

DECEMBER
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FRIENDS OF THE 60's
ALTON BLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



ISSUE NO.
ONE

A Special Edition Newsletter of the FOS/Alton Black Alumni Association
www.facebook.com/AltonBlackAlumni or www.AltonBlackAlumni.org

± MERRY ±
CHRISTMAS

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± MERRY ±
CHRISTMAS

WHAT IS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK ECHO?

An "Echo" is the action or faculty of remembering something learned or experienced. Synonyms include "remembrance" or "memory." 'The Echoes of Alton: African-American/Black Christmas is an echo of the pain in this future. The memories of Christmas in this newsletter focus on the African-American/Black echoes in the city of Alton, Illinois. We, the FOS/Alton Black Alumni Association, invite you to sit back, relax, laugh and either relive (or learn) these shareable African-American/Black memories (echoes), curated from the memories of Minnie Robinson, Bonnie Fox and Rev. Stanley Henderson.



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ALTON BLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION - ECHOES

THE SMELL OF A BLACK CHRISTMAS



For many Black/African Americans in Alton, Christmas sights, sounds and especially smells, started after Thanksgiving. You may have given thanks in November and gathered over collard greens, candied yams, turkey and dressing (which some may know better as "stuffing"). But, you would need to gather energy to do it all over again a month later... but bigger!

Common Christmas scent recognition usually began with gifts of apples and oranges, which were typically the first Christmastime gifts children would receive from churches, family friends and schools. Along with those fruits, you may have received fragrant nuts with a giant peppermint stick (which could be had from a "five and dime" store for 10 cents. Later generations may be more used to seeing the "hook style" candy cane that may have ended up on the Christmas tree and came in a variety of colors, not just red and white.

Another tradition was the result of lack of a refrigerator. Some parents would start making pies and cakes 2 weeks before Christmas, wrap them in cheesecloth, and place them under beds and on porches (in an airtight tin, if you had it), as those were the coolest places in a house without air conditioning and/or refrigeration.

Common cakes and pies included (but were not limited to): Pineapple Upside-Down Cake, Pumpkin Pie, Sweet Potato Pie (it might or might not have strings in it), Caramel Cake, and Coconut Cake.

A special mention must be given to Fruit Cake. Everyone received one, it seemed, but rarely seen was someone eating one. Whatever happened to those fruit cakes, they always smelled wonderful and definitely contributed to the smell of a Black Christmas.

INGREDIENTS FOR BUTTER ROLLS:
2 CUPS ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
1/2 TEASPOON SALT
2 TEASPOONS BAKING POWDER
3/4 CUP SHORTENING I USED CRISCO
3/4 CUP WATER

FILLING FOR BUTTER ROLLS:
1/4 CUP WHITE GRANULATED SUGAR CAN USE BROWN SUGAR
1 1/2 TEASPOONS GROUND CINNAMON
12 TABLESPOONS BUTTER DIVIDED
TOPPING FOR BUTTER ROLLS:
1 12 OUNCE CAN EVAPORATED MILK
1/2 CUP WHITE OR BROWN SUGAR
1 TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT
PINCH NUTMEG OPTIONAL

INSTRUCTIONS
WHISK TOGETHER THE FLOUR, SALT AND BAKING POWDER, CUT IN THE SHORTENING UNTIL MIXTURE IS LIKE COARSE CRUMBS, ADD WATER AND MAKE INTO A BALL. PUT OUT ONTO FLOURED SURFACE AND CUT IN HALF. ROLL EACH HALF INTO AN OBLONG ABOUT 6 X 10 INCHES. ADD FILLING INGREDIENTS.

FILLING INSTRUCTIONS:
WHISK TOGETHER THE SUGAR AND CINNAMON AND SPREAD HALF OVER EACH ROLLED OUT PIECE OF DOUGH. CUT SIX TABLESPOON BUTTER INTO SMALL PIECES ON EACH PIECE OF DOUGH. ROLL EACH ONE UP AS IN PHOTO BELOW AND CUT INTO 1 INCH CINNAMON ROLLS. I GOT 10 FROM EACH ONE. SPRAY A 9 X 13 BAKING DISH AND ADD BUTTER ROLLS. BAKE IN PREHEATED 350 DEGREE OVEN FOR 30 MINUTES OR UNTIL ROLLS ARE DONE AND BROWN ON TOP. REMOVE FROM OVEN AND ADD TOPPING.

TOPPING INSTRUCTIONS:
WHISK TOGETHER INGREDIENTS AND POUR OVER BUTTER ROLLS. PUT BACK INTO OVEN FOR ABOUT 15 MINUTES OR UNTIL MIXTURE IS THICK AND BUBBLY. MAKES 20 ROLLS.



