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David Hudson

has been principal of Linwood Holton Elementary School for thirteen years now. When he took over the reins of command, the school—though only a few years old at the time—was in a state of rapid decline. Within that first year, Mr. Hudson had turned it around, and in the intervening years has created one of the most desirable schools in the Richmond metropolitan area. Mr. Hudson supports his teachers, safeguards every student, responds immediately to the parents, plays an active role in the PTA. More than that, Mr. Hudson reaches out beyond the borders of the school, and engages himself with all of the Northside community. Today, he is not just the principal of this elementary school, he is, in so many ways, the actual center of Northside, a center that can, and will, hold. *continued on page 14*



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In Support of David Hudson

"I leave you love. I leave you hope. I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another. I leave you a thirst for education. I leave you a respect for the uses of power. I leave you faith. I leave you racial dignity. I leave you a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow man. I leave you, finally, a responsibility to our young people."

The words above — The Last Will and Testament of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune — hang in the rotunda at A. Linwood Holton Elementary School. Although Dr. Bethune, the noted educator and early civil rights warrior, died more than 60 years ago, her words aptly describe the credo of Holton's principal, David Hudson.

When I think about the many gifts Mr. Hudson has brought into the lives of our children and families, their teachers and our entire community, I am humbled and grateful. It seems that everywhere I go, children, parents and teachers stop me and thank me for being the School Board member who "found" Mr. Hudson and, miracle of miracles, managed to get him assigned to Holton.

In a sense, I did "find" him. When it became apparent in 2004 that Holton would be needing a new principal, I began visiting elementary schools in the city and adjoining counties. I was sick and tired of losing friends and neighbors who would leave the city once their children came of age to attend school. During my visits, I never told anyone that I was basically shopping for a new principal. I was simply observing.

No matter how many schools I visited, I kept coming back to Northside, to J.E.B. Stuart Elementary School, to its principal, Iris Page, to be exact. When I first came on School Board, Stuart was the only school in the Third District, that was accredited. When I finally worked up the courage to ask Mrs. Page if she thought her assistant principal, David Hudson, was ready to be a principal, she told me we needed to discuss the matter in her office. I felt like a little child in big trouble as she led me to her office and shut the door. (Anyone who knows Iris Page knows she doesn't play). She sat down behind her desk, folded her hands and looked me in the eyes. I, of course, sat up a little straighter, folded my hands in my lap and waited for her to speak.

I was prepared to hear her tell me I had no business asking her about Mr. Hudson or any other RPS employee. She would have been right. School Board members are not charged with the day-to-day administration of a school or of employees. But she didn't lecture me about my job. She told me that as a principal, she could not speak "out of school" about her employees with anyone, not even a School Board member. I nodded and apologized for overstepping.

As I stood up and prepared to leave, she cleared her throat and in her toughest of tough-love voices, she told me that she had only one word for me. My hand on the doorknob, I paused and looked at her.

"Yes," was all she said.

We both nodded.

The next morning, I sat in Dr. Harold Fitrer's office on the 17th floor of City Hall. He was in charge of Human Resources at the time. I asked how the search for the Holton principal was going. He said he was still going through applications. I told him that I realized I could not meddle in his business, but asked that he simply hear my words. Wisened from my visit with Mrs. Page the day before, I knew better than mention her name.

I simply explained that from all that I could see and learn about David Hudson, that I thought he would be the perfect principal for Holton Elementary School. I spent the next ten minutes talking about the school, the neighborhood and how sick and tired I was of losing good friends and neighbors to the counties once their children were ready to start school. I asked him to please keep me posted and to appreciate that Holton's next principal needed to understand the neighborhood and community, as well as the school.

About a week later, I got a call from Dr. Fitrer and he told me they had found a principal for Holton. He could tell from his end that I was holding my breath on my end. "Breathe, Mrs. Wolf, breathe," he said laughing. "The new principal is David Hudson."

"Yes, yes, yes!" was all I could say. "Yes!"

Since that day, I have never once had to doubt the wisdom of bringing Mr. Hudson to be Holton's principal. I have wished on many occasions that we could clone him because all elementary schools should have an instructional leader of his caliber. He is a consummate professional, one that is both professional and passionate, intelligent and intuitive and tough enough to assemble a team of teachers who place the needs of our children before all else.

But the real miracle of miracles was not getting him assigned to Holton. The real miracle has been watching the love grow between this quiet, soft-spoken man, the students, their families, the top-notch staff he assembled and how it has overflowed into our community.

Thanks to Mr. Hudson's courage and open-door leadership, Holton is not simply a part of our Northside community, it is the heart of our community.

Carol Wolf
Former Third District School Board representative

We in Northside are so blessed to have David Hudson at the helm of the Linwood Holton Elementary school. As former Holton School parents and as longtime neighbors and fans of the school, we have loved watching Mr. Hudson in action over the years. His strong, steady leadership there has been crucial to student success. He also has helped engage the school so actively in our community. We were reminded of this recently at Christmas on MacArthur, which just wouldn't be the same without Mr. Hudson and the entire Holton School family. Thank you Mr. Hudson!

Affectionately,
Anne Holton and Tim Kaine

I write to share with you some brief thoughts about my experiences, and more importantly, my daughter's experience at Linwood Holton Elementary School. First, the school is second to none. There are many things that make Holton Elementary a wonderful place for children to learn. However there is a common denominator--David Hudson. Mr. Hudson's leadership is integral to the success of Holton. Not only has he made the school a place that values learning and diversity and family, but Mr. Hudson has also made Holton an integral part of the community. The school is active in North Side Richmond and North Side Richmond is active in Holton. I knew this anecdotally, but came to experience Mr. Hudson's leadership as a parent. His leadership inspires his teachers to extract the best out of ever student at Holton. His leadership gives confidence to parents so that when we drop our daughter or son off they are safe and secure and learning in innovative ways. RPS is lucky to have Mr. Hudson.

Jeff and Aneadra Bourne,
Holton parents

(Jeff is the current Third District School Board representative)

It has been my pleasure to work with Mr. David Hudson, principal at Linwood Holton Elementary School since 2004. Mr. Hudson is a caring, dedicated educator who has always exhibited the highest level of professionalism and ethics in our dealings.

He is well-liked, and, more importantly, respected by teachers, staff, parents and students. He has worked diligently to make Linwood Holton a shining example of excellence in the Richmond Public School System. He tirelessly promotes the school and has been a strong partner in the community.

As a 2010 recipient of the REB Award for Distinguished Educational Leadership, Mr. Hudson showed his selflessness by donating the \$15,000 monetary award to the school to further develop the learning garden program. Mr. Hudson has will-

ingly opened the school on many days and times for civic association meetings and a wide variety of community activities. He proactively offered the school as a physical resource to residents after the recent storms which impacted the Northside, although the damage did not meet the criteria for a FEMA emergency center.

Mr. Hudson is the type of person that is key to the success of any team — excellent communicator, caring leader, compassionate team player. He is the person I would always want to include on my team. I endorse Mr. Hudson and wholeheartedly support him in his endeavors.

Chris A. Hilbert,
Third District councilman



Mr. Hudson with Abbie Waters.

This is my personal experience with Mr. David Hudson, principal of Linwood Holton Elementary School.

