloved Windy City Chicago, whose elite - Barack, Michelle and Oprah - traveled to Copenhagen to argue for their town as the 2016 Olympics venue.

Alas, it was not supposed to be. I read, after the fact, that his eminence Michael Jordan, the Chi Bull, holder of two Olympic gold medals, was invited to be a part of the US entourage to Copenhagen; but he was MIA and no one outside of US officialdom knows why.

Brazilian soccer legend, Pele, was by his President Lula's side when he made the appeal for a Rio Olympic game and when it was announced that Rio is the 2016 venue!

BLACKENTERPRISE

Richard Parsons, erstwhile CEO/Chairman of Time Warner, who is the Citigroup chairman, is a senior adviser to Providence Equity Partners, a large private equity firm, owner of media operations like MGM, Univision, and Hulu. Parsons will participate with Providence as a part-time deal maker, thus returning to the unpredictable world of communications, with which he is intimately familiar as Time Warner honcho for more than a decade.

Read theroot.com essay *Is There A Next Page For Ebony: The Iconic Mag Hits The*



Bill Thompson

Ropes by Richard Prince, editor of the online *Journalisms*, a outlet which monitors media content and diversity trends in the nation's newsrooms.

Equal parts chronology and analysis, "Is There A Next Page" identifies a multiplicity of reasons that led to the *Ebony* crisis; the search for an investor, buyer or partner. Prince gets input from writer George Curry, ESPN SVP Keith Clinkscale et al.

He says that Ms. Sidmel Estes, veteran tv producer and media consultant is trying to assemble a group of investors who want to see the next generation of *Ebony*, a commitment would be in the neighborhood of \$10-\$20 million to retool the magazine. It is required reading. I suggest that Linda Johnson Rice reach out to Richard Parsons and his new group, the Providence Equity Partners.

MEDIASTUFF

Dr. Deborah Willis has two books, pictorial essays, on the fall publishing calendar. One is *Posing Beauty*, in African-American culture, from 1891 to present. The young Susan Taylor's picture dons the cover. The second book is *Michelle Obama, "The First Lady in Photographs"*.

Everyone's talking about the film, "PRECIOUS: Based on the novel *Push* by Sapphire" which opens on November 6. All PRECIOUS publicity focuses on



Vy Higginson

Gabourey Sidibe, acting novice, who inhabits and fully possesses the title character, Precious, an obese, illiterate Harlem teenager whose life is rife with dark deeds and suffering, and who at 16 is twice pregnant by her miscreant father. Ms. Sidibe is a native New Yorker, reared in BedStuy, now living in Harlem. Her bio is a special story - her mom is a Black American Special Ed teacher and her dad is a Senegalese-born NY cab driver. Speculation is widespread that Ms. Sidibe's performance is Oscar worthy, which is not bad for someone whose resume records stints as Glinda, the good witch in a college production of *THE WIZ*. I would like to meet Sapphire, who invented this dark literary fiction.

CULTURE CALENDAR

THE RIVER CROSSES RIVERS theatre piece, originally produced by the Ensemble Studio Theatre, is a compendium of short plays by women playwrights of color, which opened in September for a month-long run off-Broadway, and which garnered critical acclaim, closed.

Thespian Anna Maria Horsford said that it was great theatre, a must see! Now Woodie King's New Federal Theatre in association with the Castillo Theatre, will reopen *The River Crosses Rivers*, in an abbreviated version, for a three week run, beginning Thursday, October 8 at the Castillo Theatre, at 543 West 42 Street, in Manhattan.

Playwrights works included in the new *The River Crosses Rivers* incarnation are Ruby Dee, j.e. Franklin, PJ Gibson, Lynn Nottage, and Cori Thomas. The play runs through November 1. Playdays are Thursday/Friday, Saturday at 2pm and 7pm and Sunday at 3. Tickets are \$25. For reservations call 866.811-4111 or call New Federal Theatre at 212.353.1176

Vy Higginson's and the Mama Foundation is at it again producing a new music revue *SING HARLEM SING*, which opens on Saturday, October 10 at Harlem's popular off-Broadway venue the Dempsey Theatre at 127 West 127 Street, between Lenox and Seventh Avenues. Higginson says of *SING HARLEM SING*, "We put the spotlight on one of the world's most legendary neighborhoods." The show's playdates are Saturdays, October 10/17/31 and November 7/14/21, at 1:30 and 4:30.

