



JACKSON ADVOCATE

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Remembering Mississippi's beloved 'Snakeman' Percy King

By Meredith C. McGee

JA Contributing Writer
Friday, January 19, 2018, around 12:30 p.m., a gunman took the lives of Percy King, age 57 and his 19-year-old mentee, Jarvis Jawon Birtfield in King's front yard on Scott Street, a-skip-and-hop from Cherry Grove M.B. Church and two blocks south of Martin Luther King Drive.



Birtfield

Now, balloons anchor a make-shift memorial and candles were lit on the curve of the street in front of Percy King's house as of Wednesday afternoon, January 24th before this article went to press. Several empty glass

cages, which once housed Percy King's exotic pets, who are now in the care of the Wildlife authorities, were in the front yard.

Percy King was a self-employed entertainer and community friend. Neighborhood parents booked him for birthday parties, and he entertained church and civic groups across the state.

Every year in October, Percy King displayed his private collection of exotic animals at the State Fair in Jackson, charging visitors a \$1 admission fee. "Percy used to encourage children to touch the animals so they would not be afraid," Willie Ann Stewart, his neighbor of 34 years, recalled.

Percy kept beautiful peacocks. See Mr. King on 13A



Our community zookeeper

"Bro. Percy King (right) has been a part of the ADHIAMBO SCHOOL family for many, many years. Without fail (even last minute), he would always work us into his very busy schedule for a show. All of us feel as Kailey Butler (former graduate) stated, 'Mr. King was always such a nice man; we learned so much.' It was a 'great day' whenever he showed up at our school. Learning about animals has been an up close, loving and appreciative experience," says ADHIAMBO School co-founder, Mahari-Deloris Wedlaw Butler.

FIRST DAY ON THE JOB



Shelia Adams is one of the city of Jackson's recent hires and wears the blue with pride! "I'm so happy to be a security guard. I want the citizens of Jackson to feel safe when they visit our government buildings. Just let me know what you need and I'm at your service," she said. Pictured with Shelia is Vikki Bell, who always welcomes citizens to city hall with a smile. (Advocate photo: Alice Thomas-Tisdale)

Minority contractors take complaint of being overlooked to City Council Chamber



Marcus Wallace, owner of MAC Construction, addresses council members at a public hearing concerning minority contractors being excluded from providing services at the onset of the city's water crisis. (Advocate photo: Alice Thomas-Tisdale)

By Ivory Phillips
JA Contributing Editor
Stephanie R. Jones
JA Contributing Writer

Ward Six Councilman Aaron Banks called for and convened a townhall meeting last week. It was designed to enable citizens to express themselves on the matter of African American contractors being shortchanged when it comes to contracts to perform public works business. He was joined in the meeting by Ward Four Councilman DeKeither Stamps and Council President Charles Tillman of Ward Five.

The meeting was open and free-flowing, with five prominent African American contractors offering comments. Businessman Marcus Wallace offered the initial view of the problem. He stated that in the wake of the emergency water situation, not a single African American contractor was called to assist in the work. He indicated that the Hemphill company got the lion's share of the work. He went on to say that this has been the standard practice under the current city administration. In order to substantiate his claim, he turned to the other African



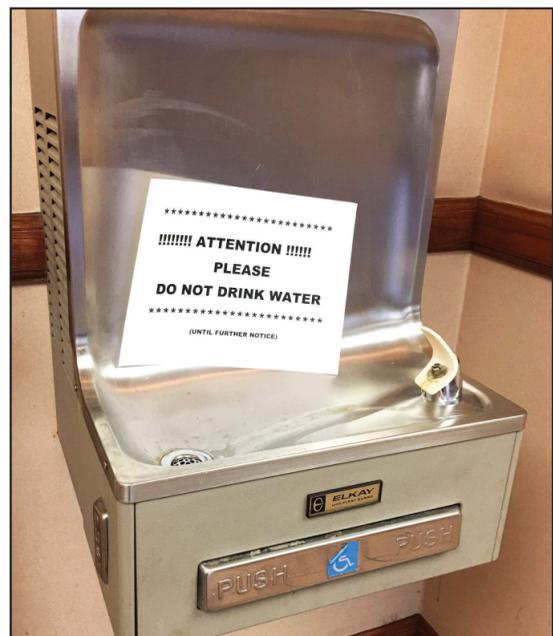
Councilman Aaron Banks (center), who chaired the public hearing, and Councilman DeKeither Stamps look on as Council President Charles Tillman explains how to move forward to ensure the playing field is leveled for minority contractors living and working in Jackson.



Black contractors filled the chamber at city hall looking for answers as to why they were excluded from receiving contracts to repair water main breaks.

American contractors in the room, each of whom said he/she had not been contacted regarding work during the emergency. "None of the local companies got emergency contracts," Banks said. One by one, the contractors talked about drastic drops in the number of employees in their companies because they have been unable to get contracts from the city of Jackson. (One company going from nearly 150 employees down to 5.) This, to them, was a negative condition that they had not anticipated since the Lumumba administration is a black administration and since the city is overwhelmingly black and in need of jobs and economic development.

The three councilmen talked about the fact that awarding contracts to contractors such as those, who



No, it's not Mexico. This water fountain is at Hinds County Chancery Court in hopes of helping residents stay safe during water crisis. The city of Jackson has issued constant precautionary boil water notices since January 1, 2018.

Nice touch



JMAA commissioners remembered their fallen member, Dr. Rosie L.T.P. Johnson, at Monday's board meeting at Hawks Field. (Advocate photo: Alice Thomas-Tisdale)