Okay, here we go. I am a skeptic by nature. I am sort of the "Doubting Thomas" kind of skeptic. I need to see things myself sometimes to believe them. So when, I was on the Linwood Holton Elementary School playground with my four-year old little girl, Abbie Catherine Waters, in 2006, and another mother suggested that Linwood Holton Elementary School was one of the best elementary schools ever, in part, because of its principal, David Hudson, I internally said: "Yeah right, it's probably an okay school, but 'best school ever,' no way." I have come to eat my words.

The mother on the playground that day relayed a second-hand story (lawyers like myself often refer to such stories as "hearsay") to illustrate her point. I listened to her story as I watched my blonde-haired little one giggle and dance with joy as she played under the big tree that shaded the playground equipment. She said that one day a little girl at the school (kindergarten age) was scared of school and wanted to

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

“go home”, lots of tears, etc., and Mr. Hudson asked her to walk with him, then have lunch with him. He took her to lunch and they sat together in his office, ate a sandwich and chatted. The little girl had lots of questions about school. She got answers. They called the little girl’s mom together and by the end of the lunch the little girl told her mom that she wanted to go back to class. Okay, that was the story, and it seemed like a sweet story, but I was cautious because this was my child’s education we were talking about, and I love my kids more than life itself. Time passed, and shortly I needed to decide on a school for Abbie.

I attended (with one of my dear friends--Anne Fox) the Linwood Holton Elementary Open House and heard the PTA president and the principal give a presentation. The PTA president said some pretty awesome things about the school. Mr. Hudson said a lot of good things, and something in particular that stuck with me. He said something similar to, “I want you all to know that if you will let me know of a problem, I will try to fix it. If you don’t tell me, then I can’t fix it, so please let me know if you have any concerns. You have my phone number, so call.” Seemed like a good school. I wasn’t sure whether he really wanted us to call him, but I kept his number anyway. Little did I know that I would be having any sort of problem that would need “fixing.” However, shortly thereafter I did have my first one-on-one encounter with Mr. Hudson.

My first one-on-one encounter with Mr. Hudson was when Abbie, at the beginning of one of the first days of school, ran joyfully unaccompanied down the hallway before the bell rang—she loved school. I ran after her and was stopped by one of Mr. Hudson’s office staff, since the bell had not rung yet. I had no time to explain and just kept running (thinking who are they to stop me from taking care of my baby). A couple of minutes later, Mr. Hudson arrived. As you know, he is a tall, really well-dressed guy, and he said something like, “Ms. Waters, after you get your daughter safely in the classroom, I would like to see you in my office.” “Eesh” I thought. I was actually being called to the principal’s office--for real—and he knew my name. Holy crud, how do I get out of this. I was always an “A” student, never caused problems, and I was just trying to take care of my four-year old. What did I do wrong? Maybe I should just skip out of the school and go to work. Instead, I told myself that I was going to tell this principal a thing or two. Well, I should not have rushed to judgment so fast. Come to find out the rule about entering before the bell was part of an important system set up to keep the kid’s safe and Mr. Hudson explained that his main priority was to keep the kids safe. He actually appeared incredibly serious about the safety issue. Before I could even begin to start yelling at him he said, “I totally understand why you did what you did--and I am not saying that it was wrong, just wanted you to know

the reason for the rule.” Then he thanked me and explained that he also needed to support his staff when they are enforcing these safety rules. Okay then, I survived my trip to the principal’s office. I started to make sure our whole family followed the bell rule and I gained some respect for a man whose first priority was to keep my child safe.

The next two years my daughter Abbie thrived at Holton. She followed the school pledge to a “T”, respect for others. She had friends of all shapes, sizes, ethnicities, personalities and cultures. Holton became Abbie’s life, her anchor. She had a way about her that made many folks want to hang out with her—sometimes being referred to as “Happy Abbie.” Throughout those two years, I would regularly hear from Mr. Hudson at various events, something like: “I can’t fix your problems, if you don’t let me know they exist....so please let me know.”

Now let’s fast forward to the first week of second grade for Abbie in 2009. After being a perfectly healthy child, Abbie was diagnosed with cancer: Stage IV Embryonal Rhabdomyosarcoma. I found myself, with Abbie (on the brink of tears) and her fabulous teacher LaTonya Oliver outside of Mr. Hudson’s office on the green couch with a problem—a big one. I had heard tales of cancer kids being secretly shunned by some school systems across the country once they were diagnosed since their diagnosis and treatment causes a lot of fear and a great deal of disruption for the rest of the students. My problem was that Linwood Holton Elementary School was Abbie’s world. I was terrified of the cancer and so was Abbie. So along with LaTonya Oliver we sat there waiting to see what would unfold. Mr. Hudson invited us into his office and he first calmed our cancer fears - telling us that he had personal knowledge of others who had just gone through the same type of thing and that they were doing okay now. He encouraged Abbie to see Holton as a safe haven, i.e., HER school, even if she could only attend for a few minutes a week because of chemo treatments. She did just that, even leaving chemo just in time to make it into the second grade class photo (they had just taken the photo when Abbie arrived and I believe Ms. Oliver suggested that it be retaken as soon as Abbie walked in the door). Mr. Hudson stood with Abbie throughout the treatment, checking on her regularly.

While Abbie was undergoing cancer treatments we started to receive truancy notices. You know the ones that tell you how much trouble you are in because your child is not attending school regularly. These notices bugged me and in between Abbie’s doctor and chemo appointments I tried pretty hard to get them to stop by calling the phone number written on the notices. I explained to the folks that answered the phone that my child had cancer and that we had a home school instructor. I explained that we tried to get her to the school as often as possible. The notices did not stop. I wanted nothing more than to

have Abbie in school every day and these notices—just bugged me. One email to Mr. Hudson and they stopped.

In early spring of 2011, Abbie, someone who loved doing her schoolwork, just gave up on doing any school work, saying it just was not the same. One mention of this to Mr. Hudson and the teachers rallied to bring school to Abbie. Students at Holton made flash cards of the multiplication tables, one child came to the house so that the house would seem more like a classroom, teachers visited Abbie and helped her learn cursive...one of the things she wanted to know how to do.



Mr. Hudson after being hit with a pie

That same spring, in order to raise money to help us take care of Abbie while she was sick, the school came up with a pie throwing event to celebrate pi [π] Day. For a small fee the kids were allowed to throw a pie in the teachers’ and Mr. Hudson’s face. All of the money went to help with our bills. Abbie was in the hospital the day the pies were thrown. With the help of a wonderful teacher at the school, Abbie was actually able to watch Mr. Hudson get hit in the face with a pie on Skype.

After the pie event, we made an appointment with Mr. Hudson to pick up the fundraising money in the office. I contacted Mr. Hudson to arrange a time and let him know that Abbie would be turning nine the following week. Abbie and I walked over to the school hand in hand and, after thanking Mr. Hudson, were escorted by him to the cafeteria where many of Abbie’s classmates sang “Happy Birthday” to her, stood in line to give her cards, and many gave her hugs. The ear-to-ear smile on Abbie’s face was priceless. This was the last time that Abbie saw many of these children, as she died the following week. The ups and downs of her treatment took its toll, and yes, what others had said is true, Mr. Hudson joined many of her classmates, teachers and our friends and family to be at her bedside the very day she went to heaven. Not easy for anyone.

