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Congress passes EQUAL Act, a bill that seeks to eliminate sentencing disparities harshly doled out to African Americans

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Two minutes before members of the U.S. House of Representatives cast their votes, District of Columbia Attorney General Karl Racine weighed in on H.R. 1693 – the EQUAL Act.

"Congress should pass the EQUAL Act to finally end the unfair sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine," Racine demanded.

"By eliminating the disparity entirely, the bill would address longstanding racial discrimination in our criminal justice policy. This reform is overdue."

The reform is now closer to happening after Congress on Tuesday, September 28, passed the legislation by a 143-16 vote – the only opposition came from Republicans.

The measure now heads to the Senate for consideration.

The bipartisan EQUAL Act would eliminate the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine. It also would allow those currently serving time for crack offenses to motion for reduced sentences.

Under current federal laws, individuals caught with 28 grams of crack receive the same sentence as someone caught with 500 grams of



For decades, African American defendants have received harsher sentences for comparable crimes than white defendants, especially in the area of drug offenses.
(Photo: Edne, Janine and Jim / Flickr)

powder cocaine, despite the American Medical Association's findings that there is no chemical difference between the two substances.

Starting with the 1980s version of the "War on Drugs," those caught with small amounts of crack – primary people of color – received decades longer prison sentences than those with powder cocaine – overwhelmingly white individuals.

According to Human Rights Watch, African Americans comprise 62.7 percent and white people 36.7 percent of all drug offenders admitted to state prison.

Federal surveys and other data clearly show that this racial dispar-

ity bears scant relation to racial differences in drug offending.

"There are, for example, five times more white drug users than Black," Human Rights Watch officials wrote in a recent report.

"Relative to population, Black men are admitted to state prison on drug charges at a rate that is 13.4 times greater than that of white men. In large part because of the extraordinary racial disparities in incarceration for drug offenses, Black people are incarcerated for all offenses at 8.2 times the rate of whites," officials at the nonprofit

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CMS will foot the bill for booster shots

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Monica Munoz Martinez

People In The News ...



Dr. Yolanda Lewis-Ragland



Edgar Barrera

NDG Quote of the Week: "Hate is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated."
—Coretta Scott King

Monica Munoz Martinez

AUSTIN, Texas — Monica Muñoz Martinez, a historian at The University of Texas at Austin, has been awarded a MacArthur fellowship, often referred to as the “genius grant.” The award recognizes her work to recover untold histories of racial violence along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Martinez is one of 25 individuals selected for the five-year fellowship — a no-strings-attached, \$625,000 “investment in a person’s originality, insight and potential.” Recipients are nominated based on



proven talent and extraordinary originality and dedication to their creative pursuits.

Martinez’s research and public history projects bring long-observed cases

of racial violence along the Texas-Mexico border to the forefront so communities can reckon with their past and work toward racial healing. Her work combines traditional archival research with oral histories and memorabilia from victims’ descendants to piece together a fuller picture of the past and transform modern narratives.

“People have a right to learn truthful accounts of history in schools, museums, the news and popular culture, even when those histories are troubling,” said Martinez, an associate professor in the Department of

History. “This is especially important when lessons of the past can help inspire a more inclusive and equitable future.”

To amplify her research, Martinez wrote an award-winning book, “The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas,” in which she recounts a period of state-sanctioned racial terror against Mexicans in the early 20th century. She co-founded the public history nonprofit Refusing to Forget to increase public awareness of these events through museum exhibits and curricular materials and by placing

historical markers in areas where such killings took place.

Her current project builds on her previous work by establishing the first national record of racist violence to recount lesser-known lynchings, homicides, policing shootings, bombings, physical assault and community banishment.

“Dr. Martinez’s work as a scholar and public historian is a shining example of rigorous, engaged scholarship in the humanities,” said Ann Huff Stevens, dean of the College of Liberal Arts. “Her careful research into the history of racial and

ethnic violence comes at a time when society continues to wrestle with the past and work toward a better future. Her brilliance, engagement with the community, and the accessibility of her work are all tributes to Dr. Martinez and to the role of public research institutions.”

Martinez is one of nine UT Austin faculty members to have been awarded MacArthur Foundation fellowships: Livia Schiavinator Eberlin, Jacqueline Jones, David Hillis, Nancy Moran, Nora C. England, Philip Uri Treisman, Thomas G. Palaima and Karen K. Uhlenbeck.

Dr. Yolanda Lewis-Ragland

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Dr. Yolanda Lewis-Ragland, a double-board certified physician in pediatrics and obesity medicine, mimes few words when protecting children.

After all, Dr. Lewis-Ragland has lived and practiced medicine in the Ward 8 section of Washington, D.C., for nearly two decades.

In one of the nation’s capital’s poorest and most traumatized communities, Dr. Lewis-Ragland has gained the kind of trust and respect



from residents that other physicians often find elusive.

That respect and trust remain crucial as medical experts and providers attempt to give more access to the all-important Covid-19 vaccines many people of color

hesitate to accept.

“We did a study and came up with the top reasons for hesitancy,” said Dr. Lewis-Ragland, a Children’s Hospital pediatrician and owner and CEO of Family Fitness and Wellness for Community Health.

Dr. Lewis-Ragland also counts as the founder and President of Dr. Yolanda Cares Foundation, her nonprofit organization that focuses on reducing health disparities in at-risk communities.

nities.

“Negative coverage about the vaccine was one of the reasons,” Dr. Lewis-Ragland reflected, sitting in a white executive office chair inside the National Newspaper Publishers Association’s (NNPA) state-of-the-art television studio in Northwest, D.C.

“One of the top reasons also was not understanding the rapid development of the vaccine and needing more clarity,” Dr. Lewis-Ragland

explained while prepping for an appearance with NNPA President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., on his PBS-TV and PBS-World news and talk show, The Chavis Chronicles.

“Community members didn’t understand, and they had no one who looks like them to talk to,” Dr. Lewis-Ragland continued.

“We need physicians of color having these conversations. I get all of my vaccines done because my parents are

asking me direct questions. Kids are telling me what they see on Tik Tok and online, so I’ll have the candid conversation.”

Dr. Lewis-Ragland — the author of two pandemic-influenced books, “Navigating a Triple Pandemic (Volume 1),” and “Navigating a Triple Pandemic: Volume 2: COVID Virus and Vaccine Facts, Fiction & Fears” — said there’s a huge uptick in the number of Ward 8 parents receiving the vaccine.

Edgar Barrera

Latin Grammy and Grammy award winning songwriter, producer, recording engineer, and musician, Edgar Barrera, has once again been nominated for a Latin Grammy, this time receiving 12 nominations across different categories. The 22nd annual Latin Grammy Award Show will take place on Thursday, November 18, at 8 p.m. EST in Las Vegas, NV and will be broadcast live on Univision.

The chart-topping producer is nominated in the following categories: Producer of the Year, Record of the Year, Album of the Year, Song of the Year, Best



Pop Song, Best Pop Vocal Album, Best Urban Fusion/Performance, Best Regional Song, Best Ranchera/Mariachi Album and Best Norteño Album. His 12 nominations this year come at no surprise as Edgar Barrera has won 14 Latin

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Ask Not What the Vaccine Can Do for You...

By Christopher Gilbert, Ph.D.

"What the virus demonstrates most loudly is that despite our independent choice in vaccinating or not, we are all leaves on the same tree, and we must act accordingly. Therein lies the real cure!"

There is no right way to do the wrong thing no matter how many ways we convince ourselves otherwise. This is especially true when it comes to the deadly decisions demonstrated in the tragic rise in hospitalizations and deaths among the unvaccinated.

Starting in 2020, the global pandemic became a searing spotlight on our interconnectedness and dependence upon one another. This highly volatile virus is truly an acid test for our nation's levels of cooperation. Vulnerability to this disease is shared across cities, states, the nation and around the world by all populations, age groups, economic and social classes, national sovereignties, education levels, political and religious proclivities, races, ethnicities, genders and more. There is no protection for anyone unvaccinated.

Beyond vaccines, the cure for this universally shared bug is a wide-spread and readily used inoculation effort. What the virus demonstrates most loudly is that despite our independent choice in vaccinating or not, we are all leaves on the same tree, and we must act accordingly. Therein lies the real cure!

Our own moral progress enables us to consider our impact on others. For the long-term survival of family, community, city and state, we are tasked by this pandemic to operate under a more universal morality. Independent choice making without considering our impact on others is moot!

Perhaps as an alternative, we should consider the classic tale of the 'Good Samaritan.'

The story of a man who risks himself on a dangerous road to help another poor, unfortunate traveler, left beaten and robbed, is not a story of punishment or reward, sainthood or piety. Rather, it is a parable about the human capacity to develop and demonstrate the three pillars of wisdom- rational intelligence, emotional intelligence, and

“Rational intelligence is knowing the right thing to do. Emotional intelligence is feeling right about what you do. And spiritual intelligence is doing the right thing sometimes despite what you know or how you feel about it.”

spiritual intelligence.