ALTON BLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION - ECHOES

BLACK CHURCH CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

When entering a Black church during the holidays, you would expect to see a Nativity Scene, usually on a stage or altar. Its' prominence and necessity is the meaning of the season; the Nativity represents the birth of Jesus. In many Black churches, the Nativity was even "live action," with adults and children alike playing the parts of the Three Wise Men, the angel, Virgin Mother Mary and father Joseph. Animals may be cardboard renderings from an artisan church member and/or carpenter, and baby Jesus was most often a Black doll (once those were sold in stores). Prior to that, the swaddled baby Jesus may have been a pillow, a carefully molded sack of flour, or even a handmade doll from a church member with sewing skills. The North Star was always hung, and the backdrop of the Nativity Scene was well done with straw, hay and burlap accompaniments.

Christmas program attendees were usually in their "Sunday best": Large, and festively adorned hats were worn by women, men wore sleek suits and children wore white, frilly socks and bowties.

Reenactments and/or recitings of poems and scriptures were rituals. Note that those recitations were memorized and, more often than not, you could find someone in the audience mouthing the recitation along with the child or young adult.

Merry Christmas to All

Joy Is Found In You
Joy is found in quiet places
In a life of sweet surrender
Knowing You are with me every day

Thank You for the joy of living
Thank You for Your grace forgiving
Thank You for Your presence every day
Merry Christmas everyone!"

Jesus, The Light of the World

lyrics and music:

George D. Elderkin

We'll walk in the Light, beautiful Light.

Come where the dewdrops of mercy shine bright.

Shine all around us by day and by night,

Jesus, the Light of the world

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN CHRISTMAS SONGS

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's, it was, and still is, common to hear Black people sing, listen to, and even "jazz up" the favorites. Black people young and old are usually familiar with these songs and caroles: "Silent Night," "Joy to the World," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Away in a Manger," "The First Noel," "We Three Kings," "What Child Is This" and "O Holy Night," just to name a few. It was very rare, if you grew up in a Black church, for you to ever need a hymnal or sheet music to know the words to the songs mentioned here.

These songs are often used judiciously during those aforementioned Black Christmas programs. The songs probably have both choreography and lighting effects (if affordable). Even if there is not a full light display on stage, flashlights can be used to illuminate the different parts of the Nativity Scene or Nativity production.

For example, if the Gospel of Luke is recounted (as is often the case), the Annunciation, journey to Bethlehem, birth of Jesus and visits of shepherds and Magi are all opportunities for Black artistic expression. The characters may do a specific dance of praise and the flashlights may be used to focus on a particular important scene, like the injustice of a pregnant woman and her husband being left out in the cold.

Loud drums typically heralded the "reason for the season": The holding up of the baby Jesus after birth. There even may be a call-and-response song utilized at this point to illustrate the theme of participation and unity in the celebration. That summons in the Black church is usually spiritual, musical and emotional, and the point is community and shared humanity.



ALTON BLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION - ECHOES

When I Think of Christmas

Christmas is a time of renewed faith, hope and love. As you get older, it is also a time of cherishing wonderful memories. It is so amazing how our mind takes us places as we sit quietly listening to Christmas carols. We relax, close our eyelids and feel our hearts swell up with exceeding great joy when we allow the flood of childhood Christmas memories to wash over us once again. Holidays are always a wonderful time. We all have so many fun memories... funny gifts, laughing, food, more food, more laughing and, of course, the very special moments reflecting on JESUS - the true reason for the season.

Christmas is a season filled with memories that are built on the power of repeated rituals. "Every year at Christmas, I... (you can fill in the blanks)." This year - in what is a truly unusual Christmas, we will actually once again be able to do many of those things: our homes are decorated with dazzling decorations; we will eat our family's traditional foods; we will watch the same movies, cheer for the same teams and connect with the same people - both in person and over video this year.

Let us remember JESUS this Christmas season, and let us be encouraged that, while we are celebrating the birth of Jesus, our remembered loved ones are actually with Jesus at this very moment. So, even though our hearts are missing our family, we can have a special warmth and joy this Christmas season with loved ones who made it home safe for the holidays - and forever more.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:14

- Stanley Henderson



Merry Christmas to All

Letter from Santa,

Give yourself, family, friends and people who are around you a special gift. Please get vaccinated and boosted.

Love, Santa



CHRISTMAS ECHOES

Greetings and salutations

from the great city of Alton Illinois. This is Mayor David Goins and on behalf of the citizens of Alton I want to take this time to wish each of you a blessed Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Remember Jesus is the reason we celebrate during this holiday season so enjoy one another, give and receive gifts, eat drink and be merry but don't forget about the one who made it all possible. God bless!!!