After Abbie died, Mr. Hudson, not only allowed us to have Abbie’s memorial service

at Holton, but he actively participated in it. He also wrote a personal poem in her memory. That day a rainbow appeared over the school and the folks from the Bliley funeral home said that they had never seen anything like this celebration of life. While a whole group of our heroes set up the event, Mr. Hudson gave it his total support.

Then, two years later when the kids in Abbie’s class had their “moving on” ceremony in 5th grade, Mr. Hudson was kind enough to include Abbie with her class in the yearbook. I was at the “moving on” ceremony to see Abbie’s friends move on to middle school, when I was called on stage by Mr. Hudson to see my daughter’s picture with her class in the yearbook. This meant the world to our friends and family and to me, Abbie’s mom.

Now let’s do another fast forward to the Spring of 2014, when our newly adopted daughter Melissza (adopted from Hungary at age six, knowing only a handful of English words) started at Holton two weeks after landing in the United States, and joined the kindergarten class in Mr. Garber’s room. She was scared, disruptive and a very high maintenance child at first. It literally took five of us (myself, Ms. Oliver, Ms. Goldberg and two wonderful 4th Grade students: Brynne Severns and Claire Sulanke) to get her out of the van and into school one day. When she first arrived she would get scared and angry, pull hair and hit. One day she got in trouble for her actions and was taken to Mr. Hudson’s office. Funny thing is, by enforcing the rules, treating her like any other student who had done such a thing (i.e., by talking to her as only a principal can do) he helped turn her around. She did not know English, but she knew she was in trouble. She was not suspended or anything like that, but his chat with her went a long way to make her feel like she belonged at the school and her behavior changed.

About that same time, Melissza saw that a baby tree had fallen down in front of the school and asked, in her own way, if she could go tell Mr. Hudson about it—dragging me by the hand to the principal’s office (did I mention that I was an A student who tried to avoid the principal at all cost). Evidently, Melissza and Mr. Hudson had built some type of mutual respect for each other during their chat and she somehow thought he could fix the tree. I sat with her silently as she tried to explain her concern to him. She used a lot of hand gestures and pointed at the fallen baby tree. Mr. Hudson looked out the window with sincere concern. I then offered up some of my interpretation of what I thought she was saying. Then Mr. Hudson thanked Melissza, and said he would try to work on it. The next day, the tree was fixed. Melissza saw it and smiled really big, and said two words with a strong Hungarian accent: “Mister Hudson.”

In 2015, Melissza still had some problems getting ready for school in the mornings, but there was no need for five people to help her out of the van. I mentioned this problem to Mr. Hudson during drop-off

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

one morning. That very day he had a talk with Melissa, and things are much better now. He kept reminding me, in front of Melissa, to let him know if my child had any problems and asked if I still had his phone number. I did.

During the Spring/Summer of 2016, at the end of the school year, Melissa wanted to be on the Ginter Park swim team and promised to go to the practices. We signed her up and after the first practice, she didn't want to do it anymore. I mentioned it to Mr. Hudson as an aside and he said, "I'll go some morning to watch her and maybe that will help." I said that the practices were at seven a.m. and most of them were after the school year had finished. He said: "That's okay, just send me the schedule." Well guess what, he actually showed up for not just one, but two summer swim practices at 7:00 a.m. (he is not paid for this...he did this because he cares).

Take a gander at the look on Melissa's face...and yes Melissa swam well that day (and so did a few other Holton kids that were at the practice). Was it a complete turnaround? No. Melissa still didn't care for practices, but she did attend them and swam well enough to be invited to attend Champs--the end of the year competition for swimmers who had done well at the swim meets.

This year, Melissa had a panic attack in school based on things that occurred before she was adopted and she was scared that she could be hurt. Mr. Hudson, once again was there. He took her to the office and from what I understand, he explained to her how the school is set up to keep her safe.

Bottom line, I was a skeptic, but I have seen, firsthand, and not just through word of mouth, the impact this incredible human being has had on our family. I am no longer a skeptic. Our family has been very blessed. Mr. Hudson is certainly not the only hero in our lives, we have many, but he is definitely one of them. In this season of Thanksgiving, we are so thankful for the families of Northside and that Mr. Hudson is the principal of Linwood Holton Elementary School.

Mary Ann Waters,
Holton parent

David Hudson is a LIFE CHANGER. Having been in Northside for 23 years, I can tell you that he has transformed not only Linwood Holton, but the entire Northside community. Words can't adequately express just how important he is, and how huge his impact has been and continues to be. He's a hero to all of us, and our lives are infinitely better because of him. I'm so thankful that he has been such a big part of our lives, and I don't think I could ever repay him for what he's given to my family. Hands down the most amazing and influential person in my life.

Charles Arthur,
Holton parent

Since the moment I interviewed at Linwood Holton, I knew I was going to love working for Mr. Hudson. From his organization of weekly agendas to his weekly grade level meetings where teachers can share concerns, these were things I had never experienced at other schools. Mr. Hudson exhibits the definition of professionalism. He is kind, caring, and most of all fair. He listens to the children and he KNOWS them. I have never been in a school where a principal knows every single child by name and how he or she is doing both academically and socially, it's incredible. He does the same thing with his staff, he listens to us and he knows us as professionals. I have the utmost respect and appreciation for everything Mr. Hudson does for the students and staff at Linwood Holton. I hope that I never have to work under the guidance of any other principal.

Kylee York,
Holton teacher



Mr. Hudson with alumnus Jefferson Miles.

I was a student at Linwood Holton Elementary School for seven years. Throughout those seven years Mr. Hudson always had my back. No matter what was happening outside or in school he was always there for me whenever I needed him.

There was never a time when Mr. Hudson was unfair. Whenever I got into trouble for doing anything I wasn't supposed to, he would ask me some questions. First he asked, "What did you do wrong?" Followed by, "Do you know why it's wrong?" And then, "What do you think we should do to prevent you from doing this again?"

I learned that if you can't work together with whoever is in charge when things go wrong, you'll never be able to work with them to make sure things go right. Mr. Hudson was empathetic and a natural leader. Whenever there were bigger problems, Mr. Hudson would host a school meeting in the cafeteria for us to all work it out together. That was a good way to unite everyone as a school. It taught me patience and helped me keep my mouth shut at times.

Those seven years helped me grow and prepared me for my future and Mr. Hudson played a big part in that preparation. I am thankful that he was never soft on me but always fair.

Jefferson Miles,
*9th grade, Community High School,
former Holton student*

I am a resident of Bellevue, a parent and a teacher at Holton. I am grateful for all Mr. Hudson has done for my family, my neighbors, my colleagues, and my students. I have known Mr. Hudson for 13 years. He has always impressed me as a man who has a great vision for Holton Elementary School. I remember Holton before he arrived as the principal. At that time the school faced many challenges blocking it from its potential. It was Mr. Hudson who knocked down those barriers and provided the kind of leadership to the teachers, parents, community members, and students that united us and made us stronger. By bringing people together to appreciate differing perspectives, talents and needs, we could all have a place to contribute our strengths and become an amazing community for learning.