Rational intelligence is knowing the right thing to do. Emotional intelligence is feeling right about what you do. And spiritual intelligence is doing the right thing sometimes despite what you know or how you feel about it. In this way, the Good Samaritan urges us to step beyond our own concerns and into the shoes of others, even our enemies, in order to understand their concerns.

What's the difference between the person who stopped to help and all the others who passed the victim by? It is the framing of the questions they asked of themselves. To the selfish, the important question is, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" To the empathetic and selfless, the important question is, "If I don't stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

In the second question—and its answer—are evidenced all three pillars of wisdom.

Perhaps then, there is far more benefit in framing the question about vaccination not around what will happen to me if I get it, but rather, what will happen to others if I do not get vaccinated. Especially those still unvaccinated and at high risk.

The very way the question about vaccination is framed adds poignancy to the concept that the quality of our lives is not measured in the answers we find, but in the questions we ask.

So, what if we ask the right question?

There's a lot of voice-raising right now over our liberties, as different entities struggle to corral this pandemic. Individuals and groups focused on individual freedoms clash with those who prioritize the long-term health of the community. From an ethical perspective, especially in a crisis, if spread of a virus is accelerated by groups and guilds who prioritize individual freedoms but is eradicated in an environment focused on common moral rights, such as everyone's right to health and safety, the latter community takes precedence because it also more effectively protects the individual. The big push for the Rubella measles inoculations in the 70's, seat belt laws, no smoking buildings and restaurants, etc., are long standing examples of the right priorities that protect individuals here.

As with global warming and pollution, COVID-19

requires no passport, visa or citizenship card to cross borders and influence entire societies. Manmade boundaries and national sovereignties prove to be no inoculation from its affects. As a people, we face this sickness together; we fight this sickness together; and we finish this sickness together.

Selflessness is a part of the norms in every society. In that regard, selflessness is a universal virtue. We've seen it demonstrated here countless times. Consider during 9/11 how the first responders and others acted so selflessly to rescue and minimize injuries and deaths. What is Covid doing to our country but creating injuries and deaths now on a daily basis.

The call for selflessness is what is being trumpeted to all of us now. Believe it or not, when it comes to vaccination one person can make a global difference—save the world you might rightly say. Is the effect of one person making the right, ethical choice to vaccinate miniscule? It certainly feels that way. Still, saving the world aside, I am reminded of a quote by the famous American cultural anthropologist Margret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Christopher Gilbert, PhD, is the author of the bestselling *There's No Right Way to Do the Wrong Thing* and his newest release, *The Noble Edge: Reclaiming an Ethical World One Choice at a Time*, is an inspirational conversation about truth and trust. You can find more information about Chris Gilbert here: www.NobleEdgeConsulting.com Watch the book trailer here: <https://bit.ly/NobleEdgeBookTrailer>.

Keep up with the news

O N L I N E

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CMS will pay for COVID-19 boosters, eligible consumers can receive free

Following the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) recent action that authorized a booster dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for certain high-risk populations and a recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will continue to provide coverage for this critical protection from the virus, including booster doses, without cost sharing.

Beneficiaries with Medicare pay nothing for COVID-19 vaccines or their administration, and there is no applicable copayment, coinsurance or deductible. In addition, thanks to the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP), nearly all Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries must receive coverage of COVID-19 vaccines



CDC / Unsplash

and their administration, without cost-sharing. COVID-19 vaccines and their administration, including boosters, will also be covered without cost-sharing for eligible consumers of most issuers of health insurance in the commercial market. People can visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) (English) or [vacunas.gov](https://www.vacunas.gov) (Spanish) to search for vaccines nearby.

"The Biden-Harris Administration has made the

safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines accessible and free to people across the country. CMS is ensuring that cost is not a barrier to access, including for boosters," said CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure. "CMS will pay Medicare vaccine providers who administer approved COVID-19 boosters, enabling people to access these vaccines at no cost."

CMS continues to explore ways to ensure maximum access to COVID-19 vaccinations. More information regarding the CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Program Provider Requirements and how the COVID-19 vaccine is provided through that program at no cost to recipients is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/vaccination-provider-support.html> and through the CMS COVID-19 Provider Toolkit.

New Medicare.gov tool to compares nursing home vaccination rates

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is making it easier to check COVID-19 vaccination rates for nursing home staff and residents with a new feature on Medicare.gov. Today's announcement makes vaccination data

available in a user-friendly format to help people make informed decisions when choosing a nursing home for themselves or a loved one. CMS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are also continuing to use this data to monitor vaccine uptake among residents and staff and to identify facilities that may need additional resources or assistance to respond to the pandemic.

"CMS wants to empower nursing home residents, their families and caregivers with the information they need when choosing nursing home providers for their loved ones. As we continue to work with our partners to monitor the spread of COVID-19 and keep nursing home residents safe, we want to give people a new tool to visualize this data to help them make

informed decisions," said CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure. "CMS knows that nursing home staff want to protect their residents and is calling on them to get vaccinated now. The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective and accessible to all at no out-of-pocket cost."

Medicare and Medicaid-certified nursing homes have been required to report weekly COVID-19 vaccination data for both residents and staff since May, and CMS has been posting the information on the CMS COVID-19 Nursing Home Data website. The addition of this new consumer-friendly data feature is another valuable tool for patients, residents, and families to understand the quality of nursing homes when making health care decisions.

DEA launches 'One Pill Can Kill' campaign against lethal fake drugs

The DEA has issued a public safety alert to warn Americans of the alarming increase in the lethality and availability of fake pills containing fentanyl and methamphetamine. Criminal drug networks are mass-producing counterfeit pills and falsely marketing them as legitimate prescriptions in an effort to deceive

the American public.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 93,000 people died from a drug overdose in the United States in 2020. Synthetic opioids like fentanyl, the primary driver of this record increase, is frequently found in counterfeit pills.

Some of the most com-

mon counterfeit pills are made to look like prescription opioids such as oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet), hydrocodone (Vicodin), and alprazolam (Xanax); or stimulants like amphetamines (Adderall). Drug traffickers are using fake pills to exploit the opioid crisis and prescription drug misuse in the United

States. Fake prescription pills are widely accessible and often sold on social media and e-commerce platforms – making them available to anyone with a smartphone, including minors.

Counterfeit pills have been identified in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. DEA laboratory

testing reveals that two out of every five pills with fentanyl contain at least two milligrams, which is considered a potentially lethal dose.

The DEA reminds consumer to only take medica-

tions prescribed to you by a trusted medical professional and dispensed by a licensed pharmacist. Any pills not meeting this standard should be considered unsafe and potentially deadly.

CDC releases statement on ACIP booster recommendations

CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., M.P.H., endorsed the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' (ACIP) recommendation for a booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in certain populations and also recommended a booster dose for those in high risk occupational and institutional settings. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) authorization and CDC's guidance for use are important steps forward as we work to stay ahead of the virus and keep Ameri-

cans safe.

This updated interim guidance from CDC allows for millions of Americans who are at highest risk for COVID-19 to receive a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster shot to help increase their protection.

CDC recommends:

- people 65 years and older and residents in long-term care settings should receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series,
- people aged 50–64

years with underlying medical conditions should receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series,

- people aged 18–49 years with underlying medical conditions may receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks, and
- people aged 18–64 years who are at increased risk

for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting may receive a booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine at least 6 months after their Pfizer-BioNTech primary series, based on their individual benefits and risks.

Many of the people who are now eligible to receive a booster shot received their initial vaccine early in the vaccination program and will benefit from additional protection. With the Delta

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Parker-Mims elected Denton County Democratic Party Chair

Delia Parker-Mims, longtime Lewisville family attorney and previous candidate, was elected chair of the Denton County Democratic Party (DCDP) Friday, September 24, 2021, at 7 p.m.

by a unanimous vote.

The election is historic since Parker-Mims is the first African American to hold this office.

Parker-Mims will immediately replace Jennifer

Skidonenko who resigned September 14 to fill the unexpired term until the primary election in spring 2022.

Parker-Mims stated that DCDP Democrats are “one team and that she and her

fellow Democrats will identify, engage and excite Democrats to elect Democratic candidates.”

“I am grateful for the trust the Denton County Democrats have placed in me. We

will move forward together to succeed,” said Parker-Mims. “Democrats are not a monolithic group. We are a big-tent party that represents the broad interests of all Americans.”



Delia Parker-Mims
(Courtesy photo)

Congresswoman Bass says it's more than just Manchin and Sinema holding back Democratic agenda

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

When President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris defeated Donald Trump and Mike Pence to win the White House, the new administration claimed that they had won the battle for the soul of America.

Less than two months later, when Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff defeated Republicans Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue to represent Georgia in the U.S. Senate, it was Black America that mostly breathed a sigh of relief.

Democrats had no more excuses.