ALTON BLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION - ECHOES

GREETINGS FROM THE ELIJAH P. MEMORIAL

Perpetuating the memory of Elijah P. Lovejoy and presenting scholarships since 1954



"Go Tell It On The Mountain"

Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere,
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born

CHRISTMAS GREETING FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

NCNW's mission is to harness the power of women of African descent and other minority women to ensure access to, and full participation in, the socioeconomic political systems which impact upon the quality of life for all persons.



THOUGHTS FOR A NEW YEAR

New Years is a time we look back at the year, or years gone by; it is a time to reflect on the progress we've made and to make new plans for the coming year. A New Year is seen as a fresh beginning and a time for resolutions and promises on habits and behaviors we'd like to incorporate into this new start. Common New Years resolutions are commitments to: stop drinking; quit smoking; manage money more wisely; and spend more time with family. By far, the most common New Year's resolution is to lose weight, in conjunction with exercising more and eating healthier. Another year, another list.

I doubt anyone expected at the end of 2021 expected to still be talking about social distancing, mask wearing and another strain of the virus on the rise. Because of this, here's some good, solid advice for making the New Year better: Be careful, Be thoughtful, Be thankful

2022
Happy New Year

The Alton Black Alumni Association (ABAA) will certainly be "Moving Forward in 2022" with a fresh and exhilarating chapter. We look forward to restoring the Alton Black Alumni Reunion tradition and other activities that ABAA promotes to enhance the long and rich friendships established in the soil and bricks of Alton.

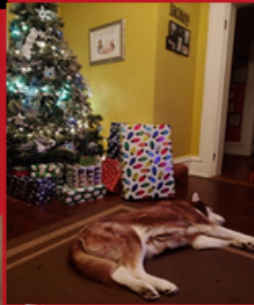
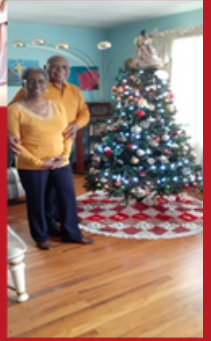
The issues affecting our world and community have forced us to think critically about what is not only needed, but also possible, for ABAA to thrive. This year, we've learned a lot about organizational strengths and challenges... while also exploring possibilities and focus areas for 2022. With your support, we will continue to evolve with ongoing improvement to the organization as well as our community engagement initiatives.

Happy New Year!

- Jim Killion, President, FOS/ABAA



MERRY
christmas



ABOUT US - FRIENDS OF THE 60'S ALTON BLACK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (FOS/ABAA)

FOS/ABAA OVERVIEW/HISTORY

In 2003, a core group of Black alumni from Alton High School in Alton, IL founded the "Friends of the 60's Alton Black Alumni Association."

In 2004, the first formal event was held. This was the First Biennial Alton Black Alumni Reunion.

From 2004 through 2021, the organization has operated as a social group. They host reunions, but the primary area of focus is on a variety of community/civic projects.

Since inception, the reunions have brought hundreds of former Alton students home (many for the first time since graduation). FOS/ABAA has been able to build interest in "reaching back and giving back" to the Alton community.

FOS/ABAA has a special interest in providing "success role models," mentors and career coaches for the Greater Alton Area "at-risk youth," especially in the Black community. To that end, the organization established a scholarship fund in 2015, and scholarships are annually awarded to college bound students.

FOS/ABAA OBJECTIVES/FUNDING

MISSION

To reunite colleagues who attended Alton Area schools and utilize their life and career experiences to lead, strengthen and mobilize the community to prepare our youth for productive adulthood

VISION

To evolve as an organization... shaping the future by preserving our heritage and sharing our knowledge and resources with the community

VALUE STATEMENT

To be committed to the highest standards of ethics and integrity

FUNDING SOURCES

- Fundraising
- Special events
- Donations
- Sponsor Contributions



FOS/ABAA 2021 GOALS

1. Continue to **enhance** the ABAA reunion event
2. **Strengthen** the overall fiscal position of the FOS/ABAA organization
3. Continue to **develop** and **refine** FOS/ABAA program offerings, keeping in consideration:
 - Organizational competencies
 - Community demographics
 - Potential program partners/collaborators

FOS/ABAA PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Biennial Alton High School Black Alumni Reunion
- Scholarships
- Academic support
- K-12 - Liaise with Alton SD and collaborating NFP organizations
- College - Assist pre- and post-high school graduates
- Targeted volunteerism
- Selective financial support to charitable organizations



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JOIN US!

FOS/ABAA membership is open to:

- Persons who attended Alton area high schools, regardless of race, color, religion, age, national origin or sex
- All graduating classes (not just the 1960s)
- Spouses of persons who attended Alton area high schools



ECHOES CHRISTMAS EDITION CONTENT CONTRIBUTORS

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(designed using **Canva**)