Mr. Hudson has given so much to make great things happen at Holton. I believe his secret to success is how he opens his door to everyone and listens to ideas and concerns. He takes action to right wrongs, solve problems, and find resources to make good things happen. He supports growth in everyone! Teachers become masters of their craft, students achieve academically and socially, parents are empowered to make a difference. The focus is always guided by what is best for the children. He stands up strong for the belief that quality education provides students opportunities to define themselves as good citizens with bright futures.

Mr. Hudson holds high expectations. You know that feeling you get when you discover someone who believes in you? Mr. Hudson has given that empowerment to hundreds! We work harder because he works so hard. We step up to volunteer, collaborate, inform, and provide a universal design for learning. We go above and beyond in our commitment to the students, and contribute to our school community because he inspires us to do so. Students learn kindness and respect along with an academic growth mind-set that is the foundation to the rest of their educational careers.

I have witnessed this first hand for my own children, my neighbors, and my students. He encouraged me to get my Master's degree in Special Education. He showed my oldest daughter how to be brave in the face of her dyslexia. He praised her for standing up for others with her kindness and influence on her peers. He saw a leader in my son and recognized his achievements in a way that motivated him to excel. He asked my youngest to self-advocate, teaching her valuable life lessons about being true to herself and the opportunities that follow when

you do so. Mr. Hudson's belief in all that is possible when we strive towards greatness has carried us all when we felt doubt. He acts with integrity and professionalism. From his daily commitment of checking in on each class, welcoming visitors, and staying late for community meetings, to his going above and beyond to assure that every child is cared for in a way that shapes futures, Mr. Hudson has been there. Thank you Mr. Hudson for all you do for the Holton Elementary School community!

Amy Harr,
Holton teacher and parent

I thought Mr. Hudson was scary. He knows how to give you a very, very scary look so you will behave. Even though he could be scary to make kids behave, he was very nice when we followed directions and when we went to see him for good reasons.

My favorite memories are whenever he asked me for a favor because he trusted me and I respected him. I liked to help him get papers for announcements because I knew that he couldn't trust just anyone with even a simple task like that.

Now that I am a sixth grader I appreciate that he looked scary because it makes kids think about doing the right thing. I now know why he tries to seem scary is that he was helping us in learning manners, and respecting other people which will help us in the future to get jobs.

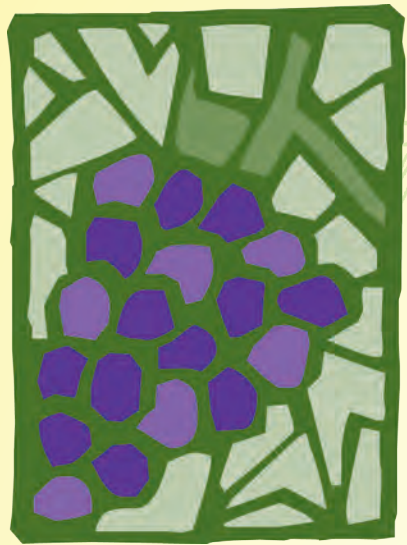
Mr. Hudson isn't actually scary. He's nice and good at his job. He is very intelligent and has a great fashion sense. I am glad that he was my principal for seven years. If I had any other principal who would just call my parents, or suspend me for little things - then I wouldn't have learned all the little habits that are helpful to me now in middle school.

Lorelei Miles,
*6th grade, Binford Middle School, former
Holton student*

Mr. Hudson is head and shoulders above his contemporaries. Holton stands out from all the other schools. Staff and students are polite and greet you with a smile. Holton passes the SOE'S. Mr. Hudson walks the children to their cars as they leave school at night. The parents love this man. One can hear one hundred different stories on how Mr. Hudson has affected their student and their family. My grandson attended Holton and continues to achieve success. We need more principals like Mr. Hudson and more schools like Holton. Let's get a Mr. Hudson or Holton PLAN to improve Richmond Public Schools.

H. Rakestraw,
Bellevue resident

I have known Mr. David Hudson for 5 years as the Principal at my son's school. From the first time we met at orientation, he has proven himself to be completely



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Goals, Updates & Accomplishments

LETTERS

dedicated to not only an amazing education but, more importantly to the quality of care our children receive at his school. He is always available to deal with all concerns almost immediately when you reach out to him. He arrives early and stays late. He makes everyone feel heard and valued from administrative staff to teachers to parents and to students. David Hudson is tireless in his commitment to all the things that matter to keeping our children safe and learning. He creates an environment that feels open to all who come there. It always strikes me how important he makes everyone feel who comes to him with a problem and how much he lifts up the children's sense of self. We are so blessed to have someone like David Hudson in our community.

*Sonni Gittelman,
Holton parent*



*Principal David Hudson with twins
Darren and Sarah Lage at their moving
on ceremony in 2013.*

treks to and from UVA were necessary for treatment, Mr. Hudson made sure we knew if we needed to hit the road to Charlottesville early to make an appointment, or needed to stay late, our kids were welcome to "hang" in his office.

When in middle school, and for a community service, I suggested to my son we take doughnuts to the local firehouse and police station for "Hot Doughnuts for Heroes Day," my son made it clear...the hero he wanted to honor was Principal Hudson.

The students and teachers alike (and parents, too) rise to the lofty expectations he sets. Our twins entered two different RPS specialty high schools this fall. While I would like to take some "credit" for the incredible students and young people they've become, we'd be remiss and naive to assume that a large part of our children's success wasn't directly attributable to Principal David Hudson.

Principal Hudson is a man of integrity, honor, compassion, and commitment to education.

We Northside families owe him an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

*Cheryl Lage,
Holton parent*

We love you Mr. Hudson. You are an amazing man. I remember being in the pickup lane and you know every parent or grandparent's name and who they came to pick up. Plus all the naughty kids are scared of you. Better said, you are highly revered.

*Scotta Barsella,
Northside resident*

Think it's time for some parents of students who've attended the incredible RPS elementary school, Linwood Holton, to chime in with first-hand knowledge about the man that is David Hudson.

Our boy-girl twins attended Linwood Holton Elementary in Richmond's Northside from kindergarten through 5th grade. From the day we were invited to "shadow" while in preschool, to the day we wept openly upon "moving on," Principal Hudson was clearly at the helm of a loving, supportive, nurturing elementary school community.

When in their early grade-school years, my husband (our twins' Daddy) had a recurrence of cancer, both of their classes--under Principal Hudson's leadership--rallied with posters and cards and well-wishes lifting our children's spirits and confidence---and ours.

When a tree demolished our home during Hurricane Irene (we're still often a highlight on local pre-storm news footage), Principal Hudson called THE NEXT DAY (a Sunday) gave us his personal cell number to make use of for any and every possible "need" --from taking our kids on an outing to bringing his chain saw and helping hands-on.

When my husband's cancer recurred AGAIN in later elementary years, and

Becoming divorced is a terrible feeling. Becoming divorced with children was even more upsetting for me. In the first months I questioned every choice for fear of what would happen to our children. Would they be scarred? Would they develop resentments against us? Would they be able to build healthy relationships? Would their education suffer?

In our case, we separated in the summer. The children had a small window of adjustment time before returning to school. Since they were both still in elementary school, however, I felt a need to speak to their teachers. I met with the teachers and found myself embarrassingly weepy. After leaving the last classroom, I ran into their principal, David Hudson.

