
THE COALITION OF UNITED PROGRESSIVES CHARMECK CHRONICLE



Greetings!

We truly appreciate everyone's involvement.
This War on Oppression will only be won as one
mass movement.

Sections

- **Spotlight - by DonnaMarie Woodson**
 - **Editorial - by Tarik Kiley**
 - **Announcements**
 - **Happenings Gallery!**

Our Mission Statement

The continual unification of as many organizations as possible starting at the local level and branching out to both the state of North Carolina and then the entire nation.

Spotlight

Alice Allison Dunnigan



**First African American Female White House
Correspondent**

(April 27, 1906 – May 6, 1983)

By DonnaMarie Woodson

“Incredible Black Women You Should Know About”

Alice Allison Dunnigan was the first African American female correspondent at the White House and the first Black female member of the Senate and House of Representatives press galleries. During her time as a reporter, she became the first Black journalist to accompany a president while traveling, covering **Harry S. Truman's 1948 campaign trip**.



Alice was born April 27, 1906, near **Russellville, Kentucky**, to Willie and Lena Pittman Allison. Ms. Dunnigan was of Black, Native American, and White descent, with connections to both slave and slave-owning families. Though her father was

a sharecropper, and her mother took in laundry for a living, Dunnigan's family was unusually "well-off" compared to other Black families in the area; they owned their own land and had a larger home they expanded on over the years.

She and her older half-brother, Russell, were raised in a strict household with an emphasis on and an expectation for a strong work ethic. She had few friends as a child, and as a teenager was prohibited from having boyfriends. She started attending school one day a week when she was four years old and learned to read before entering the first grade.

At the age of 13, Allison began writing for the *Owensboro Enterprise*, a Black Newspaper. Her dream was to experience the world through the life of a newspaper reporter.

Although her parents saw no benefit in allowing their daughter to continue her education, a Sunday school teacher intervened, and Dunnigan was allowed to attend college. By the time she had reached college, Alice had set her sights on becoming a teacher, and completed the teaching course at what is now Kentucky State University.

Ms. Dunnigan was a teacher in Kentucky public schools from 1924 to 1942. A four-year marriage to Walter Dickenson of Mount Pisgeh ended in divorce in 1930. She married Charles Dunnigan, a childhood friend, on January 8, 1932. The couple had one child, Robert William, and separated in 1953.



As a young teacher in the segregated Todd County School System in Russellville, she began taking courses in journalism at [Tennessee A&I University](#). She quickly realized that her students were almost completely unaware of

the historical contributions that African Americans had made to the state of Kentucky, so she began preparing Kentucky fact sheets to supplement the required texts.

The sheets were later collected and turned into a manuscript in 1939 but no publisher was willing to take them to press. Associated Publishers Inc. finally published the articles in 1982 as *The Fascinating Story of Black Kentuckians: Their Heritage and Tradition*.

When a call for government workers went out in 1942, Ms. Dunnigan moved to Washington, D.C., during World War II seeking better pay and a government job. She worked as a federal government employee from 1942 to 1946 and took a year of night courses at [Howard University](#).

In 1936, at the onset of World War II, Dunnigan juggled a freelance writer position for the Chicago, Illinois branch of the *American Negro Press (ANP)* and night courses at Howard University in statistics and economics.

In 1946 she was offered a job writing for *The Chicago Defender* as a Washington correspondent. *The Defender* was a black-owned weekly that did not use the words "Negro" or "Black" in its pages. Instead, African Americans were referred to as "the Race" and Black men and women as "Race men and Race women." Unsure of Dunnigan's abilities, the editor of *The Defender* paid her much less than her male counterparts until she could prove her worth. She supplemented her income with other writing jobs.



Dunnigan started working full-time at the *American Negro Press* and eventually secured a *Capitol Press Pass*. With it, she was able to cover news events of the Congress, which was generally kept off limits to most reporters, the public, and especially women and African Americans.

Ms. Dunnigan became the first African American to gain a Congressional Press Pass.

In 1947 she was named bureau chief of the Associate Negro Press, a position she held for 14 years.

During her years covering the White House, Dunnigan suffered many of the racial indignities of the time, but also earned a reputation as a hard-hitting reporter. She was barred from entering certain establishments to cover President Eisenhower and had to sit with the servants to cover Senator Taft's funeral. When she attended formal White House functions, she was mistaken for the wife of a visiting dignitary; no one could imagine a Black woman attending such an event on her own.

