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Heavily armed Texas man, 31-year old Paul Murray, targets VP Harris

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

Paul Murray, an army veteran from Texas already wanted by the Secret Service, was arrested outside of Vice President Kamala Harris's official residence.

U.S. Secret Service officers took Murray into custody after finding a large-capacity ammunition-feeding device, a rifle and ammunition, and another unidentified dangerous weapon.

Vice President Harris and Second Gentlemen Doug Emhoff have not moved into the residence at the U.S. Naval Observatory, and neither were there during the incident.

"The Brazos County [Texas] Sheriff's Office has been in contact with Paul Murray over the past two weeks at the request of family members due to his behavior," Texas officials wrote in a statement issued to the media.

"There were no criminal violations found, but our agency continued to monitor the situation because of concerning behavior and statements, as well as information that Murray may have been in possession of weapons."

Authorities said deputies, working with the family and health care providers to obtain a mental health evaluation, received information that Murray may have traveled to



Murray's mother reportedly called the police to request a welfare check on her son, stating she was concerned about his mental state.
(Photo: Screen capture, penguinsix | YouTube)

Washington, D.C.

"We communicated that information with our local and federal partners in an effort to ensure the safety of all involved," the statement read.

"Sheriff [Wayne] Dicky is grateful for the efforts of all the agencies that took part in this event. It is through these efforts to share critical information that situations like this can be resolved without harm to anyone. Protecting our community is the highest priority of the Brazos County Sheriff's Office."

Murray's mother reportedly called the police to request a welfare check on her son, stating she was concerned about his mental state.

Court documents revealed that the 31-year-old Murray complained to police that he wasn't getting support from Veteran's Affairs and was not taking prescribed medication.

Despite the mental health concerns, many Americans have expressed concern that Murray may have targeted the vice president for political reasons or because she's a woman of color.

"He had a rifle and a large capacity clip in his vehicle," Twitter user @1988Vor wrote. "Is he just another 'bad day' Christian man or mentally disturbed?"

Neither Vice President Harris nor the White House has issued statements regarding the incident.

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Yusef Jackson

People In The News ...



Shauntae E. Lewis



Kwame Dawes

NDG Quote of the Week: "I think education is power. I think that being able to communicate with people is power. One of my main goals on the planet is to encourage people to empower themselves." – Oprah Winfrey

Yusef Jackson

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - Attorney and entrepreneur Yusef Jackson is joining the executive team at Aventiv Technologies, according to a company announcement. Jackson is the son of Rainbow/PUSH founder Jesse Jackson and has been a longtime advocate for civil rights alongside his family.

Jackson's role is being described as helping to facilitate external partnerships with the civic, educational, and corporate communities and ensuring a more diverse workforce at the company.

Aventiv is the parent



company to Securus Technologies, which is best known for providing telecommunication services to prisons and jails around the U.S., including phones and digital tablets. The company, along with others in

the industry, has come under fire in recent years for the high prices charged to family members of the incarcerated for use of their services in some jurisdictions.

A number of advocacy groups have been calling for policy changes to lower the price of calls and other services for the incarcerated, including by prohibiting government agencies from collecting revenue off of these contracts. Others, including some who are currently incarcerated, argue that the opportunity that comes with these previously unavailable technologies is worth the cost

of the service.

Last year, Aventiv announced an effort to change some of those business practices and respond to criticism of the industry. To date, the company has provided more than 40 million free phone calls through that effort, according to company data.

Jackson's hiring is being positioned as a continuation of that effort. The company announcement said Jackson would be involved in the development of job and reintegration tools for those who are incarcerated, and partnerships focused on eliminating the post-incarceration stigma.

In a release announcing Jackson's new position, Aventiv CEO Dave Abel said that Jackson would "play a vital role not only in expanding our reform efforts, but also in broadening our view as we look both inward and outward with respect to employee, customer, and community stakeholders."

Jackson acknowledged the history of problems inherent to correctional contractors, saying "the correctional services industry provides critical technology products and services to incarcerated Americans, but the business practices employed by the industry

have been rightly criticized and are long overdue for reform."

Jackson also said that his approach to this reform effort would be driven by both data and conversations with families of the incarcerated. "While I know Securus has undertaken a similar effort, it is important that I understand not only the data, but hear first-hand from affected individuals," Jackson said.

African Americans and Hispanics make up 32 percent of the U.S. but 56% of the incarcerated population, according to the NAACP.

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Shauntae E. Lewis

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Shauntae E. Lewis heard the naysayers – loud and clear.

"I heard 'you won't amount to this' and 'you're not good enough,'" Lewis, a certified grant writer who owns and operates Grant Life Consulting in Florida.

"My inspiration came from a sense of fear and those things that I had heard in my life – in the professional world," Lewis recalled.



With her four children and her faith as inspiration, Lewis has done more than achieve. She has succeeded.

A U.S. Air Force veteran, Lewis initially considered

starting a nonprofit to help young girls and women – specifically those who have suffered the trauma from physical, mental, or sexual abuse or divorce.

Following careful research, Lewis decided grant writing would prove just as effective.

"I realized that grants and funding were needed and my research showed that none of the grant writers looked like me," Lewis remarked.

"I couldn't find anyone to speak to or about it. I have a background in business and finance, and any college student knows that

writing is essential to getting those degrees," she continued.

"When I researched it, I said, 'I can do that.' So, out of that came Grant Life Consulting."

As a certified grant writer, Lewis assists companies with budgets as much as \$10 million.

She noted that there is a vast difference between a grant writer and a certified grant writer.

"The importance of a certified grant writer is immeasurable," Lewis announced. "We are held to certain standards of ethics, whereas one who's not

certified isn't held to those same standards. An uncertified grant writer may not understand some things like how to get a state license or a federal grant."

Further, Lewis offered that if an uncertified grant writer could be prone to mistakes that can severely damage a business.

"You have to show how funds are received and allocated. If funds are misallocated in any way, your business will have a major problem," Lewis stated.

The mother of four acknowledged that there is a battle to balance home and work.

"Work, life, balance," uttered Lewis as a reminder of one of her mottos. "I think in some ways I may have redefined that. It's tough to be a CEO in business and a CEO in the home. You have challenges in both places, and it can take a toll on you. But time management is always key."

Lewis now has more than 18 years of professional writing experience, organizational management, business development, and client training.

A member of the American Grant Writers' Association

See LEWIS, Page 16

Kwame Dawes

CHICAGO — Award-winning poet, author, and editor Kwame Dawes, PhD, today published his first weekly column as American Life in Poetry editor, in partnership with the Poetry Foundation and University of Nebraska Lincoln, and relaunches a new and engaging website to connect people to poetry through interests, geography, and representation.

Dawes carries the col-



umn forward after founding editor and curator, Ted Kooser, retired after 15

years as project creator and editor. The first poem featured is "They Dance Through Granelli's" by Pat Emile – an homage to the recently retired editorial assistant of the project for 15 years. Dawes seeks to maintain and expand the original vision for the column by continuing to reach readers through local news media outlets, as well as subscribers to the newsletter that publishes weekly on Mondays.

"This column is rooted

in the everyday, the broad sense of Americanness that eschews elitism and that embraces a democratic sense of lives that make sense to a vast cross section of the population," Dawes said. "I welcome readers who can engage in a wide section of American life, can find poetry that speaks to various aspects of American existence, and that somehow embraces the full range of this America."

Along with a completely refreshed visual state-

ment, the website features increased browsing and discovery capabilities, new photography, and an increased social media presence. Front and center allows users the ability to browse past columns by theme and region.

"The site allows for readers to dig deeper into what they may see in the newsletter or on social media," Dawes said. "We want readers to stay on the site for awhile and get comfortable with poetry, or to

find new ways to engage with poems whether that's through a love of sports or geography."

Dawes hopes new readers will connect with American Life in Poetry by finding columns that are approachable and speak to their interests, particularly for new poetry readers. With over 60 different themes that can be combined while searching, users can find a poem that speaks to gardening

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The seven last words of George Floyd

By John Thomas III
Editor, *The Christian Recorder*

The commemoration of Good Friday is a solemn and holy event for Christians. We cannot get to the resurrection of Jesus Christ without traversing through the crucifixion, death, and burial of God's only begotten son. One of the dividing lines among Christian traditions is the context of Jesus's Passion and death. When we separate Jesus from His worldly environment and circumstances—being persecuted as a Jewish teacher by a foreign empire and betrayed by compatriots who were threatened by His message and witness—we lose sight that Jesus, both fully God and man, was gruesomely murdered.

This year's Good Friday is especially poignant for African Americans it comes in the middle of the trial of Derek Chauvin for the gruesome murder of George Floyd. The 9 minutes and 29 seconds that turned the collective stomach of the world have been seared into our shared consciousness and the legacy of this watershed moment is still playing out. In the same way that we cannot allow our faith to be sanitized, we cannot allow the death of Mr. Floyd to be stripped of the circumstances of institutional racism, poverty, and White Supremacy that led to his brutal death at the hands of one who was charged to serve and protect. It is customary on Good Friday to commemorate the seven last words/sayings of Jesus Christ in solemn worship. In that spirit today, I encourage us to reflect upon the seven last words of George Floyd based upon the police bodycam transcript.