After four years of a race-baiting and mostly oppressive administration, a better tomorrow had finally arrived.

With a Democrat in the White House and party control of the House and Senate, indeed, African Americans and other communities of color could expect nothing less than po-



Congresswoman Karen Bass told NNPA journalists and publishers that “It’s important to understand that there are senators on our side of the aisle [aside from Sen. Manchin and Sen. Sinema, that don’t want to get rid of the filibuster.” (Photo via NNPA)

lice reform, voting rights, and a renewed push for a social safety net.

While President Biden has utilized executive orders to reset some of his predecessors’ Jim Crow-like policies, lawmakers have thus far failed to protect voters of color, assure police accountability, and correct centuries-old legislation that negatively affects minorities.

“It’s so important for our people to understand why,” remarked Congresswoman Karen Bass.

She held a zoom conference with journalists and publishers from the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), representing the Black Press of America.

“They say Democrats control the House, the Senate, and the White House, and we still can’t get anything done,” Congresswoman Bass stated.

“It’s important to know that we were successful twice in the House in getting the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act passed,

only to have it die in the Senate because of Senate rules around the filibuster,” she said.

“It’s important to understand that there are senators on our side of the aisle that don’t want to get rid of the filibuster,” she advised.

“The Congressional Black Caucus did what we were supposed to do in the House, and there’s nothing we could do about the Senate.”

While the sentiments were evident, Congresswoman Bass went in on some members of her party – specifically Democrats in the Senate.

The congresswoman acknowledged that Senators Joe Manchin (D-West Virginia) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Arizona) oppose any tinkering of the filibuster, the archaic and racist rule that requires bipartisan agreements on legislation.

While some have described Sen. Manchin as

a Republican in Democrat clothing, Sen. Sinema openly has mingled with organizations opposed to most of President Biden’s plan.

The Arizona senator reportedly has received nearly \$1 million from groups and corporations opposed to the police reform, the American Rescue Plan, and the Build Back Better agenda.

Congresswoman Bass said Sens. Manchin and Sinema might be a front for other Democrats, who throw rocks and hide their hands.

“I know Manchin and Sinema don’t want to do that [eliminate the filibuster],” Congresswoman Bass asserted.

“But here’s the thing,” she said, now loaded for bear.

“I don’t think it’s just Manchin and Sinema. I think there are other Democratic Senators, but we

don’t know who they are. I think Manchin and Sinema are just the faces of this,” the congresswoman declared in a stunning rebuke of some party members.

“Both Manchin and Sinema have been re-elected, and they have five more years to go. They know that in year five, everybody will come back to them and vote for them because they know that we need Democrats.”

Congresswoman Bass didn’t stop there.

“The Senate Parliamentarian that the Democrats hired seems to have an awful lot of power,” she continued.

“I think if I hired someone, where’s my power? Is there a history of Democrats or Republicans, anyone, pushing the Parliamentarian to do what’s needed as opposed to ‘asking’ the Parliamentarian? I don’t know the history, but I am curious.”

CDC, from Page 4

variant’s dominance as the circulating strain and cases of COVID-19 increasing significantly across the United States, a booster shot will help strengthen protection against severe disease in those populations who are at high-risk for exposure to COVID-19 or the complications from severe disease.

“I believe we can best serve the nation’s public health needs by providing booster doses for the elderly, those in long-term care facilities, people with

underlying medical conditions, and for adults at high risk of disease from occupational and institutional exposures to COVID-19,” Walensky said. “This aligns with the FDA’s booster authorization and makes these groups eligible for a booster shot. Today, ACIP only reviewed data for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. We will address, with the same sense of urgency, recommendations for the Moderna and J&J vaccines as soon as those data are available.

“While today’s action

was an initial step related to booster shots, it will not distract from our most important focus of primary vaccination in the United States and around the world.”

CDC will continue to monitor the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines to ensure appropriate recommendations to keep all Americans safe. We will also evaluate with similar urgency available data in the coming weeks to swiftly make additional recommendations for other populations or people who got the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

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New research warns of risks to K-12 students due to monitoring software

On Sept. 21, the Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT) released a pair of research reports detailing the concerning use of online monitoring software that can track student activity on devices like laptops or tablets—even outside of school hours. With 81% of teachers reporting the use of such software in their schools, the reports cite community concerns regarding disciplinary actions, potential outing of LGBTQ+ students, and chilling effects on students' expression as some of the privacy and equity issues surrounding their use.

"This research demonstrates how the privacy and security of personal devices is a luxury not all can afford," said CDT President and CEO Alexandra Givens. "Constant online monitoring—especially of students who cannot afford or don't have access to personal devices—risks creating disparities in the ways student privacy is protected nationwide."

The new research shows that while 71% of teachers report the use of monitoring software on school-issued devices, only 16% of teach-



Egor Viktorov / Unsplash

ers report its use on privately-owned personal devices, suggesting that students in higher-poverty districts are subjected to more monitoring than those in wealthier districts as many do not have their own personal devices. Many, including 61% of parents surveyed, are concerned that this software and data collected could harm students if used or shared in a disciplinary context.

"Unfortunately, many districts are using this software due to a misinterpretation of requirements under the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)," said Elizabeth Laird, director of the Equity in Civic

Technology Project at CDT. "That's why CDT is calling for clarification regarding federal requirements and recommendations on how school districts can close the 'homework gap' while still protecting student's privacy."

The research was compiled based on surveys of students, parents, and teachers and was combined with in-depth interviews with school district staff that provided further insight. For example, one school administrator explained that, "[Students' online] traffic 24/7 is going through our web filter... There's no limitation on that. If they're on our de-

vice, it doesn't matter what time of day or what day of the week—their traffic is going through our web filter."

The new data also showed that a majority of students reported that they do not share their true thoughts online because they know they are being monitored. The findings additionally included concerns from parents and teachers that monitoring could have unintended consequences like 'outing' LGBTQ+ students.

In response to the new research, multiple influential civil society groups have signed a letter calling for policymakers to clarify CIPA's monitoring requirement and to adopt policies to codify student privacy practices as federal funds are dispersed to provide school-issued devices. The letter has so far been signed by American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Democracy & Technology, the Center for Learner Equity, Getting Smart, Hispanic Technology & Telecommunications Partnership, InnovateEDU, and the State Educational Technology Directors Association.

U.S. makes \$37 million contribution to 'Education Cannot Wait'

On Sept. 27, Administrator Samantha Power announced the United States, through USAID and the U.S. Department of State, will contribute an additional \$37 million to Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the only global fund for education in emergencies. The announcement was made virtually during ECW's High Level Steering Group meeting today.

The \$37 million contribution, the U.S. Government's largest contribution to date, highlights the United States' commitment to lead in education in crisis and conflict. The United States continues to assist partner countries in building education systems back better as countries respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. At the height of school closures, COVID-19 disrupted the education of as many as 1.6 billion learners in 190 countries. Thankfully, that number has declined dramatically, yet more than 31 million children remain out of school — and many may never return to a classroom.

The United States' investment will support the global education fund in ensuring that the most marginalized children and youth in countries experiencing emergencies and protracted crises have access to lifesaving and life-sustaining education services. The funding will also support its critical work in improving humanitarian and development coherence in education and enabling a more collaborative and rapid response to the educational needs of children and youth affected by crises. The contribution includes \$5 million dedicated to continued learning and resilient education systems for conflict-affected communities in northern Mali.

The pledge complements USAID's bilateral programs in basic and higher education, adding to our long history of creating better access to quality education, particularly for children in crisis and conflict contexts — one of the most powerful forces for driving economic development, prosperity, and security.

Texas Education Agency approves FEV Tutor as a full-service provider in new statewide high-impact tutoring initiative

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has approved FEV Tutor to be a full-service member of the state's new Vetted Texas Tutoring Corps (VTTC). The corps is an initiative aimed at accelerating student learning through high-impact tutoring. The TEA vetted all VTTC members to ensure they have the research-based criteria for high-impact tutoring. The agency also confirmed that the VTTC providers can help districts meet House Bill (HB) 4545's requirements for supplemental ac-

celerated instruction. Local education agencies (LEAs) may use local ESSER funding to obtain these tutoring programs.

The TEA-approved providers include both full-service and partial-service providers. Full-service VTTC members, like FEV Tutor, will provide end-to-end services, including instructional materials, tutoring platforms and trained tutors.

"We are excited to have been chosen to support the Texas Education Agency's and Texas legislature's commitment to providing

scaled high-impact tutoring to the state's K-12 community," said Ryan Patenaude, Sr. Vice President and Co-Founder of FEV Tutor. "We believe that TEA's high-impact tutoring initiative has the potential to make a true difference in the lives of students throughout Texas. Our mission is to make a social impact through K-12 education, and we're doubling down on our commitment to the state of Texas and our strategic K-12 LEA, charter and ESC partners."

See TUTOR, Page 7

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Together We Can Find A Solution

Solar Co-op helps Afghan immigrant family in Plano

Nonprofit groups Habitat for Humanity and Solar United Neighbors (SUN) will help a Plano family install solar on their new house.