Mr. Hudson had been part of our lives for five years at that point. My son had been so impressed by him in pre-kindergarten that he started dressing like him. His school pictures for multiple years featured a dress jacket and one year he even sported the Hudson Classic bowtie. Mr. Hudson managed a fine balance between authority figure and model to be emulated. We considered him the perfect person to be in charge of our children's school.

On that tearful day Mr. Hudson deftly inquired after my well-being without being

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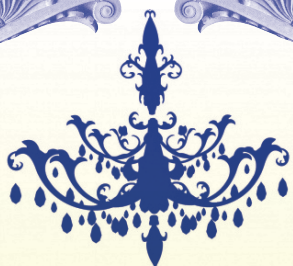
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nosy. We had become particularly close three years before when I tripped and broke my hand in front of the school. Mr Hudson sat on the ground with me, his perfect suit in the dust, so he could hold my good hand while we waited for help to arrive. That day he kept me from vomiting from shock by chatting gently. On this day, he soothed my fears and dried my tears.

Mr. Hudson reminded me that his staff had significant experience in working with children undergoing times of upheaval. He shared his confidence that my husband and I would handle the coming months in ways that would not hurt the children. He pointed out that what children need most is unselfish and reliable love. He said he had nothing but confidence that we would raise our children well as divorced co-parents, because we were "Good people".

This is one of Mr. Hudson's kind, understated compliments he gives to many, but it is always from his heart. I have never taken it for granted. I've heard him say it to others, and we all respond with the same grateful smile. He doesn't have to be so kind to us parents, but he takes the time to get to know us and reach out. Parenting isn't easy. The thoughtful words of David Hudson have always made a difference in my parenting life.

But they are more than just words. Within a week of my meeting with the teachers and Mr. Hudson, my son came home from school saying he had been called into the principal's office. He said he'd felt some trepidation at first but when he arrived, Mr. Hudson sat him down and gently asked how he was doing. I don't know the full extent of that conversation, but it made a lasting impression on my son.

At the end of their talk, Mr. Hudson gave my son his card with his cell phone number on it. He said that whenever my son had trouble or needed help, he could call any time. My son showed it to me proudly, a bit in awe that Mr. Hudson would reach out to him. I kept it to myself that Mr. Hudson made sure I had a card for the same reasons.

My son kept that card on his bedside table until he graduated from elementary school. I believe it was the single kindest gesture anyone could have given that little boy at that time. To my son it was a sign of compassion, of respect, and of a genuine care for our family. He never used it, but it was a comfort knowing someone had his back if needed. I, however, used mine.

As the years passed, Mr. Hudson cared for my daughter after my son graduated. I work with hospice and my ex-husband is a trial lawyer which meant that sometimes we were late for pickup due to emergency work circumstances. Mr. Hudson would always be sitting, chatting with my daughter when I arrived. I would apologize profusely and he would say that it was his pleasure to be with her. He would thank me for the work I do. He would check on me to make sure I wasn't too burnt out. And while we would talk, he would acknowledge parents, teachers, and staff

with kind words, little jokes and a wave.

This September we had our first First Day of school without David Hudson. I'll admit it. I shed a little tear. For a decade I felt confident that my children had excellent teachers, a clean school, safety and well-being. Their elementary school was a safe and happy place for us all. The children had many teachers and staff they adored. My daughter made friends with the nurse one particularly germ year. My son earned a flattering nickname from the janitor that he still has to this day. They both had multiple favorite teachers. But the greatest influence of all came from the principal himself, David Hudson.

Needless to say, my children were not scarred by the divorce. They do well in school and have close friendships. They are loving and delightful people. All the hopeful things David Hudson foresaw coming to pass did. I can never thank him enough for all he has done for our family. But, oh do I try.

*Alane Cameron Miles,
Holton parent*

Mr. Hudson is Linwood Holton Elementary School. From the very first day we met him through the past eight years he has supported and encouraged us. He runs a tight ship, expects a lot, but gives even more. He has supported the students and created unique opportunities for them, gives everyone his personal cell phone to call any time, answers emails at ungodly hours, and opens the building for community events. But the greatest support from him came in the form of the Dandelion Gardens.

As parents of kindergartners, we proposed the concept of the gardens and he threw his full weight behind them, helping us achieve more than we could imagine, and faster than we could believe. We had known him less than a year, yet he still embraced our efforts and continues to do so today. He spoke at City Council and in front of the School Board. He donated our first asset, the picnic benches, just so we could have something tangible to see and believe in to make it happen.

The gardens grew and Mr. Hudson was rightfully recognized as R.E.B. Principal of the year. We named the Golden Hammer award winning classroom structure after him, 'The Hudson House'. Our journey did not stop there as the gardens gained greater recognition that led us to the White House Kitchen Gardens. In October 2013 he escorted five 5th Grade students, Ellen Shepard and myself to Washington, DC to harvest those gardens with Michelle Obama. It was one of our most memorable events ever that we still cannot believe happened.

Just this October, Hands On came out to help clean up the gardens for Hands On Day. Mr. Hudson arrived early to open the building and proceeded to grab a pitchfork

continued on page 18

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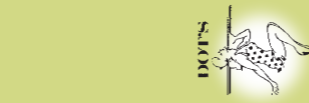
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MUCH LIKE THE PRESIDENT OF A COUNTRY, the principal of a school sets the tone for the body they govern, and I can think of no school administrator in the Richmond metro area who better reflects American values, and who rules with the compassion and understanding our nation is known for round the world. All are welcome at Linwood Holton Elementary School under the watchful guidance of David Hudson, and neither race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, nor gender is ever used as a criteria for acceptance. Jews, atheists, Christians, agnostics, and Muslims comprise the student body here, and never are their beliefs held in contempt. And on the Northside there are sons and daughters of immigrants, Latinos and Latinas, blacks, whites, you name it. None are ever criticized for who they are, but rather praised for their uniqueness and cultural diversity, and how they enrich the school. Every boy who attends Holton knows that under no circumstances can he ever touch a girl, and there is no tolerance for locker room banter. This too: no child at Holton would ever consider mocking a classmate with a disability of any kind. To the citizens of this elementary school, that behavior is utterly abhorrent. As is bullying of any kind. The children at Holton are taught never to incite hatred of any kind, or encourage any sort of physical violence. Rather, they are instructed to be kind to one another, to defuse anger with love, and, above all else, honor one another's human dignity, and show true respect. What's more, the leader of this nation of six hundred doesn't have time to take to Twitter; he has real work to do.

David Hudson was dressed impeccably from the leather of his uppers to the trademark bowtie below his chin. We were sitting in his office at Holton. There was a photograph of his daughter, now in her twenties, framed on a shelf facing his desk. And behind him, hung on the wall, was a vintage photograph of a group of pre-teen boys sitting on the hood and bumper of a classic automobile, a bulbous clunker of steel. Each one of the children adorning the front of this car like so many hood ornaments is dressed to the high nines.

"Let me explain why dress is important," David told me as he adjusted his bowtie. "One of the things I think people never talk about is why we're in school, and realistically we're in school so one day the kids can be very successful in the workplace. I have a problem with kids that have clothes hanging off of their body. They can be valedictorian of their class, but they're going to apply for a position in the real world and they're not going to get it. Because the first thing we do is look at appearance. I would never come into this building dressed any other way than the way you see me now. My appearance has to be in a style that is respectful to the kids. I hope I'm portraying a good image because hopefully one day when they go to their job they will be able to get the job based on their respect for themselves, which comes through in their appearance."

