

# Family Matters

Special Edition

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Official Newsletter of the Gillyard-Johnson-Mahoney Family and Family Reunions

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## Inside this Issue

History and Family	1
Upcoming Events	1
Family Spotlight	1
Black History Month Inspiring Quotes Crossword	2
Healthy Living	3
A Family Recipe	3
New Date for Family Reunion	4

## History and Family

By: Bettie G. Griggs

This year's theme for Black History Month is The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity. This month is a good time for us to look back at our family's tapestry and explore our past and present.

Sometime ago a friend who shares my passion for family and history shared this passage by an unknown author with me, "We are the chosen. In each family there is one who seems called to find the ancestors; to put flesh on their bones and make them live again. To tell the family their story and to feel that somehow, they know and approve. Genealogy is not a cold gathering of facts; instead, it is breathing life into all who have gone before. We are the storytellers of the tribe. All tribes have one. We have been called as if it were in our genes. Those who have gone before crying out to us: tell our story,

and so we do. In them we find ourselves." This is who she thought we were, the storytellers of our family's history.

As I've researched and reviewed documents, and conducted oral interviews, I've grown to a deeper understanding of our ancestors. Before I started my ancestral journey; I knew little or nothing at all about my grandparents. Now, I've put flesh on their bones and now they live as their stories are unfolded and told. I have heard their cries and I have shed tears. I have laughed with them and I have shared their pain, joys, triumphs, their need to be understood and their need to be forgiven.

I admire their strength, and I love how they as humbled farmers shielded our moms and dads, aunts, uncles, from the pain of "going without." I've learned

(continue page 4)

## Family Spotlight

### Upcoming Events

June 1, 2021  
Next Family Matters Newsletter  
(submit any news or articles by May 13, 2021)

July 2022  
The 9<sup>th</sup>  
Gillyard Johnson Mahoney Family Reunion

Check our website, Facebook page and your email frequently for all the latest information on our family and the 2021 Family Reunion!



Ostell Griggs

Family Matters is shining the spotlight on Ostell Griggs. Ostell is the husband of the GJM family historian Bettie Gillyard Griggs. He enthusiastically accepted her invitation to join the family history team and serve as the team's photographer. He has photographed all things family reunion related for the team since 2004.

Ostell was born, raised, and educated in Dallas, Texas. More specifically he grew up in the housing projects of West Dallas. As a youth, he attended the project's community center and participated in almost all sports, but developed a real passion for track and

field which led to him running a 9.7 in the 100-yard dash for James Madison H.S.

Deeply committed to volunteerism and working with senior citizen programs, he has been recognized by LA County for his positive attitude and tireless energy in assisting seniors and encouraging others to volunteer.

He is a quiet philanthropist concerned with human welfare and the advancement of others. He gives generously of his time, talent, and money to those causes that aim to make life better for other people.

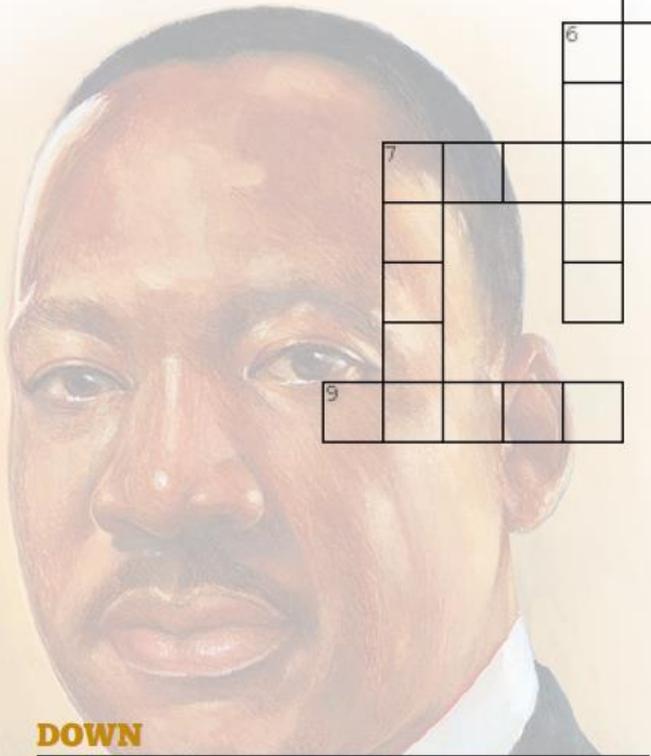
Ostell and Bettie have four daughters, one son, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. In his free time, he enjoys playing Dominoes and Bid Whist

Most recently inspired by Amanda Gorman's poem, The Hill We Climb, Ostell says there is always light, and he commits to being brave enough to see the light and brave enough to be the light.

# Black History Month Inspiring Quotes Crossword

Find the missing word from each inspiring quote to complete the crossword puzzle.