President Eisenhower refused to talk to Ms. Dunnigan for 2 ½ years. Resorting to asking for her questions beforehand because she was known to ask such difficult questions, often about race. No other



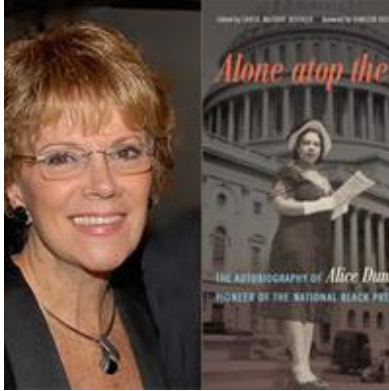
member of the press corps was required to submit their questions before a press conference, and Dunnigan refused.

When President Kennedy took office, he welcomed her tough questions and answered them frankly.

Alice Dunnigan lower (L) Kennedy upper (R)

In January 1961, 8 minutes into his press conference, President Kennedy became the first to call on Ms. Dunnigan making her the first woman reporter and the first Black reporter to be recognized.

After her White House days, Dunnigan returned to writing, this time about herself. Her autobiography, *A Black Woman's Experience: From Schoolhouse to White House*, was published in 1974.



Carol Mc Cabe Booker

As its title indicates, the book is an exploration of Dunnigan's life from her childhood in rural Kentucky to her pioneering work both covering the White House and inside it. A new annotated edition of her 1974 autobiography was edited by **Carol McCabe Booker** and released in February 2015. This version is entitled **Alone Atop of the Hill: The Autobiography of Alice Dunnigan, Pioneer of the National Black Press**. During her retirement she also penned *The Fascinating Story of Black Kentuckians* in 1982.

Awards

Despite her extensive work in government and politics, Ms. Dunnigan was most proud of her work in journalism, and received more than 50 journalism awards. She was inducted into the Black Journalist Hall of Fame in 1985 two years after her death.

Ms. Dunnigan died on May 6, 1983, in Washington, D.C.

Tribute

A life-size bronze portrait statue was created by artist **Amanda Matthews** and cast at Prometheus Foundry, LLC. The statue was unveiled at the **Newseum** on September 21, 2018. After a period being honored there for much of the fall of 2018, it was relocated to Dunnigan's native Kentucky.



By Seekmuseum - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

It spent several months at the University of Kentucky, then was relocated again featured in the Truman Presidential Library in Independence, Missouri.



Dunnigan Family

In August 2019, the Dunnigan monument made its way home to her native Russellville where it resides in a park named for her. It was unveiled during a celebration that included the descendants of Alice Allison Dunnigan.

The Alice Dunnigan Memorial Park is located in the [Russellville Historic District](#) and is part of the West Kentucky African American Heritage Center.

***As an extra treat, listen to this podcast hosted by Eugene Daniels.**

White House reporters have access to the highest seat in the country — and they're a small group. An even smaller group? Reporters of color.

Hear from Black White House correspondents April Ryan (TheGrio) and Ayesha Rascoe (NPR) about everything from microaggressions to death threats.

Plus, a look at the first Black female White House reporter *Alice Dunnigan* and her faceoffs with Eisenhower — who refused to take her questions for two ½ years.

***The Black Correspondents at the White House**
(Click below for podcast)

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/playbook-deep-dive/id1111319839?i=1000520604177>

- **Eugene Daniels is a co-author of POLITICO Playbook.**
- **Carol McCabe Booker is a former journalist and attorney who edited Alice Dunnigan's autobiography "Alone atop the Hill."**
- **April Ryan is White House Correspondent at TheGrio.**
- **Ayesha Rascoe is White House Correspondent for NPR and part of the NPR Politics Podcast.**

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Editorial

The Decline of Critical Thinking in the USA

By
Tarik Kiley
January 29, 2021

When I was in k-12 school, I was taught critical thinking based in the scientific method. I was taught that belief and ideas should be evaluated