A half-hour earlier, as the school buses had lined the drive on the side of Holton, a number of boys, climbing down the steps of the bus to the sidewalk, hastily tucked their shirts in, adjusted their belts, and zipped

up their jackets. The kids knew then, as they know now, that their Mr. Hudson means business, that there are laws they all must follow.

"Even if you're stern," he told me. "If you're fair and you listen to everything a kid has to say, they don't look at you as being mean. They know they can come to you and something is done."

That was five years ago, and today in that same office, the two pictorial reminders are in the same place they were back then. Mr. Hudson points to the photo of his daughter. "I provide a school that I would want my own child to go to," he says. "That's why I have a picture of my kid there. When I look at that picture, I see my children here at the school. I make sure that when parents leave their children here they know their children will be in safe hands, and that teachers are going to work with them, and that they are going to be safe from other people in the building, whether they're students or adults. People in this building are going to treat the students with respect, and in return the students are going to treat every other person in this building with respect."

When former Third District School Board Representative Carol Wolf found Mr. Hudson (who was then working at J.E.B. Stuart Elementary School), Holton, just a few years old at the time, was slipping into a sinkhole. Chaos reigned, and the student

population was under three hundred, well below half of what it is today. Almost overnight, Mr. Hudson turned it around.

"The first thing that I wanted to do was to hear what the teachers and the parents had to say about the school, and ways they would improve it," he says. "Then I thought about things that I believe make a successful school. One of those things is school activities." During that first year, Mr. Hudson created five after-school enrichment programs. Today, there are more than a hundred such activities, including some that are offered during vacation as summer camps.

He remembers those early days at Holton very clearly. "These kids were really out of control, and I had to let them know there were consequences," Mr. Hudson says. "And I had to let some of the staff know they couldn't act the way they acted."

But Mr. Hudson was called on his sternness by a woman he has come to have the deepest respect for. "My very first PTA president Yvette Contie," he says. "I would give my life to defend her. I respect her because she's going to tell me like it is. I used to be real hard and mean. And she came in here one day and sat on this couch and she said, 'You're going to drive all these people away, you're too mean.' Yvette was right."

My son Charles spent all six of his elementary school years at Holton, and the lessons he learned there helped him immensely in middle school. While attending middle school in Henrico County (for a total of 33 days) he was bullied relentlessly by a small group of students, and at least one teacher. The bullying was so intense that he later developed posttraumatic stress disorder that he is still being treated for, but Charles, drawing on the knowledge he had acquired at Holton, refrained from becoming a bully himself.

"There's no bullying here because we teach the students from kindergarten to be nice," says Mr. Hudson. "I think bullying is something that not only parents have to work on, but the school has to work on."

Mr. Hudson remembers a pivotal moment in his own life that occurred when he was in college. A group of bullies would say mean things to one young man, and the man would laugh it off. Mr. Hudson took this young man aside and asked him if he really thought what was being said about was funny. "No, I don't," the young man said. "I'm just afraid."

"Sometimes people don't speak up for themselves, so you have to," Mr. Hudson says. "You can't allow people to make people feel uncomfortable, and a lot of people are not successful in life because people are doing that to them."

But not at Holton, because Mr. Hudson has one simple rule: "You don't call people names, you don't make them feel uncomfortable, and you don't touch them."

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO

THE CENTER WILL HOLD



If this golden rule is broken, Mr. Hudson encourages people to tell him. “And I mean everyone,” he says. “I give my (cellphone) number to bus drivers, parents, even the neighbors in this area. You see anything wrong, let me know. My job is not to

be your friend, it’s to solve problems. My job is to make sure that every child feels good about school. I say, ‘Let’s say nice words to one another.’ And the boy and girls here are very good to one another, and to the staff.”

His staff of teachers, each carefully selected, are among the best teachers in the state. “I have a staff one hundred percent on target,” says Mr. Hudson. “Fifty-five employees in all.”

Mr. Hudson encourages his teachers to make themselves even more successful than they are. “I tell my teachers that this school for them is like a classroom,” he says. “I don’t want them to stay idle, I want them to keep moving on, and my job is to help that. The principal of (William) Fox (Elementary School), Daniela Jacobs, used to be my assistant, and I saw so much greatness in her that I encouraged her. Like my assistant now, my job is to make her a principal one day. You show them the ropes because you want it be contagious throughout the system. When a teacher wants to move up, I’m not going to hold them back. I want them to move up.”

I have walked the halls with Mr. Hudson throughout the day, following a routine that he carries out every day like a doctor making her rounds in a hospital. He visits every classroom, and spends time talking with the students and the teachers. He wants everyone to know that he is always available, and willing to make changes when necessary.

“As soon as there’s a problem, you need to tell me about it,” says Mr. Hudson. “You don’t hold it in. You need to tell me, and we need to fix it immediately. The worst thing is to wait till the next day to tell me because it has grown inside.”

Every Wednesday, Mr. Hudson meets with all his teachers, and asks them if they have any concerns. “For almost fourteen years I’ve done that,” he says. “I train my teachers and student teachers to tell me when there’s something wrong. No matter how well you think something is running, there’s going to be a problem. I praise the teachers when they tell me there’s something wrong. I can’t fix good, don’t tell me anything good. Only tell me something that I can fix. That’s how it’s supposed to be. I listen to what people say.”

He preaches the same message to parents, and he’s not kidding. Every time I had a concern when Charles attended school there, I would call Mr. Hudson, sometimes as late as eleven at night, and he always took my calls, and tackled the problem immediately. “I’m out there in the front of the school in the afternoon, and I’m out there in the morning” he says. “I’m around all the time. I walk through the community at least once a week. If I look at a parent and see something wrong, I call them and ask them, ‘Are you okay? Is there something I can do?’”

Mr. Hudson has often heard parents on the playground after school talking about their concerns. “I’ve said to them: ‘A problem you don’t share, is a problem you don’t want fixed,’” he says. “You need to tell me. You’re out there on that playground talking, it’s not going to be fixed. Come here and tell me, and I will do something.”

Along with special education and administration, Mr. Hudson also studied and taught mathematics,

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and he suspects his fascination with math may have had a direct effect on his problem-solving strategies. "I'm going to look at it, I'm going to analyze it, and I'm going to react to it," he says. "I have that math background. With math you have to always figure out a problem. You have to solve the problems. It's rarely that I have to solve the problem the next day. All problems can be solved."

Years ago, Mr. Hudson learned to eliminate one simple, monosyllabic word from his vocabulary, a deadly and defeatist word, a word that can destroy life dreams for good and all.

"I never say no," he says. "My father told me that. 'The worst thing you can do is tell somebody no. First off, you're lazy when you say no. But there's so much more to it than that. When you say no, you pour water right on the flames. You put it out.'" So regardless what the kids, the teachers, the parents suggest, Mr. Hudson always listens, and he doesn't say no.