1) Mama, mama, mama!

"When George Floyd

called for his mother, he was calling for all of us," said a friend of mine who is the mother of a young Black son. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He looked to His mother, Mary commending her to John's care. We can only imagine how Mary felt to see the life slowly leaving her son's body. In his last moments, Mr. Floyd cried out for the woman who brought him into this world as he realized he was being ripped out of it.

2) Please, man.

When Jesus was on the cross, He appealed to His tormentors to quench His thirst. Mr. Floyd appealed

many times have we heard deadly force being justified because of a perceived threat or a need to stand one's ground?

4) I can't believe this.

Mr. Floyd's disbelief that a transaction with an alleged counterfeit bill could cost him his life at the hands of someone who he had worked with. The shock from emergency personnel who clearly saw the signs of distress yet were not allowed to render assistance. The horror of rookie police officers out on their training patrol witnessing a superior crushing the life out of a restrained suspect. We all cannot believe the

outside of its office emblazoned with the words, "Another man was lynched today." In 2015, the flag was revived and updated to say, "Another man was lynched by police today." Jesus's death was a public lynching complete with a gambling show. The world has borne witness to Mr. Floyd's lynching—many anguished, others cheering, and some nonchalant—in the same way that the spectators watched Jesus hang His head on Golgotha as the sun set.

7) I can't breathe!

The most well-known phrase that embodies how White Supremacy has strangled the life out of Black people globally through the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Maafa), colonialism, apartheid, segregation, and a litany of other terms associated with White Supremacy and anti-Blackness. It was first seared into our memories when we watched Eric Garner have the life choked out of him. On May 25, 2020, over 600 years of global anti-Blackness were distilled into a single moment when a white cop literally ripped the spirit out of a Black man. We remember that Jesus committed His spirit to God as his lungs collapsed from the crucifixion.

Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Tamir Rice, Freddy Gray, Philando Castille, Bothan Jean Janisha Fonville, Mr. George Perry Floyd, Jr., and Jesus.

Today as we commemorate one who paid the ultimate price for our eternal salvation, we must also remember those who daily pay the price of the legacy of the brutal and inveterate violence of White Supremacy. Our prayer to make it "on Earth as it is in Heaven" is only as good as the witness and daily steps we take to make sure that Jesus, George Floyd, and so many others have not died in vain. Amen.

Today as we commemorate one who paid the ultimate price for our eternal salvation, we must also remember those who daily pay the price of the legacy of the brutal and inveterate violence of White Supremacy.

to the humanity of his tormentor to save his life. He was already on the ground and restrained. He was not a threat. This plea echoes the signs of the 1960s strikes when working-class Black people asserted their dignity by simply saying, "I am a Man!" It also echoes the appeal of Sojourner Truth for persons to see and value her humanity by saying, "Ain't I a Woman?" In the eyes of his murderer, however, Mr. Floyd was not a citizen—much less, a human being.

3) You're going to kill me, man!

Mr. Floyd told his murderer that he was dying and pleaded with him to stop. As the trial goes on, we are hearing the damning testimony of persons who all say they know they witnessed a murder. An assassination perpetrated by White Supremacy at the hands of the police. How

cruel brutality of White Supremacy—yet it plays before our collective eyes daily with its deadly consequences.

5) Tell my kids, I love them.

Mr. Floyd had a life before he became a martyr, a slogan, and a t-shirt image. He was a friend, a son, and a father. Behind every victim of racism is collateral damage—grieving children, a heartbroken community, the lost potential of what could and should have been. Even though his death has become a symbol of the cost of institutional racism for Black people, Mr. Floyd was a real man with real people who mourn him and were robbed of his presence in their lives.

6) I'm dead.

Between 1920 and 1938, the New York branch of the NAACP hung a flag

"A Fitting Memorial"
NDG Obituaries

North Dallas Gazette now offers Obituaries and Death Notices specific to our community. Contact ndgobits@northdallasgazette.com for more info.

Want to help fight for health justice? It may be time to listen

By Michael Merschel
American Heart
Association News

A pandemic, protests and politics have highlighted the nation's long-standing, deep-seated racial issues and how they affect the health of millions of Americans. People who've never confronted racism before are asking, "How can I show I'm an ally?"

For the uninitiated, being a partner in the fight against racism can begin by looking inward. First and foremost, "it's about listening, particularly listening to the communities and the people that are directly impacted by injustices," said Judy Lubin, president of the Center for Urban and Racial Equity, a social change consulting group in Washington, D.C.

Before anybody who's part of a privileged majority rushes in, they need to understand where they fit in, Lubin and others say.

Discussions about racial disparities in health aren't new. But COVID-19, which has disproportionately affected Black, Hispanic, American Indian and Asian communities, has helped move the conversation about race and health to the medical profession's highest levels. Top medical journals have run columns.



Online Marketing / Unsplash

Well-established groups such as the American Medical Association and the American Heart Association have denounced structural racism.

Research continues to show the connection between the deep roots of racism and health inequities. For example, while overall death rates from heart disease and stroke declined over the past two decades until a recent plateau, these gains were not equitably shared among people who are from the Black, Asian, American Indian, or Hispanic and Latino communities.

Black adults experience a 30% higher death rate from heart disease and a 70% higher death rate from stroke compared with their white peers, according to the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data from 2018. After a cardiac arrest, Black and Hispanic patients experience significantly lower

survival to hospital discharge than white patients, even when controlling for socioeconomic status. Researchers have linked such health problems to a web of factors that have structural racism at their base.

Focusing on health and racism is good, said Lubin, who has both a master's in public health and a doctorate in sociology. But sometimes, on an individual level, people who say they're allies go out of their way to put the focus on themselves. It becomes a performance, she said, sometimes fueled by social media.

The term "allyship" is often used in discussions and guides about supporting the need for change. But Lubin said many people addressing racial inequity are focusing more on the idea of "solidarity," which involves "making space and listening to and respecting the leadership of people of color."

That type of listening,

said Lubin, is often a challenge for white people — particularly those in leadership positions who think it's their job to be the first person to offer ideas.

In contrast, she sees solidarity as making space so affected people can speak for themselves.

Dr. Harlan Krumholz agrees. He's director of the Yale-New Haven Hospital Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation in New Haven, Connecticut.

"It's important that those of us who are outside of those groups that are directly affected are standing up and speaking loudly," he said. "But we need to be sure that the attention stays firmly on those who are suffering."

Over his career, Krumholz has led programs to illuminate health disparities and promote greater diversity in the profession. He's spoken about the need to partner with affected communities on such issues.

People have to be willing to take on problems that might not affect them directly, he said, because what happens to people who come from different backgrounds — defined by race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or more — reflects on us, our health care system and our society. And it affects us, too.

"I may not be Black, but I've got to talk about the implications of being Black in this society," he said. "There are people who are experiencing the structural racism, who know it, for whom it's deeply personal. And they can see it with clear eyes."

Everyone else is then obligated to listen and learn, Krumholz said, "and not draw attention to ourselves for just doing what is right. The focus must be on those who are disadvantaged — and repairing a society that has caused this situation."

An ally's job, he said, involves helping "those without voice gain voice and stand up against the injustices within health care and within society, to try to promote a better society, one in which everybody has a fair shot to be healthy, and a fair shot at a good life."

That's an attitude Lubin encourages when people ask how to be allies. Solidarity, she said, is about doing things that "honor the dignity of everyone."

Which does not make it simple.

"There's no checklist on how to be in solidarity, although there are lots of articles and resources out there," she said. Her organization lists several.

Universities from Georgia to Georgetown and beyond have pages devoted to allyship. The Seattle Public Library offers an extensive reading list.

And if solidarity starts with listening and learning, eventually it demands more.

A white person who understands how systemic racism has kept people of color out of leadership roles might realize they need to step aside to create room for someone, Lubin said. It also involves risks, whether confronting family members or putting a job on the line with a problematic employer.

"At the end of the day, action is what's most important," she said. "But we also don't want action that's harmful. And that's why it's so critical that self-reflection and awareness is happening."

Supporting the humanity and dignity of groups who haven't historically had privilege ends up lifting all of society, she said. "When systems work for the most marginalized, they end up working better for everyone."

If you have questions or comments about this story, please email editor@heart.org.

OP-ED: The American Rescue Plan — Changing the course of the pandemic for all Americans

By U.S. Congressman
James E. Clyburn (D-SC-6)

It has been a little more than a year since COVID-19 was officially discovered within the boundaries of the United States. It has been devastating to communities of color.

The statistics are sobering. Blacks represent only 13-percent of the U.S. population, but account for nearly 24-percent of age-adjusted COVID-19 deaths. In January, nine percent of Black workers or 1.8 million people in our communities were unemployed. One

in five Black households are struggling with food insufficiency, and more than a third of Black renters are behind on their rent payments.