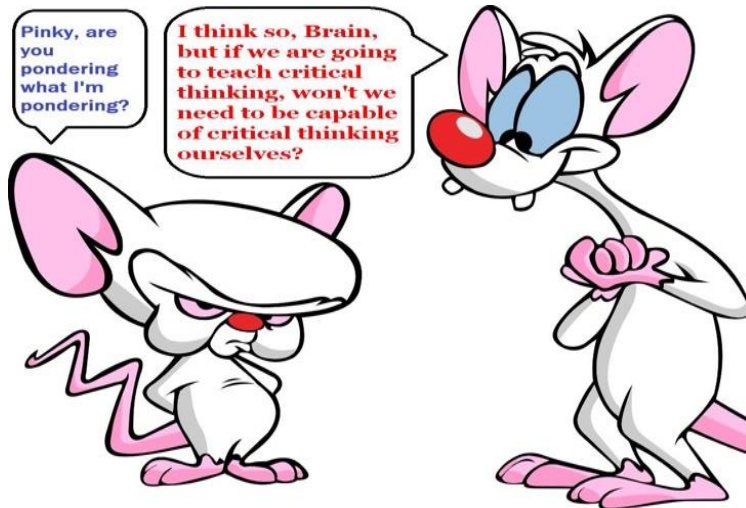


and validated with evidence and observation. I was also taught the difference between truth and falsehood. More importantly, I was taught that as US citizens, our political leadership will lead us into a technological

future ripe with scientific invention.

While I must admit that not all educational curriculums are created equal, as critical thinking is most likely to be emphasized in honors classes and in magnets schools, still the basic idea of truth, I believe is a universal concept. Then COVID hit.

In this pandemic, we can't even agree as to whether a vaccine will work or not. Some people reject the science. Instead of asking whether the COVID vaccine works based on evidence, it is now couched in the idea of the vaccine as hindering freedom. This is confusing. If you look at the



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science of vaccines, for example the vaccine for polio, you can see where a vaccine eradicated the harmful virus, polio, and now people no longer must suffer from it.

Critical thinking is a skill to be learned and practiced. It was Frederick Douglass who said, "Knowledge makes

a man unfit to be a slave." This means that true freedom is predicated on the ability to think for yourself. If you can only swallow the ideas of political leaders and their dogma, then you are not actually free. Knowledge leads to freedom in that being able to think for yourself allows you to question the words, ideas, and actions of political leaders.

This makes me think of an interesting book I read in junior high school, called "1984" by George Orwell. This book is a dystopian novel which critiques the idea of totalitarianism. In his book exists "Big Brother" and the "Thought Police." The Thought Police enforce "Newspeak" and "double thinking"—putting forth such contradictory ideas as "Freedom is slavery."

“The Party” or the political leadership in this book create a whole surveillance state to promote their dogma. This poignant critique, the book “1984”, shows how freedom of thought is essential to freedom itself. And that not being able to think for yourself is a form of slavery.

It is also interesting that how in the information age, with information being ubiquitous, some people have been developing lazy thinking



habits. People are not doing the hard research to evaluate ideas for evidence and truth. Instead, some people are swallowing as truth whatever social media and the people who agree with their biases put forth in the public discourse. This is lazy thinking, and

people should not be so easily persuaded.

What can be done about the need for critical thinking?

First, of all, we can teach our children the truth. For example, while critical race theory seems to be controversial--I'm not advocating for it here. I'm just saying that if it is teaching the true history of the USA, then it should not be denied. The history of the United States of America is very complicated, and it is rife with genocide, racism, and cruelty—genocide of Native Americans, racism against African Americans, and the cruelty of white supremacy and white nationalism.



If we ban books for example, or try to sanitize, and assimilate, instead of facing our complexity, then that will make it difficult for our children to think scientifically and to understand evidence-based practices.

The practical application of critical thinking is the development and advancement of technology in our society. This technological future that the USA is supposed to be headed into—as taught by my schoolteachers—requires innovation. Innovation is based in the idea of improving the tools our society uses over time. Innovation allows society to develop new tools and new ways to solve problems and to make labor easier. To maintain an advanced society, we must be able to think critically.

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Announcements



Democrats of North Mecklenburg:
Monthly Meeting
Thursday, February 3rd at 7:00 PM
Pre-register here for the Zoom link.

Democrats of North Mecklenburg
Special Event - Cheri Beasley
Saturday, February 5th at 1pm.
(Doors open at 12:30)
In person - Wynfield Forest Clubhouse 15722
Wynfield Creek Parkway, Huntersville
And live streamed via zoom.