The free solar installation will take place at 1135 ½ F Avenue in Plano on Wednesday, September 29th.

The family of four include Abdullah Abed, his wife Sweeta, their son Abdulrahman “Imran”



Science in HD / Unsplash

— who’s three years old — and daughter Zainab, who’s seven. Abdullah and

Sweeta grew up in Kabul, where Abdulla worked with the US Army as a linguist/

instructor.

When the US Army started pulling out of Afghanistan, the Abed family felt that they might be harmed by militants for his service as an interpreter. Since he served in the military, the family was able to immigrate to the United States.

The Abeds are members of the Plano Solar Co-op, a cooperative run by the nonprofit Solar United Neigh-

bors.

Solar co-ops allow a group of neighbors or businesses to learn about solar and go solar together through a good group rate. The Plano co-op members selected RISE Power, which is based in Dallas, to install panels for the 146-member group.

Earlier this year, the City of Plano launched the successful Solar Co-op that

enabled homeowners and business owners in and around the city of Plano to join the growing community of people saving money by harnessing solar power.

The family partnered with Habitat for Humanity to move into their rehabbed Plano house, and, by volunteering with Habitat and fulfilling their “Sweat Equity hours,” they are on the path to home ownership.

TUTOR, from Page 6

As a Level 2 ESSA research and evidence-based intervention, FEV Tutor has a proven track record of success in providing students with individualized instruction. The company’s live 1:1 online tutoring program employs instructors with a minimum of a bachelor’s degree and two years of teaching experience. It delivers personalized academic intervention designed to naturally extend the instruction delivered by a specific school or district. Student support is

available around the clock seven days a week, and measured student progress is at the core of the company’s work.

To accurately assess the effectiveness of interventions, FEV Tutor’s Academic Impact Analysis reports compare student response to the interventions with a district’s benchmark and assessment data. Those findings are regularly shared with teachers to help them evaluate student growth and course success as well as deliver data-driven

instruction.

FEV Tutor has been helping Texas students and educators for more than a decade. The company has formed strategic partnerships with Texas LEAs, charter school networks and education service centers. Its success is evidenced by students’ achievement on end-of-course assessments, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), benchmark assessments, the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSiA) as well as the ACT and SAT. In fact, the TEA shortlisted FEV Tutor

for the VTTC based on the company’s history of strategic partnership and positive educational impact.

FEV Tutor recently won the EdTech Digest’s Cool Tool 2021 Award for Best Tutoring Solution, and it

was named the 2021 Tech Advocate Award winner for Best Tutoring/Test Prep App or Tool.

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The chance to be transported into the magical world of Enchant® is here! General admission tickets are on sale beginning Thursday, September 30 at 10 a.m. for the whimsical and heartfelt Christmas light maze and village, taking over Fair Park, November 26 to January 2. Known for creating new family traditions and sharing unforgettable experiences with loved ones, Enchant Christmas presents 'The Great Search', the first in a series of five magical adventures. The experience includes gliding down the Ice Skating Trail, sampling gourmet holiday treats from around the world, visiting the artisan Christmas market and meeting the Big Man



Courtesy photo

himself - all before stepping into the most magical Christmas light maze the world has ever seen. Guests have the opportunity to

purchase tickets starting at \$20 for adults and \$19 for kids, amongst VIP experiences and group packages. Reserve your tickets early

at EnchantChristmas.com to prepare for the most adventurous holiday experience of the year!

"Providing a magical

Christmas experience is at the heart of what we do, and this year we have something for everyone," said Kevin Johnston, Founder and CEO of Enchant. "After a year with no events, our team is excited to debut an array of new illuminated experiences. In 2020, we were given the gift of being able to redesign and upgrade much of the experience, and we can not wait to share it with our guests. We are also thrilled to be working with some amazing local partners and Dallas businesses to bring the event to life!"

Win a weekend of wonder getaway

In partnership with Hilton Anatole and VisitDallas, Enchant Christmas

is giving away a holiday getaway like no other. One lucky winner, and three guests, kick off the festive season at Enchant's Grand Opening - it's the most wonderful time of the year, to have the most wonderful time of the year. A two night stay at the beautiful Hilton Anatole transports guests to the heart of North Pole, Texas. The perfect holiday destination, Dallas offers everything from the classics like Reunion Tower, Fair Park and Perot Museum of Nature and Science, to new experiences in must-see spots like Trinity Groves and the Design District. To enter, visit EnchantChristmas.com/Weekend-of-Wonder now through October 24, 2021.

Coaches Vs. Racism launches ambitious action plan to erase systemic racism in sports

WASHINGTON, DC — Coaches Vs. Racism (CVR) is a 501c3 national non-profit leading the charge to end systemic racism in sports.

They are mobilizing coaches in the pro ranks as well as collegiate and amateur levels across the country to create an action-filled, educational and grassroots approach to inspire cultural and societal change in the world of sports.

CVR has teamed with the Big 10, College Coaches, Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and professional sports teams to promote awareness of Social Injustice, Economic Divide, Equality, Reform, and Systemic Racism (SEERS).

Together, the groups aim to create a positive sports environment for all players by using education, conversation and community to build equality and understanding.

The non-profit will work with coaches to ensure all players have access to the tools and resources necessary to develop student



and professional athletes to their full potential and level the playing field.

As part of their mission, Coaches Vs. Racism has created the HBCU Roundball Experience, bringing Big 10 Schools, major Universities and HBCU teams together for high-profile competitions.

The games seek to amplify awareness of incredible athletic talent from both schools, and will place an emphasis on HBCUs who traditionally lack resources and equipment and are routinely overlooked by professional talent scouts.

"Our focus is to shine the spotlight on systemic racism as a root cause of the inherent disparities that exist in the sports," said Mr. Darryl Woods, Executive Director of Coaches Vs.

Racism.

"Economic inequality continues to exist today in our Elementary and High Schools, Colleges and Universities and is detrimental to our youth. By working together, and using our collective passion for sports, we hope Coaches Vs. Racism will spark productive conversations to change the narrative about race in sports and serve as a revolutionary voice for change in our society."

To reinforce the anti-racism message, CVR has initiated a series of match-ups between Big 10 schools and HBCUs to bring awareness to the anti-racism initiative.

The inaugural game pits the University of Michigan Wolverines vs. Prairie View A&M University Panthers.

The teams are led by coaches Juwan Howard and Byron Smith respectively.

The high-profile game will be held on neutral territory at the Entertainment and Sports Arena (ESA) in Washington, DC., on Saturday, November 13th.

Tickets will be available at coachesvsracism.org ef-

fective Friday, October 15, 2021. Tickets will also be available at University of Michigan and Prairie View A&M University.

A portion of the proceeds from all CVR games

will be used to support marginalized students and student-athletes who are unable to complete their education due to lack of tuition funds.

CVR hopes to engage

these students in a "Good Start" program before they drop out of college by raising funds to pay tuition for struggling students and paying off their respective student loans.

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Cowboys roll over Philadelphia in strong 41-21 performance

By Dwain Price
NDG Sports

In one of their more dominant performances in recent history, the Dallas Cowboys totally befuddled Philadelphia on Monday night on their way to a thorough 41-21 spanking of the Eagles at AT&T Stadium.

The lop-sided victory moved the Cowboys into sole possession of first place in the NFC East with a 2-1 record. They also proved that – if they can stay relatively healthy -- they're going to be a pretty tough customer to deal with come playoff time.

"I think our team is well-conditioned, and it showed-up," coach Mike McCarthy said. "It showed-up early."

"We had the one unfortunate turnover down there. But to beat a division opponent by two-plus scores, it's a good win."

The game was the first time quarterback Dak Prescott played at AT&T Stadium since his gruesome season-ending ankle injury that he suffered last Oct. 11 against the New York Giants. Prescott was carted off the field that day with tears in his eyes.

On Monday, there was nothing but tears of joy coming from Prescott and the Cowboys as they completely dismantled the Eagles.

"I'm thankful for this opportunity to be back out there," Prescott said. "It's the momentum more than anything that we're trying to capture."

"To get a statement win like this, I feel, was important. That was a complete



All Pro Reels / Flickr

game."

Prescott picked apart the Eagles' defense for 21 completions in 26 attempts for 238 yards and three touchdowns. He was, in a word, flawless.

"I'm very happy for Dak," McCarthy said. "I think any of us who have had a chance to witness how much he puts into it, he's just a great leader for our football team."

"He's obviously playing the quarterback position at a very high level right now. And I think it's like a lot of things – you get what you put into it -- and he's off to an excellent start."

Two of Prescott's touchdowns – a 19-yarder and a 22-yarder – went to tight end Dalton Schultz. The latter TD put the Cowboys ahead, 41-13, with 6:56 remaining in a game that wasn't as close as the final score indicated.