President Joe Biden has responded to this worldwide pandemic with The American Rescue Plan (ARP) which he signed into law last month, just 51 days after he took office. The ARP will help change the course of the pandemic and deliver immediate relief for hard-hit communities of color. This transformative law invests in a national vaccination program and the safe reopening of schools.

It distributes \$360 billion in emergency funding for state and local governments to keep front line public workers on the job and help maintain essential services. These targeted investments will directly benefit your communities and help them return safely to normal.

The ARP also provides direct benefits for you and your family. It delivers immediate relief to families by devoting \$1 trillion towards economic recovery for working families including direct relief payments, extension of unemployment insurance benefits, increas-

ing child and earned income tax credits, and increasing SNAP benefits.

Many of you may have already received the \$1,400 direct payment per eligible member of your household. Because of misinformation that is being shared via social media, I want to clarify that this is the second of two payments. The first \$600 payments per eligible person were distributed in December and January. These two direct payments deliver on the \$2,000 per person in pandemic relief that Demo-

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Marvin Scott: Seven Texas police officers fired after death of Black man in jail

By Lauren Victoria Burke
NNPA Correspondent

Seven sheriff's officers in Collin County, Texas, were fired on April 1. The firings appear to be in connection with the death of 26-year-old Marvin D. Scott III. An eighth officer related to the incident has resigned.

Scott was arrested on a marijuana possession charge on March 14 in which he possessed less than two ounces of the drug. This is a misdemeanor offense in Collin County. Scott family attorney Lee Merritt, informed media



26-year-old Marvin D. Scott III (Photo: The Chicago Crusader)

that Scott had a schizophrenia diagnosis. Scott's funeral was on March 30.

There is video footage of

the episode that has not yet been publicly released.

On March 15, the Collin County, Texas Sheriff's of-

fice put out a release stating, "On Sunday, March 14, 2021, 26-year-old Marvin D. Scott III of Frisco, Texas, died while in custody at the Collin County Detention Facility. Officers from the Allen Police Department arrested Mr. Scott earlier that day and transported him to the county jail. The Sheriff referred the matter to the Texas Rangers, who are investigating this death. As a matter of policy, the Sheriff placed seven detention employees on administrative leave and ordered an internal administrative investigation. The

Sheriff's Office will not release additional information while the Texas Rangers are investigating."

"Evidence I have seen confirms that these detention officers violated well-established Sheriff's Office policies and procedures," Jim Skinner, the Collin County sheriff, said in a statement.

The news of Scott's death arrived into the public eye during the trial of Derek Chauvin. Chauvin is on trial in the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minn.

Police brutality has been

an issue for African American civil rights leaders for over 80 years. In 1962, an encounter with Los Angeles Police Department outside a mosque resulted in the death of a Nation of Islam member. The incident of police brutality was focused on by Malcolm X.

Lauren Victoria Burke is an independent journalist for NNPA and the host of the podcast BURKEFILE. She is also a political strategist as Principal of Win Digital Media LLC. She may be contacted at LBurke007@gmail.com and on twitter at [@LVBurke](https://twitter.com/LVBurke)

Public policy and the Republican Party

By Dr. John E. Warren
Publisher San Diego
Voice & Viewpoint

It is an established fact that public policy is the result of ideas that start with people, who create interest groups. Interest groups usually form on both sides of an issue, and issues give birth to proposed rules and potential laws that reflect the prevailing views growing out of the initial issues with its pros and cons.

The United States Constitution never provided for political parties as we know them today. The party system we have today associ-

ated with our government now operating in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate is the by-product of a 1787 battle over the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the two factions that grew out of the conflict over how powerful the federal government should be. Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, developed a movement known as the "Federalists" who wanted a strong central government.

On the other hand, Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State, advocated for "States Rights". The Federalists coalesced around business, and the "States

Rights" people around an agrarian (rural) society.

This bit of history is important today because we are faced with a Republican Party no longer committed to "Protecting and Defending the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic", but preserving and protecting their own interest in spite of the Constitution and the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments that provide equal protection under the law and protection of the rights of all.

When we understand that political parties are the result of battles over issues that compete, such as who should be able to vote

and how those in power may limit the rights of others, then we have reached a point that requires public policy, reflected in proposed legislation, that must not be blocked.

We the people, following the Constitution, which does not require a "Republican Party", have the ability to vote out of office all those elected officials who have decided to follow a Republican Party mantra that votes "political party" instead of the will of the people; or those who refuse to allow a discussion of ideas followed by a reasoned vote based on the issues and not party loyalty.

We the people in every state must look at who is running for office next year; we must look at all 43 of those states that have voter suppression laws totalling over 253 legislative proposals and we must organize just as "Black Votes Matter" in Atlanta has done.

We must follow their examples and bring pressure

on those corporations that support those elected officials advocating the voter suppression laws and we must continue voter registration to ensure that we the people outnumber Republican interest by 2022. We can make public policy more important than the Republican Party. Let's get busy.

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Keeping watch...



Aviation Support Equipment Technician 3rd Class Keon Batiste, from Fort Worth, Texas, studies a tractor schematic aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), in the Mediterranean Sea, March 31, 2021. The IKE Carrier Strike Group is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national interests and security in Europe and Africa. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Cameron Pinske/Released)

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Black students' graduation rates improve in California survey

Sacramento Observer
Staff Report

(CALMATTERS) — More Black Californians are graduating from college in the wake of key legislative and educational reforms, even as significant disparities in Black and white graduation rates persist, according to a Tuesday report from the nonpartisan research center Campaign for College Opportunity. For example, Black CSU students' four-year graduation rate doubled over the past decade to reach 20%,

even as the gap in Black and White CSU students' graduation rates grew to 25%, the report found.

One reform that helped put Black students on a faster graduation path was a 2017 law that largely allowed community college students to take transfer-level classes without first taking remedial courses — even though tens of thousands of students are still taking unnecessary remedial classes, CalMatters' Mikhail Zinshteyn found.

Other key findings from the report:

- The number of Black applicants to the UC system shot up 20% after the Board of Regents eliminated the use of the SAT and ACT in admissions. UCLA and UC Berkeley saw a 50% spike.

- More than 50% of Black students entering UC since 2012 have graduated in four years or less, though there's a 20% gap in Black and White students' UC graduation rates.

- 26% of Black Californians have a bachelor's degree — a number researchers want to see reach 60% by 2030.



Gift Habeshaw / Unsplash

Education is a key issue in Texas Senate's 2022-23 budget

AUSTIN (Texas Senate News) — The Texas Senate approved a plan to spend \$117.9 billion in state general revenue and billions more in federal and other funds after a pandemic-induced economic collapse never materialized. According to Finance Committee chair and Flower Mound Senator Jane Nelson, years of conservative fiscal policy and smart investments helped Texas to weather a year of COVID restrictions that heavily impacted some sectors of the state economy. "Throughout last year, things were looking pretty bleak," she said. "But never underestimate Texas. We have proven our resiliency time after time and because of our commitment to smart fiscal policy, we are able to bring forward a budget that will keep Texas strong, safe, healthy, and prosperous." In all, the budget approved by the Senate will spend \$250.7 billion in state, federal and other funds, and slightly increases state revenue spending by 2.6 percent - well within constitutional spending limits, said Nelson.

Maintaining funding commitments to public education and teacher pay



The Senate gave unanimous approval Tuesday to the budget developed by Flower Mound Senator Jane Nelson's Finance Committee. (Texas Senate News)

were a major concern coming into this session when the state's economic picture still looked uncertain. In 2019, the Legislature passed sweeping education spending reforms, putting billions more into schools and teacher salaries. Senate Education Committee chair Senator Larry Taylor of Friendswood, who carried that measure in the Senate, said that the bill increased teacher pay an average of \$5,200 for educators with five or more years of service, and an incentive pay program created to let districts find and pay bonuses to their best teachers paid out \$40 million to nearly four thousand teachers, an average increase of more than \$10,000 in annual pay for those skilled educators.

Those programs remain fully funded this session, said Taylor.

The bill also maintains last session's \$1,000 increase for the basic allotment, the main variable used in the school funding formula, and increases total education spending \$3.1 billion over the last biennium to keep up with expected enrollment growth over the next two years.

The budget approved Tuesday does not include any money from the \$1.9 trillion aid package approved by Congress in early March. The state is expected to receive just under \$17 billion in direct aid, with another \$10 billion going directly to local municipalities and a \$12.2 billion chunk of funds for

education spending. The session ends on May 31st, and it's looking increasingly unlikely that the funds will arrive before lawmakers go home for the interim. One factor in the delay is a lack of clarity about federal requirements that come with those funds. As state officials work to get that clarity, Nelson said it isn't wise to accept funds when we don't know what strings are attached. "We also need to be very, very cautious about committing and obligating funds when we don't

know all the details because we cannot have that money clawed back and be on the hook for expenditures," she said.