There are a limited number of in-person spots available. Please submit an RSVP here today to secure your in-person or virtual spot. If you have trouble with the form, please just send an email to David@cheribeasley.com!

Masks are required.

Announcements



N. Meck Progressives

Monthly Meeting

February 8th at 6:00 PM

**Speakers: Josh Remillard and Pam Genant
Democratic candidates for US Congress (running
against Madison Cawthorne)**

Zoom

Democratic Women of North Mecklenburg County

Membership Meeting

Wednesday February 9th

6:30 PM Candidate/Officials Reception

7:00 PM Program

Program: Judicial Justice Educations

Zoom

Senior Democrats of Mecklenburg County

Monthly Meeting

Friday, February 11th at 11:30 AM

Zoom

Announcements



University Precincts Area Organizing Meeting
Precinct Organizing Meeting via Zoom
Saturday, February 19th, 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM
Registration

Link: <http://www.meckdem.org/precinct-meetings.html>

Democrats of North Mecklenburg
Precinct Organizing Meeting via Zoom
Saturday, February 19th, 2pm-4pm



**Please submit your group events to donnamarie93@gmail.com
by the 15th of the month for inclusion in the Announcements.**

Elizabeth House Foundation- Urgent Request

This request is from a dear friend and dynamic woman on a mission to help empower other women who are underserved, and uninsured minority women to obtain access to critical health care needs.

My name is **Brandy Sims**, and I am the **founder of the Elizabeth House Foundation, a non-profit, Black woman owned organization.** I started this foundation in honor of my mother who passed from breast cancer by not catching it early (diagnosed at stage 3) enough. This cause is VERY DEAR to me. I want to empower other women that are underserved, uninsured minority women access to critical health care needs such as a mammogram for early detection of Breast Cancer. It has been proven to help save lives.

I started this foundation in 2011; we've helped over 30 women receive a Breast Cancer Screening. During the recent years (including the pandemic) I've suffered a financial hardship. At this point I am severely behind in bills, and I need to keep the doors open for Elizabeth House Foundation to continue helping women in the community. We are hopeful for future grant funds applied for, but at this time we must utilize other funding sources.

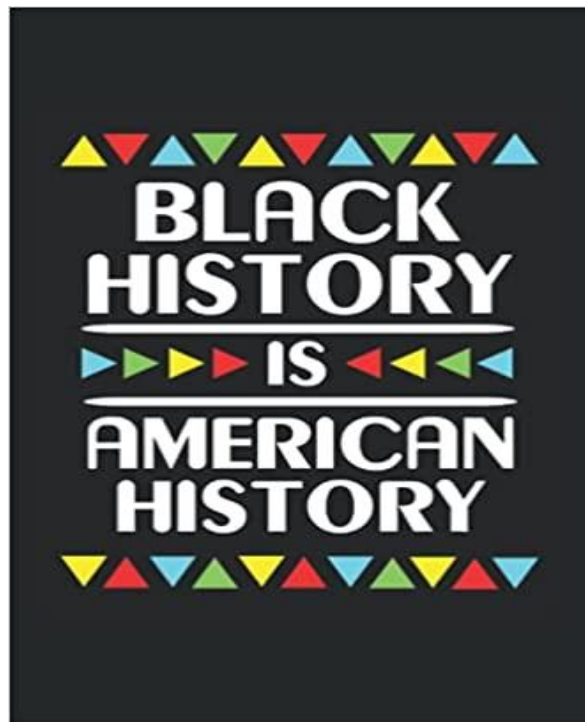
We are a **501 (c)3 organization**, which means you will receive 100% tax deduction of your monetary donation. Every dollar counts. We need funds ASAP to continue operating expenses.

We ask you to please check out our **website:** [Elizabeth House Foundation](#)

You can find us on Google, Facebook, and Instagram:
@elizabethhousefoundation

Happenings Gallery!

Black History Month



HAPPY VALENTINES' DAY



The Executive Corner:

Executive Director - Jade X. Jackson

Rev Rodney Sadler, Joel Segal, DonnaMarie Woodson

Rev Glencie Rhedrick

Coalition of United Progressives-CharMeck Chronicle

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