"It's tough (for opposing defenses) when we have as much depth as we have," said Schultz, who caught six passes for 80 yards. "Guys sit back and try to play shell (defense), which opens up a lot of opportunities for tight ends in the middle."

"We have options everywhere. It's a good problem to have."

In addition to the passing game, the Cowboys also ran roughshod over the Eagles as Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 95 yards on 17 carries and two touchdowns, and Tony Pollard collected 60 yards on 11 carries.

"The offensive line was super physical," Elliott said. "We controlled the line of scrimmage. You can tell that with the O-line pushing them back five yards a play."

"When we would go to the hurry-up (offense), they were still on the ground cramping up. They definitely felt us."

It wasn't just the Cowboys' offense that the Eagles felt. The defense also had some spirited moments as cornerbacks Trevon Diggs and Anthony Brown each walked away with an interception, with Diggs carrying his back 59 yards for a touchdown to give the Cowboys a 27-7 lead at the outset of the third quarter.

Diggs, who was at Alabama during the same time as Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts, said his pick-6 brought back old memories.

"I had read Jalen, his three-step, his quick game read, and the receiver had a short split, so I was expecting him to run an out,"

Diggs said. "It feels good to handle the ball as a defensive player."

"I appreciate (Alabama) coach (Nick) Saban training me good. He does teach that."

Brown, who has been much maligned during his career, appreciates what Diggs brings to the game. Particularly since Diggs now has three interceptions this season.

"He was on fire tonight," Brown said. "He's pushing me on my side, and I love to watch him play."

The fans loved it, too, as the Cowboys packed their stadium for the first time

since the 2019 season. The sellout crowd of 93,267 was boisterous all night long as the Cowboys forced two turnovers and now own an NFL-best eight turnovers this season.

"We haven't had one of these games in a while, where offense and defense can come together and put together a complete game," linebacker Jaylon Smith said. "The beautiful thing about it is there are so many areas that we can still improve."

"We're not satisfied. It's hard to get a win in the National Football League. Whenever you do, you

must enjoy it, but we have a long way to go."

Winners of two straight games, the Cowboys will host the Carolina Panthers on Sunday at noon as they seek to keep their momentum going.

"We played some good football these first three games," McCarthy said. "But what I'm most excited about is how young we are, how our young guys are getting opportunities."

"These guys are stepping-up and the vets are doing a great job playing along. So I'm hopeful this will pay dividends as we move forward."

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BARRERA, from Page 2

Grammy awards and 1 Grammy award in the past.

With a career spanning across 10 years, Barrera has achieved an unprecedented amount of success in a short amount of time. Not only has he been awarded with the prestigious Latin Grammy and Grammy award, but he has solidified

his place as one of the most influential and versatile producers and songwriters in the music industry today.

And his track record proves it, having worked with artists such as Daddy Yankee, Shakira, Madonna, Maluma, Ariana Grande, among others. He even made history for co-writ-

ing four songs of different genres that were #1 on all five of Billboard's Latin charts simultaneously. Additionally, he has topped the Billboard Latin Songwriter chart for 11 weeks.

Without a doubt, Edgar Barrera is leaving his mark not only in Latin music but the music industry as a whole and he has no signs of stopping anytime soon.

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Temptations mark 60th anniversary with new single with Smokey Robinson



Photo via NNPA

This year marks the 60th Anniversary celebration of The Temptations, the legendary, Grammy Award-Winning group known as the “No. 1 R&B Artists of All Time” (Billboard).

And releasing today is their brand-new single, “Is It Gonna Be Yes Or No,” a duet between the group and the equally legendary Smokey Robinson, the man who delivered their first hits.

The song, also written and produced by Smokey, is a preview of the upcoming TEMPTATIONS 60 album.

The single and taster of their 2022 album, Executive Produced by Temptations’ founding and sole surviving original member Dr. Otis Williams, is available, [HERE](#).

Robinson brought in stellar studio musicians to play on the ballad, including his longtime associate Dave Garfield on keyboards, bassist Freddie Washington and drummer Steve Ferrone.

And in all the years Robinson has delivered such timeless Temptations classics as “The Way You Do the Things You Do,” “My Girl,” “Since I Lost My Baby,” “Get Ready” and more, the duet marks the only time he and the Temptations have sung lead together, save for a recording of “The Christmas Song” in 1989.

“It’s wonderful to be back together. When The Tempts first met Smoke we were teenagers, young black men in Detroit who had no clue that our partnership at Motown would produce ‘My Girl,’ one of the greatest hits of all

time,” says Williams.

“And our success together didn’t stop there. We had chart hit after chart hit and, soon after, our music was heard around the world. Now, 60 years later, as I turn 80, Smoke and I have come full circle. I never imagined we would have the opportunity to get back in the studio and do it all again.”

Smokey adds, “When Otis called me and said, ‘Hey man, we’re doing a new album and we’d like you to do a song, that got me excited about working together again. That was it, that’s all it took. I proceeded to write a new song for them, and I was very happy to, because it’s been a long time. When I showed up at the studio, Otis said, ‘Man, I want you to sing on this one with us.’ So, I said, ‘Oh, okay, I’m very excited about the song, let’s do it! You, know, it’s just great working with them, always.’”

The Temptations’ 60th Anniversary campaign launched this summer and will run through June 2022, in a celebration befitting one of the most revered and prolific musical institutions of all time.

The year-long campaign includes the new album in 2022; a 50-city tour through the end of this year, with more global dates to be announced; remastering of their music videos, including “Standing on the Top” with Rick James and their No. 1 hit “Stay,” a new content series; the Imperial Theatre re-opening on October 16th of the Broadway musical, Ain’t Too Proud: The Life and Times of the Temptations, based on Otis

Williams’ personal journey that was nominated for 12 Tony Awards, including Best Musical and won the Tony Award for Best Choreography at the 73rd Tony

Awards ceremony in June 2019 and whose Ume cast album was GRAMMY-nominated; and celebratory events along the way including Otis Williams’ 80th

birthday on October 30th.

Their Emmy Award-Winning Television miniseries, The Temptations, which first aired to rave reviews in 1998, is still on

air or streaming every day somewhere in the world.

Williams’ critically acclaimed autobiography,

See SINGLE, Page 12



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African American entrepreneurs head SPAC in \$126.5 million IPO to acquire Black-owned firms

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Shawn Rochester, who authored the spellbinding book "The Black Tax: The Cost of Being Black in America," and Robin Watkins, a highly regarded financial and operations accountant, have made Wall Street history.

And the two are poised to break through more barriers in the financial world.

Their latest venture, Minority Equality Opportunities Acquisitions Inc. (MEOA), has raised \$126.5 million they've earmarked to help minority businesses and enterprises grow and prosper through mergers and acquisitions.

"It's amazing to be a part of this," Watkins, a Drexel University graduate, stated.

While Rochester serves as CEO of MEOA, Watkins counts as the company's CFO.



Shawn Rochester, Minority Equality Opportunities Acquisition Inc.'s Chairman and CEO, and Robin Watkins, the firm's Chief Financial Officer and Secretary. (Courtesy photo)

"I come from a family of entrepreneurs," Watkins remarked during an appearance on PBS-TV and PBS-World's The Chavis Chronicles with National Newspapers Publishers Association (NNPA) President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

The interview took place inside the new state-of-the-art NNPA television studios in Washington, D.C.

Because her grandfather

owned a trucking company and café in Lawrenceville, Virginia, and her father and other family members were entrepreneurs, Watkins leaped at this latest opportunity.

"It's historic, and it's amazing," Watkins stated.

MEOA raised the money after its initial public offering in August and now counts as the first special purpose acquisition company – or SPAC – headed by African

Americans.

"We are trading now on the Nasdaq under MEO-AU," Rochester, who earned a master's degree in Business Administration from The University of Chicago Booth School of Business with a focus in Accounting, Finance, and Entrepreneurship.

MEOA will target MBEs and Black-owned businesses nationwide.

"We're really a blank check company that's funded through an IPO," Watkins remarked.

"The funds are held in trust to acquire another company. In this case, we are looking at minority business enterprises to take them public through our IPO. We are the only SPAC that is targeting minority business enterprises."

According to financial experts, SPACs generally have

two years to complete an acquisition.

If they fail, the company must return the money raised to its investors.

For Rochester and Watkins, failure isn't an option.

Rochester said they are looking at companies with enterprise values between \$250 million and \$500 million with recurring and predictable revenues.

The criteria include having a history of being able to generate sustainable free-cash-flow.

"There is unprecedented demand for diverse suppliers, but many minority firms don't have the resources to meet the demand," Rochester said.

"That's where MEOA, and the decades of combined experience that our team has in operations, strategy, business development, and acquisitions enter the picture

for the right business, to help accelerate growth," he continued.

Further demonstrating a commitment to racial equity and economic inclusion, MEOA engaged the Industrial Bank of Washington, one of the country's preeminent Black-owned institutions, for its working capital banking needs during the SPAC and IPO process.