As to the interim question, Nelson said there are a few options she and others are considering to ensure lawmakers have input in how federal aid dollars are spent between the end of this session and January of 2023. Appropriations Committee chair Rep. Greg Bonnen of Friendswood, Nelson's counterpart in the House, has filed a measure

which would create a special panel consisting of the Speaker of the House, the Lt. Governor and the chairs and vice-chairs of each chamber's budget committees. This panel could meet during the interim and would have a say over what federal aid funds the state accepts. Should it clear the House, Nelson said she expects to carry that bill in the Senate.

The Senate reconvened yesterday at 11 a.m. Results from that session were not available at press time.

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Black women's voices take center stage at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

ATLANTA — Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. and the International Black Women's Public Policy Institute (IBWPPI) hosted the panel discussion "Promoting the Safety and Security of Women of African Descent" on Thursday, March 16th. The virtual session was held during the 65th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

The panel convened experts and world leaders to speak on the exploitation of Black women and girls in the underground human trafficking world and other forms of violence. Speakers included: Rasheeda S. Liberty, International President, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc.; Barbara A.



International leaders and activists promoted strategies for grassroots action to inform, prevent, and address violence against women including intimate partner-based violence, physical and mental abuse. (Image: NNPA)

Perkins, IBWPPI President and CEO; the Honorable Paula Cox, Former Premier of Bermuda; Dr. Deirdre Cooper Owens, historian and professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln;

Michellene Davis, Health Equity Strategist/President & CEO of M.D. Clarida Drew, LLC; Ouleye Ndoeye, human rights activist; and Teresa Stafford, Chief Programs Officer, Cleveland

Rape Crisis Center.

In the United States, there are more than 600,000 to 800,000 people being trafficked annually across international borders and 40% percent of sex trafficking victims are Black women and girls. The panelists discussed the vulnerabilities of Black female trafficking victims, gaps in services and public policy, and the historical context of the oversexualization of Black females dating back to the Transatlantic Slave Trade. These elements coupled with poverty, racism, and a wide array of social determinants feed into the vicious cycle of human trafficking.

International leaders and activists promoted strate-

gies for grassroots action to inform, prevent, and address violence against women including intimate partner-based violence, physical and mental abuse. IBWPPI shared with attendees their position paper "Slavery by Another Name: The Epidemic of Black Female Trafficking Victims in the US and Abroad."

"Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. is proud to be a part of such powerful work to amplify the importance of protecting women and youth for nearly 100 years. As we amplify, our sisterhood acts to ensure that women of African descent are protected in healthcare, education and financial equity policies," said Rasheeda S. Liberty.

"The issue of human trafficking as it pertains to Black women and girls is largely an issue of not being seen, heard or valued. The International Black Women's Public Policy Institute's goal is to change that," said Barbara A. Perkins. "Humanizing and centering the voices of Black women is our collective call to action, regardless of where they are because Black women matter."

The 65th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will be open to the public until March 26th. Attendees can register for the virtual event, which features over 700 sessions, at <https://ngocsw.org/event/ngocsw65-forum>.

← RESCUE, from Page 4

crats campaigned on last November.

The American Rescue Plan also addresses inequities in access to pandemic resources by making significant investments into small, Black businesses by providing \$50 billion for new and existing small business relief programs. This legislation bolsters the Paycheck Protection Program with an additional \$7.25 billion in funding to support small businesses and non-profits that were previously excluded.

It allocates \$15 billion in flexible grants to help the smallest; most severely

impacted businesses persevere through the pandemic. It deploys community navigators to increase awareness of and participation in COVID-19 relief programs for small business owners who currently lack access, especially underserved entrepreneurs without banking relationships, lawyers, accountants, and consultants. And, it provides \$28 billion for a new grant program to revitalize hard-hit small restaurants and other food and drinking establishments.

The American Rescue Plan is the first piece of legislation passed by the 117th

Congress and signed by President Biden to rescue our economy and repair some of our faults that are being exasperated by COVID-19. On March 30th President Biden rolled out his American Jobs Plan. That plan proposes to: Fix highways, rebuild bridges, upgrade ports, airports and transit systems; deliver clean drinking water, a renewed electric grid, and high-speed broadband to all Americans; build, preserve, and retrofit more than two million homes and commercial buildings, modernize our nation's schools and child care facilities, and upgrade veterans' hospitals and federal buildings.

These actions demonstrate President Biden's and Congressional Democrats' commitment to building America back better than it was before the virus visited. This is not the end of his build back better plan. There is a third iteration on

the way.

During his victory speech last November, President Biden pledged to always have the backs of the African American community. We will continue fighting to ensure that, in the short term, Black communities

have access to all the tools necessary to recover from the economic and personal devastation wrought by this pandemic; and in the long term, address the impacts of historic disparate treatment against communities of color.

← DAWES, from Page 2

and unrequited love from the archive which includes more than 800 poems.

Dawes is the author of twenty-two books of poetry and numerous other books of fiction, criticism, and essays. His collection, Nebraska was published in 2020.

He is George W. Holmes University Professor of English, Glenna Luschei Editor of Prairie Schooner

at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and also teaches the Pacific MFA Program.

He is director of the African Poetry Book Fund and Artistic Director of the Calabash International Literary Festival. Dawes is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

His awards include an

Emmy, National Press Club Joan Friedenberg Award for Online Journalism, the Forward Poetry Prize, the Musgrave Silver Medal for contribution to the Arts in Jamaica, the Governor's Award for service to the arts in South Carolina, a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Windham Campbell Prize for Poetry. In 2009 he was inducted into the South Carolina Academy of Authors.

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Beyoncé dominates NAACP Image Awards; Eddie Murphy inducted into Hall of Fame

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Beyoncé took home four trophies, Eddie Murphy received the Hall of Fame award, and Viola Davis and the late Chadwick Boseman earned outstanding actress and actor in a motion picture during the primetime telecast of the 52nd NAACP Image Awards.

Rev. D. James Lawson was honored with the Chairman's Award, NBA Superstar LeBron James received the President's Award, and Stacey Abrams earned the NAACP's Social Justice Impact honor.

"I've been making movies for 40 years now. This is the perfect thing to commemorate that and be brought into the hall of fame," Murphy proclaimed, after his friend and Coming to America co-star Arsenio Hall presented the award. "Thank you very much. I'm very moved."

The NAACP bestows the hall of fame induction on an individual viewed as a pioneer in their respective field and whose influence shaped the profession for generations.

Previous inductees include Oprah Winfrey, Stevie Wonder, Spike Lee, Ray Charles, and Sidney Poitier.

DJ D-Nice captured the entertainer of the year award for his immensely popular "Club Quarantine" that began early last year during the pandemic. "It's been an honor to provide entertainment and inspiration during one of the darkest times we've experienced," D-Nice said.

Jhené Aiko earned album of the year honors, Beyoncé and Drake won the outstanding female and male artists, respectively.

Megan Thee Stallion, Chloe x Halle, Jon Batiste, and Marsai Martin of ABC Television's "Blackish" won two awards.

Anthony Anderson, the star of "Blackish," hosted the show.



The tear-jerker moment of the night belonged to Simone Boseman, the widow of Chadwick.

In accepting his award, she said her late husband would "thank his mom and dad. And he would give honor to his ancestors as we now honor him. Thank you, NAACP, for always giving him his flowers. He was an uncommon artist and an even more uncommon person."

Simone Boseman also urged Black people over the age of 45 to get screened for colon cancer.

"Don't put it off any longer," she said. "Please, get screened. This disease is beatable if you catch it in its early stages. So, you don't have any time to waste, even if you don't have any family history. If you think nothing is wrong and younger than 45, please be proactive about your health. Know the signs. Know your body. Listen to your body."

Former First Lady Michelle Obama presented Abrams with her first Social Justice Impact award.

"They taught my five siblings and me that having nothing was not an excuse for doing nothing," Abrams said, referring to her parents. "Instead, they showed us by word and deed to use our faith as a shield to protect the defenseless, to use our voices to call out injustices, and to use our education and our time to solve the problems that others turn away from."

Complete list of winners:

Hall of Fame Award
Eddie Murphy
Entertainer of the Year
D-Nice
Chairman's Award
Rev. D. James Lawson

President's Award
LeBron James
Social Justice Impact
Stacey Abrams
Outstanding Motion Picture

Bad Boys For Life
Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture

Viola Davis – Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

Outstanding Actor in a Motion Picture

Chadwick Boseman – Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

Outstanding supporting actor in a motion picture

Chadwick Boseman – Da 5 Bloods

Outstanding supporting actress in a motion picture

Phylicia Rashad – Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey

Outstanding ensemble cast in a motion picture

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

Outstanding breakthrough performance in a motion picture

Madalen Mills – Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey

Outstanding breakthrough creative (motion picture)

Nadia Hallgren – Becoming

Outstanding independent motion picture

The Banker

Outstanding international motion picture

NIGHT OF THE KINGS

Outstanding writing in a motion picture

Radha Blank – The Forty-Year-Old Version

Outstanding directing in a motion picture

Gina Prince-Bythewood – The Old Guard

Outstanding animated motion picture

Soul
Outstanding documentary (film)

John Lewis: Good Trouble

Outstanding short-film (live action)

Black Boy Joy

Outstanding short-film (animated)

Canvas

Outstanding character voice-over performance – motion picture

Jamie Foxx – Soul

Outstanding female artist

Beyoncé – "Black Parade"

Outstanding male artist

Drake – "Laugh Now, Cry Later"

Outstanding duo, group or collaboration (traditional)

Chloe x Halle – "Wonder What She Thinks Of Me"

Outstanding duo, group or collaboration (contemporary)

Megan Thee Stallion feat.