Consider the Dandelion Garden, which has been coming into its own for the past six years. It serves as outdoor classroom and hosts a variety of eco-friendly gardens and a veritable forest that will take decades to mature. What's more, this initiative teaches children and adults alike about the beauty of gardening, and all the tasks associated with it. Kids learn to grow their own vegetables and herbs, and how to create compost and how to tend raised beds.

Holton parents Susanna Raffentot and Ellen Shepard were the mothers of this garden project, and when they presented the idea to Mr. Hudson, he did not say, "No."

In fact, he threw his full support behind these two women and their project. He even dug and weeded, got good dirt under his nails. And then in

2010, when Mr. Hudson received REB Award for Distinguished Educational Leadership, he donated the \$15,000 monetary award to the school to further develop the learning garden program. The outdoor classroom, which won a Golden Hammer award, is fondly called The Hudson House.

Ten years ago, I met with Mr. Hudson and asked him if he would consider becoming involved with our annual Christmas on MacArthur. He was instantly on board, and has since become the unofficial grand marshal of the parade, year after year, always dressed to perfection and driving one of his classic sports cars, brimming with toys. Mr. Hudson transformed the parade, seeking active participation from students, parents, the school's chorus and band, long with the marching bands of other local public schools. He tirelessly promotes the event to the student body, encouraging kids to bring their donations for Toys for Tots. Each year, the kids at Holton donate more toys than any other group. They have learned from Mr. Hudson that generosity is humanity's greatest achievement.

"We have every nationality here, we have everything, and we make good people out of our students," says Principal David Hudson. "I tell kids and parents during the awards program that the first thing I look for is good citizenship. What happens when you make good people? They're going to take care of society, and they're going to take care of each other, too, because they know how to act."

Would that politicians would begin to understand these profound truths, would that these leaders had attended Linwood Holton Elementary School, a great public school, a school for all children, a school well-governed by a man whose objective is not power, but the safety and well-being of his citizens, every last one of them. **NJ**



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LETTERS

continued from page 11

and helped spread mulch around the trees on a beautiful Saturday. To me, that is his essence. Mr. Hudson not only speaks out on his support, but he rolls up his sleeves and digs in the dirt with us.

You are a wonderful man and we professionally love you.

Thank you!

All the Raffenots,
Holton parents and children

Mr. Hudson is wonderful. He provides his students and staff with structure, authority and respect. He was there for our family when my husband was in a terrible accident two years ago. Mr. Hudson is a pillar of our community and an indispensable asset for Richmond Public Schools.

Karina Martinez,
Holton parent

It is an honor to be working again at Holton under the leadership of Principal David Hudson. Our family is currently in our 11th consecutive year at Holton, with Ally and Cate being alumni and Gigi in kindergarten. I remember what Holton was like before Mr. Hudson and I know how truly fortunate we are to have David Hudson as our truly passionate, always professional leader and role model. We feel so fortunate to be able to say that we know this amazing human being and it is with honor that we can call this man our friend.

Kim Lavach,
Holton parent

I don't even know the man, but he came to the Ginter Park pool because one of his students (a six-year old) was fearful of going in the pool and he wanted to build up her confidence. Did I mention this was in July and August and NOT during the school year. I was beyond impressed.

Andrea Liverman,
Northside resident

We've been at Holton with Mr. Hudson since 2006 and think the world of him! All three of our girls have gone to Holton (one is still there) and have loved it. Our middle is now at Lucille Brown and our oldest is at Maggie Walker. Mr. Hudson is the kind of principal who is completely dedicated to the families at Holton Elementary and knows each child by name. We know that we can bring any concerns at all to him and he'll work on fixing them that day. He also shows up on the weekends when we need him to open up the building so we can do things like prepare for the school play. Nothing is off the table. We feel so lucky to have Mr. Hudson at the helm of Holton.

Kristin Cummings,
Holton parent



Mr. Hudson with Jackson Drumheller.


My son had a very rough second grade year. His father had been traveling for work during the week and he missed him very much. Jackson was struggling with what we later learned was dyslexia. Jackson was very sad and very stressed. He no longer wanted to attend school and he would cry a lot. One morning I took my son straight to Mr. Hudson. I didn't know what to do and I needed help. Mr. Hudson stepped up immediately. Beginning that day, and for weeks after, he would stop by Jackson's class to check on him. When Jackson was having a tough time he was invited to go straight to Mr. Hudson's office and allowed to use Mr. Hudson's phone to call me. Mr. Hudson would also allow Jackson and a friend to eat lunch with him. Jackson's second grade year was tough. But, because of Mr. Hudson, my son was able to find comfort at school. Holton was a second home to us. We will forever be grateful to know David Hudson.

Brooke Fauver Drumheller,
Holton parent

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Letters in support of Mr. Hudson continue to flood our email-box. If you haven't written one, feel free to do so. We will continue publishing them throughout 2017.

We encourage all letters to the editor. Submit letters to the editor one of three ways: Go to northofthejames.com/contact; respond on our g-mail address at charlesmcguigan@gmail.com; or send a letter to North of the James, P.O. Box 9225, Richmond, VA 23227.

Letters must contain the writer's name for verification and authentication. The publisher reserves the right to edit for clarity, or withhold from publication any letter for any reason. Letters to the editor become the possession of North of the James. Published letters reflect the opinion of their writers and not North of the James, or its staff. 

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BOOK REVIEW

A Planet Scarred And Scared

by FRAN WITHROW

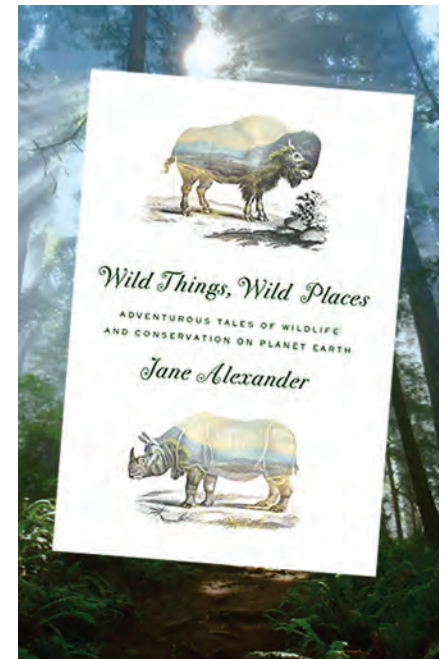
JANE ALEXANDER IS multi-talented. You may know her as an actress, but you may not be aware that she has a gift for writing as well. "Wild Things, Wild Places" is her passionate book about traveling around the world as an advocate for conservation.

And travel she has. From Mexico to Nepal, and from Amazonia to Ecuador, Alexander has explored the world extensively, writing knowledgeably about a wide variety of animals and their struggles to survive in an ever-changing world. She meets with scientists on the forefront of the conservation movement and shares their dedicated work with her readers.

Alexander also describes the work being done by various countries to combat poaching and the loss of wildlife habitat. Some countries face an incredibly uphill battle, and I am filled with admiration for their efforts. And while it may seem hopeless, it is not. Alexander cites the example of Chinese film star Li Bingbing, who has become one of Asia's leading advocates for Elephants, fighting illegal wildlife trade. It only takes one person.

But her true love is for the animals themselves. Her excitement upon seeing a rare Monal Pheasant in Bhutan is palpable. Throughout the book, Alexander capitalizes the names of animals as a way of "elevating their status." I found this to be a powerful means of according animals the respect they deserve, and I applaud her decision.

