

# Conference on black history set in Indiana Blairsville to dedicate marker

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light for the conference is the dedication of a state historical marker on the square in Blairsville at 3 p.m. April 17. The marker will commemorate the rescue of a fugitive slave named Newton in April 1858. (See related story).

This year's conference keynote speaker is Juan Williams, an acclaimed journalist and historian and an authority on American civil rights history.

He is the author of such books as "Eyes on the Prize: American's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965," "Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary" and numerous other books and articles. He is the host of a nationally syndicated television show, "America's Black Forum," a political analyst for Fox News, and a correspondent for National Public Radio.

Williams also worked for the Washington Post. During his 23-year career, he served as an editorial writer, police reporter, op-ed columnist and White House reporter. Articles written by Williams have appeared in magazines ranging from Newsweek, Fortune and The Atlantic Monthly to Ebony, Gentlemen's Quarterly and The New Republic.

He also has appeared on numerous television programs, including "Nightline," "Washington Week in Review," "Oprah," "CNN's Crossfire" (where he served as co-host), and "Capital Gang Sunday."

He is the winner of several journalism awards for reporting and commentary and also holds an Emmy Award for TV documentary writing.

Members of the Indiana community who are participating in the conference include IUP journalism professor Dr. Stanford Mukasa, who will moderate "The Global Context and Impact of Brown v. Board of Education: Pan Africanist Perspectives on Justice and Equality." Panelists will include Dr. Wang Xi, professor of history, and Dr. John Orife, professor of management.

IUP will also have representatives on a panel about "Past, Present and Progress at IUP: 50 Years after Brown vs. Board of Education." Panelists will include IUP student Rhonda Cole from Erie; Dolores Walker Hickerson, a 1950s IUP graduate, and Dr. Hilda Richards, former provost and vice president of academic affairs at IUP.

The panel will also include Indiana County NAACP representative Dr. Edwina Vold.

Dr. Carolyn Primes, director of IUP's African American Cultural

Center, will moderate a panel on "Who Are You Now: African American Developments Since Brown vs. Board of Education." This panel will include Dr. Beverly Goodwin, IUP professor of psychology.

Dr. Marcus will moderate a panel on "African Americans and the Media," which will include Jennifer Horgen from the Purchase Line School District. Dr. Veronica Watson, IUP professor of English, will moderate a panel on "Pennsylvania Higher Education: Mapping the Past and Knowing the Future."

Lillian Clemons, director of the Chevy Chase Community Center, will moderate a panel titled "African Americans in Indiana County," which will feature Indiana Countians Helen Brandenburg, Shirley Johnson and the Rev. Hubert Redd. Chris Catafano from the Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana County will be part of a panel on "Pennsylvania and the Network to Freedom."

In addition to the panels and lectures, Michael White and the White Quartet, the IUP African Dance Ensemble and Morgan and MoJo, featuring Eugene Morgan, will be part of the three-day event.

The following award recipients are being honored for their contributions to the African American community of Indiana County:

■ **Patricia Holmes** has served the people of Indiana County as a performing artist and community leader for the past 20 years, and has served 12 years as vice president of the Indiana Chapter of the NAACP. Holmes has also served on the board of the Sweet Adeline for 13 years, and is currently on the board of the Tri-State Country Music Association, Chapter 17. Holmes has also served the Chevy Chase Community Center and the African American community of Indiana County as a volunteer for voter registration drives, social justice events, and numerous other events.

■ **Charles Sadler Sr.** has been a resident of Indiana since 1939, and has provided leadership to the Indiana community for the past 44 years. He is a community leader and a civil rights activist with his family, and has helped to support the education of young adults in Indiana County by establishing the NAACP Shirley Sadler-Reeder Scholarship Fund. Sadler has also served as a deputy sheriff for a number of years.

■ **Margaret E. Jones**, a lifelong

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Johnson was an ox-team driver for George Muller, a local merchant. Johnson also received support from slavery opponent John Graff, a prominent merchant and political and community leader in the borough and the county.

The rescue is documented in "The Anti-Slavery Issues of Indiana County" published in 1964 by Indiana County historian Clarence Stephenson and in his five-volume history marking the 175th anniversary of the county.

In a personal account of the incident written by a Uniontown, Fayette County, historian, and included in Stephenson's histories, a tailor from Uniontown, who accompanied a slave hunter from Virginia to help capture Newton, said the attempt was like poking a pole into a beehive. The tailor said a like swarm of whites and Negroes appeared from everywhere and chased them along the towpath of the Pennsylvania Canal. After arriving home, the tailor said, he vowed never again to pursue a runaway slave in the North.

The marker is the second one commemorating a slave rescue in the county as part of an ongoing effort by the Underground Railroad Project of Indiana County, begun in 1995, to tell the stories of freedom fighters who defied federal law by helping slaves elude bounty hunters in the county. A marker at the First Commonwealth bank office building in the Old Courthouse at Sixth and Philadelphia streets in Indiana commemorates the rescue of An-

resident of Indiana, is a descendant of a founding African American family of Indiana. She has served as a role model for young and old by pursuing her interest in nursing and becoming the first African American to be licensed as a practicing nurse in Indiana County. She joined the Indiana County Improvement Association to put an end to the segregation of Mack Park swimming pool and other recreation facilities.

■ **Yvonne Redd** is the first elected African American to the Indiana Borough Council, now serving her third term. She served Indiana County for 20 years as university-wide coordinator for the internship program at IUP as assistant to the provost and is currently manager in human resources. She is president of the Chevy Chase Community Center Board and serves as local preacher at the historic St. James AME Zion Church, working in outreach and support to the African American community.

■ **Lyman Connor** founded and chaired the Chevy Chase Community Action Council for the purpose of desegregating the Mack Park swimming pool. In 1971, Connor led the movement to build the Chevy Chase Com-

munty Center, and following its completion in 1977, Connor continued to serve on the Chevy Chase board for the next 30 years. Because of the spirit and determination of Connor, the Chevy Chase Center serves the needs of the low-income and the

unemployed as well as supporting families with breakfast and after-school programs. There are also food and clothing banks and communal meals for seniors and families.

Connor tested for and passed the exam to be a Tuskegee Air-

man, but was unable to serve because of the black quota placed on African American servicemen in World War II. Connor also served as assistant dean of admissions for IUP.

■ **Robert Scholfield** became the first African American to work in a supervisory function as an accountant in the IUP Department of Finance in 1975. He has overcome his physical challenge to become a leader within Indiana County and an ordained minister and choir director. Scholfield has served on the board of directors for the Indiana Head Start Program, the Indiana County Community Action Program and Chevy Chase Community Action Committee and serves on the Indiana Area School District Handicapped Committee.

■ **Irwin Marcus**, a retired IUP history professor, he created the first class for African American history at IUP in the 1970s. He has displayed a lifetime commitment to teaching and writing about the history of African Americans and has been a leader in sustaining and improving the university's curriculum on African American studies. Dr. Marcus has been a unique and exemplary teacher, scholar and community activist with and for the African American community of Indiana. He has also written and contributed articles to the Negro History Bulletin and to Negro Biography, and has also written about Indiana's African American community for local newspapers and journals.

Edwina Vold, president of the Indiana County Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and a retired professor from IUP, said the markers are important because they help to make people aware of the black history of the county.

Mayor John Zedick of Blairsville said the marker is an honor for the borough and a historical tribute to people who were against slavery and took the necessary steps to help save people who were seeking freedom.

Linda Gwinn, president of BIG, said the marker is significant because every attempt to inform people about the rich history of the borough will help to promote tourism and to revitalize the economy of the town.