The company's directors are majority-minority including, Dr. Julianne Malveaux, MIT economist and Dean, College of Ethnic Studies, Cal State Los Angeles, Mr. Ronald Busby, Sr., President and CEO, US Black Chamber, Inc., and Mr. Patrick Linehan, Partner, Steptoe & Johnson.

"The mission and purpose of MEOA will help to catapult minority enterprise in this country," Rochester asserted.

EQUAL, from Page 1

continued.

"One in every 20 black men over the age of 18 in the United States is in state or federal prison, compared to one in 180 white men."

The eye-opening report concluded that:

"Shocking as such national statistics are, they mask even worse racial disparities in individual states. For example, in seven states, Black individuals constitute between 80 and 90 percent of all drug offenders sent to prison. In at least fifteen states, Black men are admitted to prison on drug charges at 20 to 57 times greater than white men.

"These racial disparities in drug offenders admitted to prison skew the racial balance of state prison populations. In two states, one in every 13 Black men is in prison. In seven states, Black people are incarcerated at more than 13 times the rate of whites."

The authors concluded that the imprisonment of African Americans for drug offenses is part of a more significant over-incarceration crisis in the United States.

"Although prison should be used as a last resort to protect society from violent or dangerous individuals, more people are sent to prison in the United States for nonviolent drug offenses than for crimes of violence," the authors determined.

The EQUAL Act also removes conspiracy charges that have contributed to numerous years of sentencing for drug offenses, particularly African Americans.

"For years, we have known that harsh drug sentencing disparities between crack and powder cocaine have created a racially disparate impact on Black communities," Congressman Bobby Scott (D-Va.), the bill's co-sponsor, said

following passage of the measure.

"The bipartisan EQUAL Act is the next step on the long road toward eliminating this unfair sentencing disparity. In 2009, I led the effort in the House to eliminate this disparity in the Fairness in Cocaine Sentencing Act," Scott continued.

"That effort eventually led to the 2010 passage of the Fair Sentencing Act, which reduced the crack-cocaine disparity from 100:1 to 18:1. That was a hard-fought compromise, and the EQUAL Act will finally end the disparity.

"This is an important step toward fixing our criminal justice system and making it fairer. I want to thank my colleagues, Representatives Hakeem Jeffries, Kelly Armstrong, and Don Bacon, for working with me on this bill, and I urge my colleagues in the Senate to move quickly to send this bill to President Biden's desk."



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FTC returns \$2M to consumers who paid high upfront fees to get 'funding' for expensive, ineffective training programs

The Federal Trade Commission is sending 8,843 checks totaling more than \$2 million to consumers who were harmed by a company that charged them money for "funding" to pay for expensive and often ineffective training programs, but instead opened multiple credit card accounts in their names.

According to the FTC's complaint, Seed Consulting, LLC (which also operated under the names Seed Capital and Founda-

tion Funding) was pitched by training companies as a way to get "funding" to people who wanted to start a business or become a real estate investor. The complaint alleged that Seed didn't actually provide any funds to consumers but instead charged them \$3,000 or more to apply for numerous credit cards on their behalf, with total credit lines of more than \$50,000, a practice known as "credit card stacking."

To obtain these credit

lines, the suit alleges, Seed often inflated consumers' annual incomes on credit card applications by approximately \$100,000, telling consumers they could expect to make that much when they completed their training programs. Often, the consumers used the credit cards Seed obtained for them to pay for expensive programs sold by the training companies.

Seed agreed to settle the FTC's case in January 2021. Each check recipient

will receive \$232.12.

People who receive checks should deposit or cash them within 90 days, as indicated on the check. Recipients who have questions about their checks, as well as anyone who paid Seed Consulting for business training and real estate investment programs, should call the refund administrator, JND Legal Administration at 1-833-823-0045. The FTC never requires people to pay money or provide account

information to cash a refund check.

The FTC's interactive dashboards for refund data provide a state-by-state breakdown of FTC refunds. In 2020, FTC actions led to more than \$483 million in refunds to consumers across the country, but recently the United States Supreme Court ruled the FTC lacks authority under Section 13(b) to seek monetary relief in federal court going forward. The Commission

has urged Congress to restore the FTC's ability to get money back for consumers.

The Federal Trade Commission works to promote competition and to protect and educate consumers. You can learn more about consumer topics and file a consumer complaint online or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357). For the latest news and resources, follow the FTC on social media, subscribe to press releases and read blogs.

EPI Report: Nearly 2 million direct care workers would benefit from a \$15 minimum wage by 2025

A new EPI report finds that a \$15 federal minimum wage by 2025 would raise pay for one-half of direct care workers who provide long-term services and support (LTSS), or 1.9 million workers.

The vast majority (90.7%) of LTSS direct care workers who would get a raise are women, and half (50.0%) are Black, Hispanic, or AAPI. About 1.1 million of these affected direct care employees work in home care,

and about 760,000 work in nursing or residential care homes.

Annual pay for year-round direct care workers in LTSS would rise by up to \$3,200 (in 2021 dollars) with a \$15 minimum wage by 2025, as called for by the Raise the Wage Act. The year-round earnings of Black and Hispanic direct care workers would increase by \$3,500 and \$3,700, respectively.

"The important and difficult work of helping peo-

ple to lead dignified and independent lives, regardless of age or ability, is deeply undervalued. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2025 would benefit many direct care workers who provide long-term health and personal care services and supports to the elderly and people with disabilities," says Julia Wolfe, co-author of the report and state economic analyst for EPI.

The report also examines the share of LTSS di-

rect care workers by state who would receive higher pay from a \$15 minimum wage. More than five out of every six direct care workers would have higher take-home pay in nine states: Mississippi (90.7%), Louisiana (89.3%), Arkansas (87.4%), Oklahoma (85.9%), West Virginia (85.3%), Alabama (84.8%), New Mexico (84.8%), Missouri (84.4%), and Kansas (83.5%).

"It is past time for Con-

gress to do its job and raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Lawmakers at all levels of government should also take further action by passing policies that encourage even stronger wages, benefits, and protections for these workers—such as strengthening collective bargaining rights and following the lead of the 10 states and two major cities that have passed Domestic Workers Bills of Rights," says Ben Zipperer, co-author of the

report and an economist for EPI.

The report defines LTSS direct care workers as those employed as nursing assistants, home health aides, and personal care aides in the following industries: nursing care facilities, residential care facilities, home health care services, and individual/family services. The authors exclude care workers in industries in which they are less likely to be providing LTSS, such as in hospitals.

SINGLE, from Page 10

Temptations, was recently released as an audiobook edition for the first time, with a new introduction by Williams.

Temptations History

The Temptations are today one of the most iconic, bestselling brands in the entertainment world. With Otis Williams, the founding and sole surviving member of The Temptations, their track record of history-making music is breathtaking, their presence across multi-media platforms has never been more vivid, and their popularity is ever-increasing. Most recently, adding to their

dozens of sampled tracks, their hit "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone," was used as the foundation of the Migos smash, "Avalanche."

The Temptations were among the first African American musical artists to crossover into mainstream America and appear on popular, national mainstream television programs, such as The Ed Sullivan Show, and The Hollywood Palace in the 60s. Trailblazers, the group's star power was so striking that these top-rated, national programs, and many others, scheduled appearances for the Temptations multiple

times during a single year.

At the time, this was an unparalleled accomplishment for African American entertainers. The Temptations helped change the face of primetime television and fueled the growth in the performing arts and entertainment world for African Americans artists forever.

The Temptations rank No. 1 in Billboard magazine's most recent list of Greatest R&B/Hip-Hop Artists of All Time, and the group appears in the magazine's list of 125 Greatest of All Time Artists. Rolling Stone magazine commented that the Temptations are "Indisputably the greatest

black vocal group of the Modern Era..." and listed the group's Anthology album among the 500 Greatest Albums of All Time.

The group has won four GRAMMY Awards, including Motown's first-ever statuette, awarded to the Tempts for "Cloud Nine" for Best Rhythm and Blues Performance by a Duo or Group, Vocal or Instrumental in 1969.

The Tempts were also awarded a GRAMMY Lifetime Achievement Award, while their No. 1 hits "My Girl" and "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone" are in the GRAMMY Hall of Fame. The group has been inducted into the Rock &

Roll, National Rhythm & Blues Music, and Vocal Group Halls of Fame, and they have a star on both the Hollywood Walk of Fame and the Apollo Theater's Walk of Fame.

Throughout the group's evolution, they have released countless gold, plati-

num and multi-platinum chart hits, many of which are considered American masterpieces.

They have 16 No. 1 R&B chart albums, 44 Top 10 R&B chart hits, including, 14 No. 1 R&B singles, plus four No. 1 Hot 100 singles.

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Want a cool job in live music? House of Blues Dallas is hiring! Spruce up your resume and join us on Monday, August 26th for a Job Fair in our Cambridge Room from 1-5PM. All departments are hiring. View job openings at <http://livenationentertainment.com/careers>.