Beyoncé – "Savage Remix"

Outstanding album

Chilombo – Jhené Aiko

Outstanding soul/R&B song

"Do It" – Chloe x Halle

Outstanding hip hop/rap song

"Savage Remix" – Megan Thee Stallion feat. Beyoncé

Outstanding new artist

Doja Cat – "Say So"
Outstanding producer of the year

Hit-Boy

Outstanding music video/visual album

"Brown Skin Girl" – Beyoncé feat. WizKid, SAINT JHN, Blue Ivy Carter

Outstanding soundtrack/compilation album

Soul original motion picture soundtrack – Trent Reznor, Atticus Ross, Jon Batiste and Tom MacDougall

Outstanding gospel/Christian song

"Touch From You" – Tamela Mann

Outstanding gospel/Christian album

The Return – The Clark Sisters

Outstanding jazz album – instrumental

Music from and Inspired by Soul – Jon Batiste

Outstanding jazz album – vocal

Holy Room – Live at Alte Oper – Somi

Outstanding international song

"Lockdown" – Original Koffee

Outstanding drama series

Power Book II: Ghost

Outstanding comedy series

Insecure

Outstanding talk series
Red Table Talk

Outstanding reality program/reality competition or game show

Celebrity Family Feud

Outstanding variety show (series or special)

VERZUZ

Outstanding news/information (series or special)

The New York Times Presents The Killing of Breonna Taylor

Outstanding children's program

Family Reunion

Outstanding animated series

Doc McStuffins

Outstanding Actor in a Drama Series

Regé-Jean Page – Bridgerton

Outstanding Actress in a Drama Series

Viola Davis – How To Get Away With Murder

Outstanding supporting actor in a drama series

Clifford "Method Man" Smith – Power Book II: Ghost

Outstanding supporting actress in a drama series

Mary J. Blige – Power Book II: Ghost

Outstanding Actress in

See AWARDS, Page 10



Filmmaker Michelle Danner's "The Runner" premieres at WorldFest Houston

Michelle Danner's film "The Runner" has been confirmed as a 2021 WorldFest Official Selection at WorldFest-Houston. The film will screen Friday 4/23 in theatre A at 9:35pm at The Cinemark Memorial City Theatres, Houston, TX. 77024.

"The Runner" is an action thriller and true-life coming of age story starring Cameron Douglas and newcomer Edouard Philponnat as a troubled teenager who is forced to go undercover to expose a drug kingpin.

The legendary acting teacher and co-founder of



Michelle Danner
(Courtesy photo)

the Edgemar Center for the Arts and the Los Angeles Acting Conservatory, Danner's also now well-established as a successful feature film director. Danner's latest film "Bad Impulse," is a psychological thriller

about family secrets and modern technology, starring Sonya Walger, Grant Bowler, and Paul Sorvino. The film recently won Best Narrative Feature at the 2019 International Independent Film Awards and the Best Director Award at the 2019 Culver City Film Festival.

Her upcoming film "The Runner," was filmed before the pandemic started. The action thriller and true-life coming of age story stars Cameron Douglas and newcomer Edouard Philponnat as a troubled teenager forced to go undercover to expose a drug

kingpin. It will premiere at the end of March at the Cinequest Film Festival. It will also premiere internationally at the Ferrara International Film Festival and has been selected to screen at Istanbul International Film Festival, the Barca Indie Film Festival, the Madrid Indie Film Festival, the New York Movie Awards and the Milan Gold Awards. It is a semi-finalist for the New York Independent Movie Award.

A dedicated mom (with one son who is an aspiring filmmaker), Danner still has her "day job" – overseeing the faculty of the Los Angeles Acting Conservatory, and conducting her weekly acting class. Danner's list of students has included Christian Slater, Salma Hayek, Gerard Butler, Seth McFarlane, Penelope Cruz, Chris Rock, Gabrielle Union, and Zooey Deschanel. A longtime student of legendary acting teachers like Stella Adler and Uta Hagen, Danner's eclectic approach (which she calls "The Golden Box") allows actors the freedom to employ a wide variety of techniques.

Raised in a show business family and with a deep appreciation for all of the performing arts, Danner also continues to run the boutique "Cinema at the Edge" film festival and is currently preparing to direct a new one-person play, Bonnie Culver's "Norris," starring Anne Archer, based on the memoirs of the widow of writer Norman Mailer.

Simply put, there's almost no one in the business who knows as much about acting and success as Michelle Danner – and her continued success in multiple creative fields makes her one of the most successful women working in the industry today.

AWARDS, from Page 9

a Comedy Series

Issa Rae – Insecure

Outstanding actor in a comedy series

Anthony Anderson – black-ish

Outstanding supporting actor in a comedy series

Deon Cole – black-ish

Outstanding supporting actress in a comedy series

Marsai Martin – black-ish

Outstanding performance by a youth (series, special, television movie or limited-series)

Marsai Martin – black-ish

Outstanding writing in a comedy series

Michaela Coel – I May Destroy You – Ep. 112 "Ego Death"

Outstanding writing in a drama series

Attica Locke – Little Fires Everywhere – Ep. 104 "The Spider Web"

Outstanding writing in a television movie or special

Geri Cole – The Power of We: A Sesame Street Special

Outstanding directing in a comedy series

Anya Adams – black-ish – Ep. 611 "Hair Day"

Outstanding directing in a drama series

Hanelle Culpepper – Star Trek: Picard – Ep. 101 "Remembrance"

Outstanding directing

in a television movie or special

Eugene Ashe – Sylvie's Love

Outstanding short form series – comedy or drama

#FreeRayshawn

Outstanding performance in a short form series

Laurence Fishburne – #FreeRayshawn

Outstanding short form series – reality/nonfiction

"Between The Scenes" – The Daily Show with Trevor Noah

Outstanding documentary (television – series or special)

The Last Dance

Outstanding character voice-over performance (television)

Laya DeLeon Hayes – Doc McStuffins

Outstanding television movie, limited-series or dramatic special

Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C.J. Walker

Outstanding actor in a television movie, limited-series or dramatic special

Blair Underwood – Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C.J. Walker

Outstanding actress in a television movie, limited-series or dramatic special

Octavia Spencer – Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C.J. Walker

Outstanding host in a talk or news/information (series or special) – indi-

vidual or ensemble

Trevor Noah – The Daily Show with Trevor Noah

Outstanding host in a reality/reality competition, game show or variety (series or special) – individual or ensemble

Steve Harvey – Celebrity Family Feud

Outstanding guest performance – comedy or drama series

Loretta Devine- P-Valley

Outstanding breakthrough creative (television)

Raynelle Swilling – Cherish the Day

Outstanding directing in a documentary (television or motion picture)

Keith McQuirter – By Whatever Means Necessary: The Times of Godfather of Harlem

Outstanding writing in a documentary (television or motion picture)

Melissa Haizlip – Mr. SOUL!

Outstanding literary works

Fiction

The Awkward Black Man – Walter Mosley

Nonfiction

A Promised Land – Barack Obama

Debut author

We're Better Than This – Elijah Cummings

Biography/autobiography

The Dead Are Arising – Les Payne, Tamara Payne

Instructional

Vegetable Kingdom – Bryant Terry

Poetry

The Age of Phillis – Honoree Jeffers

Children

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Black America Needs a 'New Normal': Equitable credit access to build wealth

By Charlene Crowell

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed dual crises. Over 542,000 Americans lives were lost and continue to increase. At the same time, the rippling effects of a massive economic downturn has caused the nation to lose 9.5 million jobs - more losses than even those of the Great Recession, finds the University of New Hampshire's Carsey School of Public Policy.

Although many officials have called for a 'return to normal', millions of small businesses and communities need something new instead. In Black America especially, the 'old normal' never delivered equitable access to wealth-building opportunities as those that well-served served much of white America. Instead, a lengthy history of public policies designed to create and sustain a burgeoning middle class systemically excluded Blacks and other people of color.

Now, while federal lawmakers seek to understand how best to bring the nation out of health and financial crises, many advocates are calling for a new paradigm: intentional inclusion of all who have been shut out, knocked down and underserved. Recent testimony before Capitol Hill committees focused on different issues but led to the same conclusion: the time for change is now.