Alexander seamlessly blends her explorations with tales from her life, one rich in encounters with nature, explaining how a love for wildlife was instilled in her at an early age. Yet she is not maudlin about the changes has seen. In 1943 she visited Walden Pond, then a place rich with frogs, clear water and little fish "swimming between our legs." It's all developed now, but she can still see the beauty "in a shaft of light across pavement in the big city.... It is there for us, even in the ugliness we've inflicted." She reminds us that the earth is "scarred" as well as "sacred."



Alexander is a tireless advocate even with her own grandchildren. One charming tradition I love is her plan to take her grandchildren anywhere they want to go for their twelfth birthday. (Her granddaughters nixed Paris and Hawaii for Galapagos. How great is that?) What a lovely way to educate the next generation about the importance of preserving the richness of what we have on this planet.

We cannot save everything, she acknowledges. Some species that occupy very specific habitats may not survive. But we can help, with "thoughtful management," as "there is life everywhere, and life wants to thrive."

Alexander's book is positive in nature, filled with photos (though I wanted more, and of those, more in color). I sped through it, riveted, cheering for her and her critical work for our world. I was pleased to see that she ends with a list of her favorite organizations promoting conservation, as well as an extensive bibliography of books "about wild things and wild places." I will definitely be reading more. **NJ**

**Wild Things, Wild Places:
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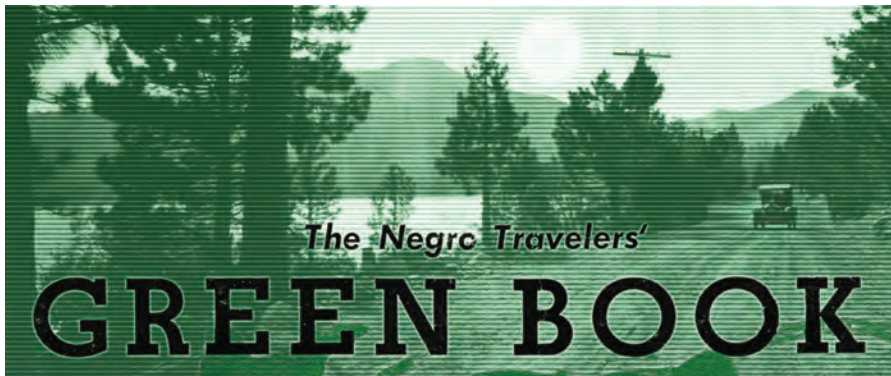
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SOMEBODY'S ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING. JUST LISTEN.

No Room at the Inn In Jim Crow America

by JACK R. JOHNSON



IMAGINE DRIVING THROUGH a foreign land where you don't know if you'll be able to purchase food, gas or board for the night. Imagine there are individuals in this land who despise the way you look, your culture, your very presence and that these same individuals have formed secret societies to terrorize you, to burn your churches, or sometimes to hang you from an oak tree. Sixty years ago, this was not a mere thought experiment. For African-Americans navigating the United States, it was the day to day reality of Jim Crow in the American South.

Realizing the dangers African-Americans faced at the time, Victor Hugo Green, a New York postal worker, sought to identify safe places for those traveling throughout the U.S. during the Jim Crow era. In 1936 he published a thin volume that he called the Negro Motorist Green book. He used his contacts throughout the U.S. postal system to develop the book's copious list of safe places and danger spots. As Green delicately put it in his introduction, his guTide was developed "to give the Negro traveler information that will keep him from running into difficulties, embarrassments and to make his trip more enjoyable."

According to The Washington Post, The Green Book became "the bible of black travel during Jim Crow," enabling black travelers to find lodgings, businesses, and gas stations that would serve them along the road. It was no secret that African-American travelers faced a variety of dangers and inconveniences, from outright refusal to be served at restaurants to threats of physical violence and forcible expulsion from whites-only "sundown towns." And it wasn't only the South. James

Loewen writes that "by the end of the 1960s, there were at least 10,000 sundown towns across the U.S. – including large suburbs such as Glendale, California (population 60,000 at the time); Levittown, New York (80,000); and Warren, Michigan (180,000). Over half the incorporated communities in Illinois were sundown towns. The unofficial slogan of Anna, Illinois, which had violently expelled its African-American population in 1909, was "Ain't No Niggers Allowed".

Trying to find a restaurant that would serve you, or a hotel that would let you stay overnight across the U.S. was a serious endeavor. As George Schuyler reported in 1943, "Many colored families have motored all across the United States without being able to secure overnight accommodations at a single tourist camp or hotel." He suggested that black Americans would find it easier to travel abroad than in their own country.

Realizing the great need, Green published a New York-focused first edition of his guide in 1936, and then he expanded the work to cover much of North America, including most of the United States and parts of Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda.

The guide found an enthusiastic readership. From on the road musicians to poets like Langston Hughes. The Green book was updated every year over three decades until it finally went out of fashion after the Civil Rights act effectively ended Jim Crow. Green often said that was his aim, "It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication for then we can go wherever we please." Printed on its cover were the words: "Carry your 'Green Book' with you. You may need it." Underneath this was a particularly apt quote from Mark Twain, "Travel is fatal to prejudice." **NJ**

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Born in 1904 in London, one of his very first roles was Humpty Dumpty. At seventeen he joined the Old Vic Theater Company, and two years later made his first silent film, “Who Is That Man?”

Easily transitioning to talkies in the 1930s, he became a box-office idol. He was known for his expressive voice, which actor Alec Guinness said sounded “like a silver trumpet muffled in silk.”

Gielgud’s greatest legacy was pioneering the theater company system. He

launched his own company in 1937 at the Queen’s Theater, proving his exceptional talents as a stage director.

Gielgud also had a long and happy gay life, living to age ninety-six. He met the love of his life, Martin Hensler, at an art show in the 1960s. They remained together for forty years, until Hensler’s early death in 1999. By all appearances, they were happily “married,” sharing a 17th-century Buckinghamshire estate with their three Tibetan terriers.

Hensler’s death devastated Gielgud, who himself passed away just a few months later. That night, the lights at the Gielgud Theatre in London were dimmed for three minutes – a symbolic tribute to the greatest Shakespearean actor of the century.

Human Rights Day

Human Rights Day is celebrated around the world every December 10th. It commemorates the United Nations General Assembly’s adoption and proclamation, on December 10, 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available in over 360 languages, it was the first worldwide enunciation of human rights and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations.

The formal establishment of Human Rights Day occurred on December 4, 1950, when the U.N. General Assembly passed resolution 423(V). It invited all members and other interested organizations to celebrate Human Rights Day on December 10th as they saw fit.


The United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights is bestowed every five years on Human Rights Day.

Mummers Primp

Every New Year’s Eve, Philadelphia clubs are putting the finishing touches on their elaborate costumes for the annual New Year’s Day Mummers Parade. Some of the getups cost tens of thousands of dollars to make, and weigh over 100 pounds. Together with movable scenery, they are months in the making. Some Mummers practice the 19th century cakewalk, known as

the “Mummers Strut.”

This all takes place in clubhouses, many located on or near Two Street in South Philly.

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