Ongoing First Fridays Virtual Job Fair

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#FirstFridayFair (#FFF) is estimated to be largest attended career fair with around 8,000 professionals and 500 recruiting companies. The data science and software development focussed career fair is delivered right at your desktop. No need to travel anywhere, just signup and wait for TAO.ai to organize your interactions.

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.

Mid-Cities (TX) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated hosts Executive Black Women's Roundtable

Rising stars, middle managers and women who see their careers leading to positions of leadership will have the opportunity to hear from three executives who have navigated that road. Cynthia Marshall, chief executive officer, Dallas Mavericks; Shunda Robinson, global vice president, diversity, equity and inclusion at GM Financial and Theresa Anderson, vice president- marketing, communications and sales operations, Bureau Veritas will be panelists at a virtual Executive Black Women's Roundtable hosted by the Mid-Cities (TX) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated on October 16, 2021, from 4 p.m. to

5:30 p.m. (CDT). The event will be moderated by Lorna Hankins, executive director, The National Kidney Foundation Serving Texas, and Western Area Director of The Links, Incorporated.

"The goal of the Executive Black Women's Roundtable is two-fold. First, it is our chapter fundraiser. The proceeds from the event will support the Mid-Cities (TX) Chapter's community programs," said Chapter President Carolyn Roberson. "Secondly,

it is our fervent hope that our panelists will inspire young women, especially African American women, to follow in their footsteps as they navigate their individual careers."

Roberson acknowledged that this fundraiser was a change for the organization which previously raised money for community programs by hosting a Black-Tie Boxing gala.

"The world has changed, and we actively looked for a unique way to serve our community while raising funds for our service projects," Roberson said. "Research helped us settle on The Executive Black Women's Roundtable as a way to open the discussion and raise awareness to the challenges Black women who aspire to leadership positions face throughout their careers."

One study, The State of Black Women in Corporate America, <https://bit.ly/3nIJTeT>

shows that Black women are at a disadvantage from the beginning of their careers. The representation gap continues to widen and ends with African American women accounting for 1.6 percent of vice-presidents and 1.4 percent of

C-Suite executives while white men hold 57 percent and 68 percent of those positions, respectively.

Access to the virtual event is \$100 and can be purchased via Eventbrite <https://bit.ly/Midcities>.



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NAN Chapter President

The National Action Network is looking for a President for its upcoming Dallas chapter. This is a volunteer position that requires an activist heart and an interest in civil rights.

The President:

- Presides at meetings and acts as Chairman/Chairwoman of the Executive Committee.
- Appoints all committees not directly elected by the Chapter.
- Between meetings of the Executive Committee and subject to the approval thereof, exercises executive authority on behalf of the Chapter.
- The President shall be an ex-officio member of all committees.
- Shall work with other members of the Executive Committee to develop a program agenda for a defined fiscal year.
- Acknowledges he/she is the primary force within the Chapter in establishing a working relationship and communication with the National and Regional Office(s); ensures that these offices receive all reports, including quarterly reports, and reports of elections.
- Is familiar with pertinent governing documents including: The NAN by-laws and Chapter rules.

Interested parties should contact Robert D. Bush, president of the Las Vegas Chapter, at (702) 626-0158.

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The epitome of boredom

Dr. James L. Snyder

I have never considered myself to be boring. I may be boring to other people but not to myself.

As you get older, you find out that there are many boring things in this world.

When younger, I can't ever remember being bored except when my father was lecturing me on how I should behave. I'm not sure he was very successful at that.

I wasn't bored with anything, and I always found something to gain my attention.

This was back in the day when there was no Internet, cell phones, or anything along those lines. How some people today live without cell phones is something I'll never understand.

The other day I was downtown, stopped at a

red light, and many people were walking on the left side. I watched them and didn't know if they were going to some Memorial service or what. They were all bent over, heads down, working on their cell phone while walking.

You take away their cell phone, and they will not know what in the world to do.

When I was younger, we knew what to do. We did not need some claptrap to amuse us and keep us from being bored.

Being a husband for over 50 years, I don't know what being bored is all about.

If, for example, I don't have anything to do and the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage finds out, believe me, I have plenty to do.

The other night, I watched the little kitties out on the back porch jumping and running around and

chasing each other. One was chasing its shadow, and I don't think it ever got it.

But these kittens were having the time of their life and when they ran out of energy, they all snuggled together for a nap.

Maybe that's why older people take naps more often!

I'm not against technology at all. For example, if I go to a restaurant by myself, I take my cell phone with a Kindle app with around 300 books, so I have something to read.

Not many things bore me, but there are times that I do get bored.

What bores me more than anything else are committee meetings. I know some people live by these committee meetings. Whether it's politics, education, or religion, meetings are their top priority.

I can't think of anything

more boring than committee meetings. I try my best to keep an upper chin, but it's tough to do with so many chins on my face.

I certainly could not be a politician because all they do is go to committee meetings after committee meetings. That may explain why so many politicians are crazy. They went to so many committee meetings that it has driven them crazy. But, of course, with some of them, it's not a very long drive.

For many years, I have gone to church committee meetings. But, unfortunately, the older I get, the more bored I am with this kind of activity.

When I'm in person at some of these committee meetings, I have to go to the bathroom if I'm not falling asleep. I remember one committee meeting I went to the bathroom probably

close to 10 times. After the meeting, someone asked me how I was feeling. I didn't tell him because I didn't want to offend him.

Then something changed. During all of this health dilemma that we are facing in the lockdowns, one positive thing emerged.

That positive thing is that we don't gather together in committee, instead, we do it virtually. That was something I never thought about until recently.

A meeting virtually means that you're not in person, instead, you're on the computer with the group. So, some of the committee meetings have been virtual.

At first, I was a little excited about this. After all, I don't have to travel a hundred miles to attend the committee meeting. Instead, I can go to my computer and join the commit-

tee online.

I was pretty anxious to get this experience, so I set up my computer on my easy chair at home and got a nice hot cup of coffee. Then, when the time came for the meeting to begin, I did several clicks on my computer, and voilà, I was at the committee meeting.

At first something was interesting about it, but then, that boring element began to develop right there in front of me.

Watching it for 30 minutes, my head began to nod but not in agreement with anything they were proposing. Then, finally, my head began to nod, my eyes began to fade, and soon, I was sleeping.

Just then, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came in and saw that I was sleeping, but she also heard

See BOREDOM, Page 15

CPJ issues reports on regional impacts of COVID-19 pandemic

WASHINGTON — On Sept. 22, the Center for Public Justice (CPJ) released new academic research conducted by three undergraduate student-faculty pairs—who were awarded The Hatfield Prize.

The 2021 awardees are three student-and-faculty pairs from Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCCU) institutions: Seth Billingsley and Daniel Bennett, Ph.D. (John Brown University); Chenyu Lin and Julie Woodman, Ph.D. (Colorado Christian University); and Matthew Strong and Mark Moland, DPA (LeTourneau University).

This year's Hatfield Prize reports explore the pandemic's impact on food insecurity, children's health, and the foster care system in specific regions of the United States.

Students, with their faculty advisor's support, articulate the normative principles that should guide society's response to issues, such as maintaining

a strong social safety net. While writing from a distinctly Christian perspective, the authors offer practical recommendations on ways government and civil society organizations can promote human flourishing in their local communities.

"As COVID-19 continues to impact our communities, the 2021 Hatfield Prize reports explore the pandemic's impact on food insecurity, children's health, and the foster care system," Katie Thompson, program director for Shared Justice, an initiative of CPJ, said. "The authors' make vital and timely contributions to current policy discussions and offer practical recommendations for government and civil society organizations."

The year's reports examine how extensively the COVID-19 pandemic has affected U.S. families and children, as well as how faith-based organizations have served these populations during this crucial time.

Seth Billingsley (John Brown University '21) — "Relief and Recovery: Addressing COVID-19's Impact on Food Insecurity" focused on food insecurity in Northwest Arkansas. The report examines how faith-based organizations and houses of worship, often alongside public programs, marshalled resources to serve their community. Seth Billingsley graduated from John Brown University in 2021 with a B.A. in international business and political science. He completed his research for The Hatfield Prize during his senior year. John Brown University Associate Professor of Political Science Daniel Bennett, Ph.D. is the advisor on this report.

Chenyu Lin (Colorado Christian University '23) — "Children's Health and Well-Being: Recommendations for a Post-Pandemic World." Lin is a junior nursing major at Colorado Christian University and intends to pursue her doctorate in nursing practice

upon her graduation in 2023. She completed her research for The Hatfield Prize during her sophomore year with her advisor Colorado Christian University Assistant Professor of Biology Julie Woodman, Ph.D., on how COVID-19 increased child health disparities in Denver, Colo. The report recommends several ways the Children's Health Insurance Program could benefit more children within the state.