For example, comments during a February confirmation hearing for Adeyemo, nominated by President Biden to become Deputy Treasury Secretary, the nominee said, "Until we contain the pandemic, economic policy must remain focused on providing relief to those harmed by the public health crisis, especially those disproportionately impacted: low-income communities and communities of color. The pandemic has exacerbated inequality, strained families, and exposed disparities in

opportunity throughout our country that existed long before COVID-19. Without additional relief, this hardship will become even more acute and will inflict long-lasting pain on countless Americans."

At press time, the Senate was set to act on the Adeyemo nomination. If confirmed, he would become the agency's point-person to implement the executive order requiring all federal offices to submit diversity and inclusion plans to the office of Management and Budget. In the interim, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, as reported by the New York Times, announced plans to invest \$9 billion into Community Development Financial Institutions and Minority Depository Institutions as they look to step up lending.

Concurrently, the U.S. House of Representatives' Financial Services Committee has convened multiple hearings that featured expert witness testimony echoing the calls of Mr. Adeyemo.

On March 10 the full committee held a hearing entitled, Justice for All: Achieving Racial Equity Through Fair Access to Housing and Financial Services.

Rep. Maxine Waters, a California Congresswoman and committee chair's opening remarks set the tone of the forum.

"Today we are here to discuss steps that this Committee can take to create justice and achieve racial equity through access to fair housing and financial services.... And no matter where you are—and who you are—in America or around the world, institutional racism based on skin color creates barriers that impact social and economic outcomes," noted Ms. Waters.

Testifying on behalf of the Center for Responsible Lending, [crl-testimony-nikitra-bailey-hfsc-hearing-10mar2021.pdf%20(responsiblelending.org)]

Nikitra Bailey, Executive Vice President recounted the legacy of federal housing policies whose sum created today's financial inequities.

A 1933 federal housing program, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), supported redlining through its underwriting guidelines. As a result, Black and other communities of color, were denied access to mainstream financing. During the first 35 years of this program, only 2% of FHA insured mortgage loans went to Black and other homebuyers of color.

Similarly, the 1944 GI Bill, continued the same systemic discrimination. In Mississippi, for example, the 3,329 VA -approved mortgages included two Black servicemembers.

Fast forward to more recent times, by the early 2000s, half of all mortgages made to Black and Latino families during the run-up to the foreclosure crisis were unsustainable subprime loans -- despite these consumers having credit records that qualified for cheaper, safer and more responsible loans.

"Because of these lending practices," testified Bailey, "Black and Latino families lost over \$1 trillion dollars in wealth during the crisis. Moreover, Black homeownership has been the slowest to recover from the Great Recession. In fact, there would be 770,000 more Black homeowners if the homeownership rate recovered to its pre-crisis level in 2000... The racial wealth gap contributes to the fact that in the 46 largest housing markets in the country, a median income Black household could only afford 25 percent of homes on the market last year in comparison to the 57 percent that a median income white household could afford.32 It will require focused and bold action to reverse these inequities."

The following day, a subcommittee of House Financial Services convened

yet another hearing. Entitled, "Slipping through the Cracks: Policy Options to Help America's Consumers during the Pandemic" the session spanned access to affordable credit or small business capital, debt collection, and stained credit all became inevitable and further complicated the financial disadvantages faced by communities of color.

"Without a safety net or a cushion to fall back on, people of color are far less able to weather financial calamities," testified Carla Sanchez Adams, Managing Attorney with Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Inc. "With fewer assets to draw on, people of color find are more prone to poverty traps."

"Debt collection activities increased in 2020," continued Sanchez Adams, "as did profits for debt collectors. Auto reposessions were prevalent, and consumers were left at the mercy of their lenders. Consumers would benefit if all debt activity ceased during the pandemic. The problems with our credit reporting system continued and revealed the need for reform around what consumer information is reported and how it is reported during a pandemic.... Consumers would benefit from a moratorium

on the negative reporting of unpaid debt during the pandemic. Scams and fraud also surged."

Speaking on behalf of minority lenders and small businesses, Robert James II, president of Carver Development CDE and chair of the National Bankers Association, emphasized the importance of minority-owned small businesses, the lack of convenient access to mainstream banking as well as the dwindling number of minority depository institutions as issues demanding attention and correction.

"Minority-owned small businesses are the lifeblood of their communities," testified James II. "The pre-pandemic 1.1 million minority-owned small businesses employed more than 8.7 million workers and annually generated more than \$1 trillion in economic output. Women own nearly 300,000 of them, employing 2.4 million workers. Despite their significance, these businesses face underlying challenges that make them vulnerable during normal times."

"Black-owned businesses, overall, also tend to start out with far less capital, whether from investments or bank loans, than white-owned businesses do," continued James II. "And only

1 percent of black business owners get a bank loan in their first year of business, compared with 7 percent of white business owners. The COVID-19 crisis has compounded this issue: 42 percent of minority-owned small businesses responding to McKinsey's US Small Business Pulse Survey reported that obtaining credit was becoming increasingly difficult, compared with 29 percent of all respondents."

But credit terms and a pronounced shortage of accessible credit, according to James II, are equally lending conditions that must become more inclusive.

"Limited access to credit is a compounding factor that hurts the underlying health of minority-owned small businesses," said James II. "Research has found that black small-business owners were significantly more likely to be asked to provide more information about their personal financials—including personal financial statements and personal W-2 forms—when applying for small-business loans than white small-business owners were, even when controlling for credit score and business characteristics."

At the same time, as not-


See CREDIT, Page 12

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| 2259 | 7-11-21® Overall Odds are 1 in 4.87 | \$1 | 4/14/21 | 10/11/21 |
| 2245 | Million Dollar Loteria Overall Odds are 1 in 3.27 | \$20 | 4/14/21 | 10/11/21 |
| 2254 | \$500,000 Extreme Cash Overall Odds are 1 in 3.75 | \$10 | 4/22/21 | 10/19/21 |
| 2252 | \$5,000 Extreme Cash Overall Odds are 1 in 4.98 | \$1 | 4/25/21 | 10/22/21 |
| 2219 | Mega 7s Overall Odds are 1 in 3.05 | \$20 | 4/29/21 | 10/26/21 |

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Bimbo Bakeries USA pledges \$1 million commitment to minority equity organizations in addition to internal focus on diversity, equity and belonging

HORSHAM, PA — Bimbo Bakeries USA (BBU) has announced a new initiative to combat racial inequity and injustice and create lasting change. As part of that effort, BBU, a proud member of the Grupo Bimbo family of companies, has committed \$1 million to national and local organizations dedicated to furthering the education, financial well-being and health of Black and minority Americans. In addition, the company formed a Racial Equity Action Council and appointed Nikki Lang as its first Head of Diversity, Equity & Belonging.

“Last year, the U.S. experienced a reckoning moment with racial equity and injustice,” said Fred Penny, president of Bimbo Bakeries USA. “BBU acknowledged our responsibility to do more within our organization and our communities. We have taken the last nine months to engage and learn from our diverse associates and thoughtfully consider how we could

have the broadest impact.”

Penny said the company’s efforts have been focused on strengthening the culture of the organization by improving representation and retention of diverse associates, promoting racial appreciation and confronting explicit and implicit bias.

BBU’s \$1 million commitment includes \$500,000 dedicated to UNCF (United Negro College Fund). UNCF is America’s largest and most effective minority education organization, empowering more than 500,000 students to earn college degrees since it was founded. Through the partnership, BBU will provide scholarships, create an internship program and participate in the UNCF Student Leadership Conference.

“This generous gift will impact many talented and deserving students seeking to get to and through college,” said UNCF President and CEO Dr. Michael L. Lomax. “We thank BBU

for the investment and look forward to growing our partnership to support our students and historically Black colleges and universities. Support like this is critical, especially during the ongoing health pandemic we are all facing.”

BBU is also committing \$500,000 to nonprofit organizations throughout the country. BBU’s Racial Equity Action Council identified education, financial well-being and health as three key areas of focus and identified organizations that would benefit from BBU’s investment while also providing an opportunity for meaningful associate engagement to make a real difference. Some of the organizations BBU will partner with are:

- The Lebron James Family Foundation
 - 100 Black Men of the Bay Area
 - The Fund for the School District of Philadelphia
- “It is important to us that our partnerships extend beyond a financial donation.

Our Racial Equity Action Council has been instrumental in identifying organizations where BBU and our associates can make a real difference. We look forward to identifying additional partners and beginning our work with these organizations,” said Penny.

BBU’s financial commitment also extends to its brands. BBU is allocating a percentage of each of its brands’ marketing budgets toward minority-owned media partners.

The company’s Racial Equity Action Council, made up of Black and ally associates from across the country, is assisting BBU as it examines and evaluates its internal practices. The Council immediately got to work by:

- Enhancing the company’s recruiting, hiring and talent development processes, including creating a dedicated position to work on these efforts.
- Establishing and activating a Black Business Inclusion Group, Black Asso-

ciates and Allies Standing Together (BAAST).