Tickets are \$35. For reservations, call 212.868.4444. Discounts for groups, seniors and students. Call 212.280.1045.

The NY-based dean of an African-American attorneys, **Thornton Meachum, 93**, died on Sunday, October 4. An attorney to Adam Clayton Powell, Meachum's office was the first stop for two generations of newly-graduated Black attorneys awaiting NYS Bar results.

Restoration has begun

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Building repairs obliterated nearly 20 percent of the mural on the left wall, and the artists will recreate the imagery referring to original photographs of the mural. They must also consider the new surface of this section of the wall which markedly differs from the textured original.

Finally, the mural will be coated with a protective layer of Soft Gel Gloss and a reversible Golden MSA Varnish with UVLS that will not only prevent the sun's ultraviolet rays from fading the paint, but will also allow future caretakers to gently clean the mural without harming the newly applied paint.

As is done with all conservation projects, notes and photographs were taken before the restoration and after its completion. A very small area of the mural will not be restored, or

only be partially restored, to help conservation researchers better understand the deterioration of paint outdoors.

Launched in late 2006, *Rescue Public Murals* is a program of Heritage Preservation, a national non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve the nation's heritage for future generations through innovative leadership, education, and programs.

Kristen Overbeck Laisc, who directs *Rescue Public Murals*, points out, "Community murals not only are treasured landmarks in their neighborhoods, they also play a significant role in our nation's artistic and cultural heritage, and we are committed to securing the expertise and support to save them." determine the composition and color. Hands, elbows, and the faces of the figures, for example, are painted on the raised stucco portions to give them a sense of three-dimensionality. (For additional information on the three apprentices, see *You Go, Girl!* on page 24).

African people on the agenda

(From page 9)

are millions of people living on the continents of Europe, North America and parts of Asia living very, very well because of their exploitation of Africa's vast amount of natural resources. But most of the people in the African continent have not and will not benefit from the abundance of valuable resources unless people on the continent and people of African descent around the world get on the case.

Master Teacher, Malcolm X, once said that as a child and young man, he heard people say "You don't have a Chinaman's chance" to accomplish or gain whatever, but now that China is a major force on the world scene, he noted, people don't say that anymore, and China has become something of a protector for people of Chinese descent throughout the world.

A strong and prosperous Africa, he stated, would provide the same kind of coverage for people of African descent throughout the world. Such a circumstance is not going to just happen; Africans and people of

African descent must make it happen.

There is absolutely no valid reason for African people to be the economically poorest and most exploited people on earth. This situation can be and must be changed.

And it can be successfully dealt with if committed, resilient, talented, determined resourceful and Africa-oriented leaders and people decide to pool their energy, skills and resources: American, British, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Indian governments, corporate executives and academicians should not have to deal with South Africans, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Congolese, Angolans etc. but with a confederation of Africans states ready to tenaciously and effectively promote and defend the economic interests of the whole continent. That is the only way to avoid continuous demeaning exploitation.

Journalist/Lecturer A. Peter Bailey, a former associate editor of Ebony, is currently editor of Vital Issues: The Journal of African American Speeches. He can be reached at apeterh@verizon.net.

Paterson unveils \$900G

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viewed nearly 300 applications seeking nearly \$468 million. The selected projects were then submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for final approval. Each grant recipient must comply with the ARRA, Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act and the New York State Revolving Fund requirements.

New York received \$432 million through the ARRA for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and \$86 million for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. The ARRA requires states to direct 20 percent of their stimulus funding to water quality projects that use innovative approaches to energy and water efficiency, incorporate stormwater infrastructure and use innovative treat-

ment technologies. A full list of the grant recipients announced today is available at www.nysefc.org/greengrants.

Long Island projects to receive Green Innovation Grants include: \$675,000 to the Suffolk County Community College to improve water and energy efficiency throughout the campus, including the installation of water-saving appliances throughout their buildings and higher energy-efficient equipment at their wastewater treatment plant. \$200,700 to the Lindenhurst Memorial Library, Suffolk County, for the installation of permeable pavers and bioswales for stormwater runoff management at the library. \$28,000 to the Oyster Bay Water District, Nassau County, for the installation of solar panels to produce renewable power for the Oyster Bay Water District.