Matthew Strong (LeTourneau University '23) — "Towards a Stronger Child Welfare System: The Pandemic's Impact on Foster Families" investigated the pandemic's impact on the foster care system in Longview, Texas. The report identifies several innovations governments and civil society institutions can use to increase the number of foster parents and provide holistic supports. Matthew Strong is a junior Physics Engineering major at LeTourneau University. He completed his

research for The Hatfield Prize during his sophomore year. Strong worked with the guidance of Letourneau University Assistant Professor of Political Science and Criminal Justice Mark G. Moland, DPA.

CPJ is a Christian civic education and public policy research organization based in Washington, D.C. The Hatfield Prize honors the late Senator Mark O. Hatfield, a U.S. Senator from Oregon known for integrating his Christian faith and his commitment to public policy.

The Hatfield Prize is made possible by support from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. However, the findings and conclusions presented in The Hatfield Prize reports are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of these foundations.

This year the reports are available online here. Students and faculty advisors are available for interviews

regarding their research findings.

Shared Justice is the Center for Public Justice's initiative for college students and young adults exploring the intersection of faith, politics, and public justice. Shared Justice provides Christian young adults with access to mentorship, a learning community, and a platform for practicing citizenship.

Let us hear from you!

If there are any news, events or anything else we need to know about, give us an e-mail at: editor@northdallasgazette.com

Planning ahead is key when it comes to funeral needs

Death can bring an unexpected and emotional shift to those who are left to handle the final celebration of a loved one. Not only is there the burden of losing a loved one in addition making funeral arrangements can also present a financial burden that some families are often unprepared to face. In Texas alone the average cost of a funeral arrangement can range anywhere from \$6,800.00 - \$10,000.00 with all services combined, according to Lifefinder. This alone can make the onset of a funeral even more stressful than it already is. That's where people like Vickie Richardson can help.

Vickie Richardson is the founder and CEO of Combined Benefit Solutions of Texas, LLC and Premier Funeral Consulting and Financial Services, an insurance and Financial Planning Company based in the Dallas and Tarrant County areas. While they specialize in providing basic life insurance plans, Steward explains that their focus lies in providing advance funeral planning for their clients.

Most funeral homes regardless of size, corporate or independently owned offers pre-arranged funeral plans often called preneed insurance. Some funeral homes have agents employed to sell pre-needs and some have independent contractors that sell plans for their funeral homes. Steward says in her pursuit to offer prearranged funeral plans to her client base she found that some



Vickie Richardson (Courtesy photo)

funeral homes didn't have preneed counselors or a structured preneed department she explained in her interview with the North Dallas Gazette. So, I started to build relationships with other funeral homes in the area, then I began to investigate their need for a stronger and aggressive preneed department that was cost effective for the owners.

One of the things Richardson realized, was that there was little or no marketing for preneed insurance in some of the funeral homes, because the focus was mainly at need (meaning that death has already occurred) business. Preneed insurance is a contract between the funeral home and the client where funds are put aside for their funeral in advance. The client can make monthly payments that is comfortable for their budget over a number of months and when the plan is paid out it is there at the funeral home until death occurs and this becomes future business for the funeral home with arrangements already made in advance and the advantage is the price is frozen

at today's prices. Richardson tells NDG that she saw a way that she could not only help her clients, but she could also be a great help to the funeral homes. Richardson partnered with one of the largest preneed marketing organizations in the nation that focused on the senior market and as an independent contractor, she would bring new opportunities to the independently owned funeral homes in the metroplex. After 24 years in the industry, she decided that she wanted to do more in the funeral industry when it came to the preneed market, so she became a proctor for the Texas Dept. of insurance through one of her insurance carriers and started to license and train preneed agents on this unique product. In addition, they would be assigned to a particular funeral home and sell pre-needs to the families that the funeral home served. At no direct cost to the funeral home and all agents are paid great commissions on the business they write for the funeral home. With these partnerships she was able to provide funeral

homes with a stronger and more competitive pre-need department with innovative solutions that is second to none.

Richardson was licensed in the state of Texas in 1989 and set up an office in the 3rd bedroom of her home for years, she later decided that she needed office space to be more visual. She found that her church was offering office space for startup and small businesses and immediately she moved in and her business began to grow so that I had a good problem, I needed to hire help she explains. After over 5 years I needed more space. I did not want to move out of the community that I served for so many years, therefore it made sense to move to the newly being renovated Red Bird Mall area. This way I was still in the community that I served and within 10 mins of each funeral home she provided services for.

Richardson has been in the insurance industry for over 32 years and added advance funeral planning 24 years ago with the help of my mentor that I worked

with at the first funeral home I sold pre-needs for, she learned a lot about funeral planning which helped her to better serve her senior market and the community by educating prospects and clients about the importance of both life insurance and advance funeral planning.

Richardson explains that by preplanning you save your family hundreds of thousands of dollars by planning in advance, making provisions now saves your family from having the experience of financial hardship tomorrow she says. She also explains that life insurance was never designed to bury anyone, it's the vehicle that keeps family financially secure and leave an inheritance for

those left behind.

One of the worse things that can happen Richardson says is that a loved one is having to go to a funeral home and make funeral arrangements for a family member under grief and stress trying to make financial decisions and listening to different people dictate on how the final celebration should be conducted.

Richardson is hoping to continue to educate people on the benefits of preplanning through her business especially in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak the worst pandemic in 100 years say Dr. Fauci. This past year alone was the busiest year I have had ever, simply due to people

See PLANNING, Page 16

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← BOREDOM, from Page 14

I was asleep because of the snoring I do when I sleep.

She tapped my shoulder and said, "You're not bored, are you?"

I opened my eyes, looked around a little bit, cleared my throat and looking at her said, "Of course not. I was having a time of prayer for the committee meet-

ing."

I'm not sure when I heard her laugh so much as I did at that moment.

Later that day I remembered a verse of Scripture. "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger" (Proverbs 19:15).

If I'm bored it's my fault.

I need to live a proactive life in serving God in a way that pleases Him.

Dr. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, Ocala, FL 34472, where he lives with his wife. Call him at 352-216-3025 or e-mail jamesnsnyder2@att.net. The church web site is www.whatafellowship.com.

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NDG Book Review: 'There She Was' takes a look at an iconic tradition

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

You'd been doing it since you were a year old.

But now you'd have to re-learn to wave. No more hand-flap or finger-wiggle, no more exuberant arm over the head like a cowpoke on a mechanical bull; no, you have to learn to wave in a ladylike manner when you become a beauty queen. As you'll see in "There She Was" by Amy Argetsinger, though, that's not all you'll learn.

Everything started to change the year the bras went into the trash can.

They weren't burned, as popular culture claims, but the young women who



tossed their undies away were burning with passion. They were, Argetsinger says, the women who'd marched against the war, and for Civil Rights, and now they were demonstrating against what had become an American insti-

tution: the Miss America pageant.

It was the first time in the pageant's history that it would be "so brazenly challenged," but it wouldn't be the last; fans and detractors alike demanded that the organization keep up with changing American society and culture, hairstyle, make-up, and talents. Young Miss America contestants also became outspoken about their beliefs and their politics.

Even the after-reign period changed, which gave Phyllis George the opportunity for a television career that almost ended with what we now call sexual harassment. It allowed

Terry Meeuwsen to publicly choose controversial "exploitation" to further her career. Changes opened the door for a lesbian Miss America, a disabled one, a hearing-impaired one, and its first Indigenous and Asian-American winners. It also loosened the reins on the press, who seemed eager to find a crack in the usual Miss America armor.

And that was the downfall of the first Black Miss America.

Vanessa Williams, argues Argetsinger, was one of the most talented winners in the pageant's history but with just nine weeks left to reign, she was forced to resign in disgrace for an inci-

dent designed to humiliate her. Thirty-one years later, changes were ripe for a triumphant, wildly-successful Williams to return to the fold...

No surprise: despite its sub-title, there are no secrets inside "There She Was." That's okay because there are still jaw-droppers, and not one of them is snarkingly gossipy.

That should put your mind at ease when you pick this book up: author Amy Argetsinger's storytelling isn't scandalously presented, although she does write about scandals here, and equally about how those things were dealt with by young women who were

blazing trails without realizing they were doing so. This chapter in women's history is impossible to ignore, and it's made even better since Argetsinger doesn't leave their tales incomplete; she spent time with a host of former Miss Americas, catching up so we know where our hometown "girls" are now and what they've done with their lives – and the competitors of the last fifty years have done a lot.

In the end, while it might agitate you some, "There She Was" is also quite the feel-good book. If you're a feminist, fan, or former wanna-be, find it, don't wave it away.

PLANNING, from Page 15

realizing they have not made any provisions for the

what if or leaving someone to carry the load of raising

money to funeralize their loved one that fell victim to the virus.

Combined Benefit So-

lutions of Tx, LLC is still licensing, contracting, and training agents who want to become Family Service

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Vickie Richardson office

is located at 7125 Marvin D Love Frwy., Suite 302. Dallas, Texas 75237, Phone number is (214) 238-6855.



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