- Reviewing supplier relationships to identify opportunities to partner with Black-, minority- and female-owned organizations.

- The company also announced that Nikki Lang, a 14-year associate, has been named the company’s first Head of Diversity, Equity & Belonging.

“Over the last nine months, it became clear that creating sustained and meaningful change in this area requires dedicated leadership and resources,” Penny said. “Nikki was the ideal person for this role, and I look forward to the progress her leadership will bring.”

Lang previously served as BBU’s Director of eCommerce and has served on BBU’s Diversity, Equity & Belonging Steering Committee for the past three years. In her new role, she will focus full-time on BBU’s overall Diversity, Equity & Belonging (DE&B) strategy, lead the

development and implementation of DE&B programs, and provide support and guidance to the Racial Equity Action Council and Business Unit DE&B Councils.

Lang will also partner and collaborate with leaders across BBU to ensure that the principles of diversity, equity and belonging are embedded in all of the company’s decision-making.

“I’m excited to lead the Diversity, Equity and Belonging initiatives for BBU,” said Lang. “Our intentional effort to improve from the inside will help BBU continue to improve equity internally and in our communities.”

“These are important first steps on our renewed Diversity, Equity & Belonging journey, but this is a long-term commitment. We hope these steps will be a catalyst to encourage others to consider how they can contribute to racial justice and equity in their communities,” said Penny.

The American Dream belongs to working Americans

By Ray Curry
Secretary-Treasurer, UAW

I grew up in a world that held the promise of a bright future for those who were willing to work hard. An America that said you can do better than your parents. A promise that meant job security with decent wages, health care, and benefits; a promise that meant training and education and a path to advancement for

so many; a promise that made owning a home and raising a family possible; a promise that guaranteed a middle-class life and the ability to retire one day after a job well done. It was the promise that gave rise to the American Dream and one that has shaped American values and vibrancy for generations.

Where is that promise today? Sadly, it is now a broken promise. Consider how

our landscape has changed over the last 40 years as corporate friendly politicians have increasingly moved to undermine our working class, as we have continued to put corporate greed ahead of the people whose work makes corporate profits possible.

A harsh reality

Consider how the terrain has toughened. Consider the damage done as we have increasingly waged

war on our nation’s unions and the voice for labor they provide. Here are just a few harsh realities: Today, our country ranks at the bottom of industrialized countries relative to employee benefits like healthcare, parental leave, paid vacation and sick days, unemployment and retirement security.

According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), the U.S. is the only advanced

country where workers are not guaranteed vacation time. In contrast, Europeans get at least 20 days of legally mandated vacation days, and some countries require at least 30. We are the only industrialized nation that does not offer universal healthcare for its citizens. This is despite the fact that we spend more on healthcare than other high-income countries relative to the size of our economy.

And, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), less than 22 percent of Americans have employer-paid pensions, and only half participate in a retirement savings plan.

Rather than the leader — as we once were — we are more in line with the Czech Republic, Latvia, South Korea and Mexico as the least generous countries

See DREAM, Page 14

CREDIT, from Page 11

ed by James II, from 2009 to the second quarter of 2018, nationally, the number of Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs) dropped from 215 to 155. MDIs are also much smaller in assets than the average non-MDI bank.

“Black and Hispanic MDIs have average assets

of \$245 million and \$2.7 billion, respectively,” said James II, “compared to an average of \$3.1 billion for all US banks.”

“Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, US household debt was on the rise, reaching over \$14 trillion,” testified [crl-testimony-ash-

ley-harrington-hfsc-hearing-11mar2021.pdf%20(responsiblelending.org)] Ashley Harrington, CRL’s Federal Advocacy Director. “While much of this debt stems from mortgages, a growing amount stems from non-mortgage consumer debt, including student loans, credit cards, installment loans, and auto loans. As people continue

to lose jobs and have hours cut, and as deferred rental payments and other debts come due, we can expect to see an uptick in delinquencies and defaults on these non-mortgage debts.”

Harrington offered a key recommendation to federal lawmakers that could begin to allow consumers to have more control over their own financial management.

“Allowing every adult to save and hold onto at least \$1000 per week in wages, and \$12,000 per bank account,” urged Harrington, “will help families avoid eviction and afford essential costs like medicine and food. While family savings cannot replace the social safety net, it is critical that families be able to provide for themselves at a mini-

mum, basic level. These protections are more urgent than ever: recent research has established that 8 million more families have fallen into poverty since May 2020.”

Charlene Crowell is a senior fellow with the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.

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Ongoing City of Dallas

The City of Dallas' HR Dept is currently accepting apps for the Budget and Contract Administrator position. Bachelor's degree in a business/public administration, human resources or healthcare administration field, plus 7 yrs exp.

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Ongoing House of Blues

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Ongoing First Fridays Virtual Job Fair

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On-Going Customer Rep job fairs

Pro Staff in Arlington will be hosting an in office Customer Service Representative Job Fair for a call center located downtown Dallas every Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 700 Highlander Blvd. Suite 110. The positions pay between \$12 - \$13.50 per hour plus up to \$1.50 an hour in performance pay. The workdays will vary, must be available 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., with overtime as needed. Must have at least one year of customer service experience.

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ral Counseling Center at 972-526-4525 or email the church at www.bethelbiblefellowship.org

Note: Until further notice, all services at Bethel church will be via Video-Conferencing and perhaps other churches as well; log on individual churches websites for details. See Bethel's website www.bethelbiblefellowship.org

for their details because of the Coronavirus.

celebrate service to God, our community and all mankind.

April 11, 9:45 am

Please join us in our quiet time, "Prayer and Meditation" followed by Morning Worship. You will be blessed and inspired as we

April 14, 7 pm

You are invited to join us via video-conferencing for

See CHURCH, Page 14

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

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CHURCH, from Page 13

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April 11,
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April 14, 7 pm
Join us in our Wednesday's 12 Noon-Day Live, Prayer and Bible Study class and/or our Wednesday Night Live, Prayer and Bible Study at 7 p.m. to learn more about God's Word. Be encouraged by God's plan for your maturity and His glory; and most of all; be prepared to grow.

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not be room to receive."
- Malachi 3:8-10

Check "IBOC's" website for details of their services until further notice because of the Coronavirus.

April 9, 7 pm
All men are invited to Men's Ministry meeting each Friday night at 8 pm, (IBOC promotes proactive male leadership.)

April 11, 10 a.m.
Join us for our Morning Service; and don't forget to invite family and friends

to join us as we celebrate our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

April 12, 7 pm
You are invited to Monday School to see what God has to say to us in His Holy Word.

Pastor Rickie Rush
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Check "SMBC's" website for details of their services until further notice because of the coronavirus.

April 11, 8 and 11 am
You are invited to our Worship Services as we honor God for His goodness and faithfulness.

April 12, 7 to 8 pm
Every Monday Night
Sister II Sister (Women's Mission) in the Main Fellowship Hall and the Men II Men Bible Study in the Youth Church Sanctuary (Chapel).

April 14, 7 pm
You're invited to our Wednesday's Bible Study class; you will learn what God has to say to us. Come and be encouraged by God's plan for your spiritual growth and His glory.

Dr. Isaiah Joshua, Jr.
Senior Pastor
920 E. 14th Street
Plano, TX 75074
972-423-6695
www.smbcplano.org

DREAM, from Page 12

for workers. For reference, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland are the top nations for worker benefits.

So, how did we get here?

Union membership has been falling for decades. This lessening of worker representation has resulted in the erosion of solid employee benefits and good wages, a loss of secure, stable jobs, and diminished worker rights. Right-to-Work laws (designed to weaken unions and the ability of workers to bargain) in many states have made it much more difficult for working people to form or join unions. These laws have predictably resulted in lower wages and diminished employer accountability.

Over the past 35 years, the number of U.S. workers who are members of labor unions has been cut in half, according to the Pew Research Center. In 1954, nearly 35 percent of all employed U.S. workers were members of unions. Now

that number is about 10.5 percent despite the fact that approval of unions is at a 50-year high.

While the unionization of workers has diminished, wealth inequality has accelerated. U.S. Federal Reserve data shows that from 1989 to 2020, U.S. net worth became increasingly concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans possessing 40 percent of the nation's wealth. In 2019, the CEO to worker ratio for compensation was 320 to 1 — a staggering gap.

It is time to close that gap again. It is time to strengthen our unions, to reach out to new groups of workers who want to unionize and pave the way for enhancing and encouraging collective bargaining, forming unions, and joining together for solid, secure, workers' rights and benefits.

It does not have to be this way

It is time to commit to our workforce. To once again be that nation that

cares about the hard-working women and men in this country and is a world leader in workers' rights and compensation. Moreover, the economic reality is that we NEED unions. A diminished union presence forces people to work two and three jobs just to make ends meet. Many of those jobs are in the service sector, with low wages, no benefits, and little room for advancement. It is the American worker that drives our economy, not wealthy CEOs.

