

National PTA's first Black executive to retire

Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - After more than 35 years of taking action for children and leading the charge to build stronger family-school-community partnerships across the country, Warlene Gary plans to retire as the chief executive officer of the National Parent Teacher Association.

Gary, who has been at the helm of PTA for almost five years, emphasized an organizational focus on equality for children's health, safety and education, as well as diversity and outreach to underrepresented families.

"When I came in to lead PTA, my goal was to involve more minority parents, continue to build partnerships with other organizations, and strengthen the PTA brand with innovative programs and campaigns to help parents across all socio-economic levels and culture get involved in their child's education," said Gary, a former teacher and PTA's first Black national CEO.

"I'm very proud of our accomplishments and confident that PTA will continue its focus on connecting to minority and urban communities that need PTA's resources and strength to represent their children."

— Warlene Gary
CEO of National PTA



"The PTA has made tremendous progress towards that goal, but there is much more to be done, if our nation's children are to reach their full potential."

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Under her leadership, a variety of programs, campaigns and initiatives were strengthened and created. Among the new initiatives is the PTA National Emerging Minority Leadership Conference—an annual event that gathers racial minority local PTA leaders from across the country to address relevant issues affecting families of color and provides leadership skills to help them involve more minority parents in their children's education.

"Warlene is a true champion of fighting for children and families. We were extremely fortunate to have someone in PTA who made advocating for children a lifetime vocation," said Jan Harp Domene, PTA national president.

Gary, who set a tentative retirement date after PTA's national convention in June, also was a key influence in establishing a diversity committee for the national board.

Other programs, campaigns and initiatives created

under her leadership include: Kids of Katrina Hurricane Relief Fund; PTA Goes To Work (funded by the U.S. Department of Labor); PTA Start the Art; PTA Ambassador for Youth; PTA Take Your Family to School Week; PTA's Walk for Healthy Kids; Community Connections (urban outreach); PTA's Commitment to America's Children Award, as well as the revisions of the National Standards for Parent Involvement and PTA parent involvement programs.

Accounts

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bank accounts, according to a study conducted by the South Carolina Council on Economic Education, based in Columbia, S.C. Even more alarming is that 80 percent of those households are Blacks (46 percent) and Hispanics (34 percent).

Several reasons were cited in the study for not having a bank account: poor account management skills, infrequent check writing, a dislike for dealing with banks, lack of enough money, high service charges, high minimum bank balances, credit problems, and no banks near home.

Many, like Watterson, also see check cashing centers as a cheaper way to handle their payroll checks versus banks. But according to a Consumer Federation of America survey of check cashing outlets, on average it cost \$24.45 to cash a \$1,002 Social Security check in 2006 and a worker paid \$19.66 every week to cash a \$478.41 handwritten paper check.

Still, if not managed properly, having a bank account can be tremendously expensive — especially for someone living paycheck to paycheck. Poor tracking of an account balance can incur penalties ranging from \$20 to \$30 for bounced checks and account overdrafts. Balances on closed accounts ruin credit reports. More education is needed.

"We choose to be irresponsible and avoid disciplining and structuring our financial lives. We choose the seemingly easy route of check-cashing centers, but we still lose in the end..." said Phoenix native Jennifer Cobb, 24.

Jesse Muhammad writes for the Final Call.

SGI

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and a reception will follow.

"Black Buddhists who comprise a small percentage of the Las Vegas community look forward to sharing this remarkable gala," Thompson said.

"The intent of the [event] is to invite and unite with the community at large. Black Buddhists of absolute peace, wisdom and joy desire to share their connections to Buddhism and their unique culture," Thompson added.

Grammy Award-winners Herbie Hancock and Tina Turner are among well-known Black celebrities who have expressed their practice of SGI Nichiren Buddhism.

"Buddhist leaders from Los Angeles, Calif., will sojourn to Las Vegas to enjoy the show. Fellow Buddhists will be reminded to continue on their journeys of peace, happiness and abundance," said Thompson. She added that SGI has about 1,600 members, many of whom are Black.

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