Illustration © Robert F. Goertz



**WORD BANK**

- climb
- courage
- crawl
- difference
- dreamer
- fearful
- imaginations
- struggle
- work
- world

**DOWN**

1. "You must never be \_\_\_\_\_ about what you are doing when it's right." – Rosa Parks, civil rights activist
2. "Where there is no \_\_\_\_\_, there is no strength". – Oprah Winfrey, media mogul
3. "Every great dream begins with a \_\_\_\_\_. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world." – Harriet Tubman, abolitionist
5. "Never be limited by other people's limited \_\_\_\_\_." – Mae Jemison, first African American female astronaut
6. "You really can change the \_\_\_\_\_ if you care enough." – Marian Wright Edelman, activist
7. "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then \_\_\_\_\_, but whatever you do keep moving forward." – Martin Luther King Jr, civil rights leader

**ACROSS**

4. "Success isn't about how much money you make, it's about the \_\_\_\_\_ you make in people's lives." – Michelle Obama, former First Lady
7. "The kind of beauty I want most is the hard-to-get kind that comes from within — strength, \_\_\_\_\_, dignity." – Ruby Dee, actress and civil rights activist
8. "Nothing will \_\_\_\_\_ unless you do." – Maya Angelou, poet and civil rights activist
9. "Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to \_\_\_\_\_ it, go through it, or work around it." – Michael Jordan, retired professional basketball player

For this edition I asked family members who had received the COVID-19 vaccination to share with us why they decided to get the vaccine.



**Gloria Lloyd Gillyard - Retiree**  
1. I chose to take the COVID-19 Vaccine to save my life, my family lives, and everyone's life.

2. I chose to take the vaccine in hope that it would bring our society back to being normal again.

3. I chose to take the vaccine because I believe and have confidence in vaccines on a personal level. The Polio Vaccine saved so many lives, and it saved many people from permanent crippling side effects of Polio. I am one of those people. Thanks to God and the Polio Vaccine I am still able to walk today.



**Bradley & Shirley Gillyard-Retirees**  
We, as a family, were praying for a solution to this virus. God heard and answered our

prayer with a vaccine. To help protect ourselves and others, we did not hesitate to get the vaccine. When your time comes PLEASE extend an arm to help protect/save lives.

**Donald Phelps-Retiree**  
I think that we should take advantage of every opportunity to stay healthy and safe. Getting vaccinated, not



just for COVID-19, is an easy and effective way to do this. There are potential side effects for getting them but there are obvious consequences for not doing it.



**Constance Gillyard Thomas, RN, Area Operations Director**

1. As a healthcare provider taking care of COVID patients, by protecting myself through the vaccination, I in turn protect my family.

2. I've prayed, as others have, and asked God to heal the land, I believe that He has heard the prayers of his people and is healing the land through the vaccination.

3. I believe God places doctors, epidemiologist, and other healthcare professionals in the earth realm to help us navigate the danger in the world and therefore I believe that this vaccination is here to serve that purpose.

## A Family Recipe

from page 32 of the Favorite Recipes from the Gillyard Johnson Mahoney Family & Friends

### OXTAILS

(submitted by William and Elizabeth Mahoney)

### INGREDIENTS:

3 lb. oxtails  
1 tsp. plus ½ tsp. salt  
½ tsp. plus 1/8 tsp. garlic salt  
1 tsp. plus 1/8 tsp. pepper  
1 tsp. seasoned salt  
1 c. all purposed flour  
¼ c. plus 3 Tbsp. canola oil  
2 c. chopped & peeled potatoes  
8 whole plump tomatoes  
½ c. chopped carrots  
½ c. chopped celery  
½ c. chopped tomatoes  
½ c. chopped onions  
6 c. chicken stock

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Rinse oxtails. Season oxtails with 1 teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon garlic salt, seasoned salt, and 1 teaspoon pepper on both sides. Pat seasonings into meat to seal in flavor. Dredge oxtails in flour. Pat off excess flour. Place sauté pan over high heat and coat with canola oil. Sear oxtails on both sides. Add potatoes and whole plump tomatoes. Add carrots, celery, chopped tomatoes and chopped onions to a separate sauté pan lightly coated with canola oil. Season vegetables with salt, garlic salt, and pepper. Let cook down. Remove oxtails, tomatoes and potatoes from heat and pour into large casserole dish.

Remove vegetables from heat and add to casserole dish. Add chicken stock. Place in oven at 275° and let cook down for 6 hrs.



Favorite Recipes from the Gillyard Johnson Mahoney Family and Friends

Family Historian  
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**Family Reunions  
Mission:**

*To focus on the things that shape us rather than the circumstances that divide us; to strengthen and preserve family as God orders our steps. We value God's Plan, Family, Tradition, and Service.*

**We are on the Web!**  
gillyard-johnson-mahoney.com

Email Us:  
gjmfamilyreunion@gmail.com

## The 9<sup>th</sup> Gillyard Johnson Mahoney Family Reunion

July 2022  
(more information to be announced)

### History and Family

(continued from page 1)

more important lessons. I have learned the importance of sharing and the importance of tenacity and grit.

As I tell our family's stories, it helps me to define who I am. I am a person with hopes, dreams; and purpose; and as part of a larger family, with shared purpose and dreams.

The Gillyard Johnson Mahoney stories are like treasured family keepsakes, and that is what calls me to put flesh on the bones. I've found myself. I can see the common thread of past

generations. Now as I tell their stories, I weave my own story, that someday, someone else will also tell.

*Parts of this article originally appeared in a 2011 Family Matters newsletter.*

Enjoy Your Blessings,

*Bettie*