It is time for our state and national leaders and representatives to come together to make a change. It is time to pass the \$15 minimum wage, to sign the PRO Act into legislation to protect workers, to keep good paying American jobs at home and to set America back on the right track.

The American Dream needs to again belong to those whose dreams defined it, and whose participation is vital to its achievement. We need to once again be a nation that champions safe working conditions, good

benefits and wages, and the ability to have some say in the workplace. We need to make the PRO Act the law of the land.

We must all come together and deliver. We made a

promise decades ago, one we should now be making for our children as it was made for our generation. Please let your support for the PRO Act be known. The bill has passed the

House and will face tougher opposition in the Senate. Please let your representative know how you feel.

America should not and must not be a nation of broken dreams.

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Celebrating influential women



Sister Tarpley
NDG
Religion
Editor

(Editor's Note: This column originally ran on 4/9/2020)

A nonprofit educational organization founded in 1980 to bring women's stories and contributions to the fore.

The project was the force behind getting Congress to designate Women's History Month officially. And, I acknowledge Black women only.

Marian R. Croak is Senior Vice President of Applications and Services Infrastructure. Named to that role in 2012, she is respon-

sible for a team of more than 2,000 developers, engineers and program managers who manage over 500 programs impacting AT&T's enterprise, consumer, and mobility services and create the tools developers inside and outside AT&T are using to build new apps and services. Her team is tightly integrated with the AT&T Foundry innovation centers in Palo Alto, Calif., Plano, Texas, and Ra'anana, Israel.

Activist was a driving force in the creation of the country's premier civil rights organizations.

After graduating as valedictorian from North Carolina's Shaw University in 1927, Baker moved to New York City during the depression.

She was a founding member of the Young Ne-



Mr. Tre & Mrs. Tameka Williams presenting Sister Tarpley with a Community plaque for her work in the Carrollton-Farmers area as they were distributing food at Dan Long Middle School

groes Cooperative League, whose members pooled funds to buy products and services at reduced cost.

In 1957 Baker and several Southern Black ministers and activists established the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a major

force in organizing the civil rights movement.

Henrietta Mahim Bradberry was born in Franklin, Kentucky in 1903. This Black innovator was a housewife and inventor who held two patents. The first, for a bed rack attach-

ment that allowed for the airing-out of clothes. Then Henrietta converted the rack into a new way for torpedoes to be shot from submarines!

Bessie Coleman, the first Black American woman aviator, had a postage stamp issued in her honor in 1995.

Ethel L. Payne was the first Black woman to receive accreditation as a White House correspondent.

Susan Knox's fluting iron made pressing the embellishments easier. The trademark featured the inventor's picture and appeared on each iron.

Ruffles, fluted collars, and pleats were very popular in Victorian-era clothing.

Evelyn Ashford, winner of four Olympic gold medals in 1984, 1988, and 1992. Also won a silver medal in 1988 and was inducted into Track and Field and Women's Sports Hall of Fame in 1997.

Two famous quotations by Ashford: "I take pride in everything I do. I don't want to be handed anything. I want to earn it."

"I can't run forever. I decided to go back to school for my degree, because I know now there's more to life than track."

Seeing can be rather expensive

By Dr. James L. Snyder

As I get older, and my goal is to get as old as I can, I begin to realize some of the things I haven't noticed in my life. You know how it is; things creep up little by little, and then all of a sudden, there it is.

About two years ago, when I was at the eye doctor, he noticed some things in my eyes.

"You have cataracts in both eyes."

I was caught by surprise and did know what he was talking about, but I responded despite that.

"No, Dr.," I said rather seriously, "I do not have a Cadillac, let alone two, but I do have a Chevrolet. I'm quite happy with my Chevrolet; thank you."

The doctor looked at me as though he was looking at some crazy person. Then he said something that somewhat confused me. "Do you think I'm a psychologist?"

Looking at me straight in the eyes, he said, "You have cataracts in your eyes."

"Well," I said, looking at him, "I did have my eye on several Cadillacs, the one I

liked was a brilliant blue. The only problem with that Cadillac was I couldn't afford it. But I must tell you I'm still eyeing that Cadillac."

"Look at me," the doctor said rather sternly, "I am not talking about Cadillacs; I'm talking about cataracts in your eyes. You will need surgery to remove those cataracts."

He then explained what this cataract business was all about and how I should go and get them removed and replaced.

Then the day of the actual surgery came, and I was chauffeured by the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage to the eye clinic and went in for the preparation.

And I went in, and the nurse took me to prepare for the doctor's surgery. The nurse spent about an hour and a half with me while the doctor used only 15 minutes.

She was finishing all of the prep work and was ready to take me in so that the doctor could do the surgery on my cataract.

At that point, I said very seriously, "Could I change

my mind?"

She looked at me and sighed very deeply, and I could see she was not a happy camper. But she said very calmly, "Yes, you can change your mind if you really want to."

"Great," I chirped, "can I have your mind?"

Staring at me, she then gave me a piece of her mind. I didn't see that one coming.

The surgery went fine, and I was surprised. I have been wearing glasses for a long time, and now, out of my left eye, I could see almost perfectly, whatever that is. I couldn't see up close, and the doctor said I would probably need reading glasses. But I have never seen the world so bright as I did that day.

Darkness seems to creep up on a person without that person even knowing it. That happened with me. Nothing is better than seeing the brightness of the light.

As my wife was driving me home, I happen to think of a verse of Scripture. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be

afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

Sometimes I get discouraged by the darkness around me and don't realize how dark it is. But when I put my eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible, I see that marvelous light that lighteth the world.

Dr. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship. The church web site is www.whatafellowship.com.

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NDG Book Review: 'We Are Each Other's Harvest'

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

One little hole in the ground.

That's all it takes, as big around as your little finger, a pencil eraser, a coffee stirrer. A tiny fissure in the Earth, that's what you need to grow dinner next week or next winter, flowers for your table, sustenance for your animals or, as in the new book "We Are Each Other's Harvest" by Natalie Baszile, a tie to your past.

Years ago, while taking weekly provisions to an elderly relative, Natalie Baszile learned that the presence of food in a neigh-



borhood (or its lack) could be a racial issue. Shortly afterward, she discovered that her ancestors had been involved in farming, long before she was born. That's not unusual: as we learn in the introduction here, nearly all African Americans today can claim that farming is in their genes.

It's never been a smooth thing, though.

Over and over in previous decades, Black farmers paid faithfully each month to buy farms from white landowners, only to ultimately, cruelly be denied ownership. Others persevered, and then lost their land through lack of financial literacy, or problems with banks, the USDA or the Farm Service Administration (FSA), the latter which, suggested one farmer, seemed to have been created to make problems.

And yet, there were bright spots: like folks a century ago, Black farmers know that sticking togeth-

er is best for all. They're speaking up and persevering, in planting and paperwork. Black farmers have learned to think around bigger issues by forming Black-owned co-ops, teaching new farmers, making sure the next generation wants ownership of the business, and ignoring old myths that say women don't farm. Black farmers are mentoring. They're redefining the word "farm." They're doing what it takes to keep possession of their land because for them, there just isn't any better way to live.

So you know where your food comes from. Bonus

points if you grew it yourself. Even better, when you read "We Are Each Other's Harvest" after you're done weeding.

Using a little of this (fiction excerpts, poetry, and quotations), along with a little of that (essays, interviews, first-person tales, and history), author Natalie Baszile gives praise to Black farmers and ranchers, showing that what may seem like a newly-discovered connectedness to the land goes way back. It is, in fact, a slice of the past that's rich as a fertile field, but also loaded with rocks that crushed many dreams.

And yet, while the stories

Baszile lets loose need a wider audience today – they can't be silent anymore – anger at the past isn't the reason for this book. No, this is much more of a prayer for the Black stewards of the land, and for those who've listened to their hearts and stood, one hand filled with dirt and the other with seeds.

Whether you are a farmer, know one, or accept the fruits of one's labor, this book is the perfect meditation. Lush as a spring morning but sharp as barbed wire, "We Are Each Other's Harvest" is a book for the well-grounded.

LEWIS, from Page 2

tion, Lewis recently joined Bunker Labs Veteran In Residence Business Cohort, where she partners with other veteran-owned businesses to help obtain grant funding.

She holds professional certifications in proposal writing for foundation, corporate, government grants, grant research, and budget development.

Lewis also possesses ex-

tensive knowledge in program design and development, executive and staff training, recruiting and retention, collaborative management, and marketing.

"I challenge myself to do something. If I fail, I fail," Lewis decided.

"But if I succeed, it gives me more ammunition to overcome additional obstacles, and life is nothing but obstacles. You have to have that drive, that mindset of being determined. And never be afraid to ask questions."

JACKSON, from Page 2

African Americans in particular are incarcerated at over 5 times the rate of white Americans.

These numbers have remained high even as overall crime has de-

clined. Over the last two decades the rate of violent crime in the U.S. has fallen by about 20 percent, while the number of incarcerated individuals has grown by 50 percent.



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