



North Dallas Gazette

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Officials find encouraging surge in life expectancy among Black Americans

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

The latest findings on life expectancy in the United States from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) underscored a noteworthy upswing for the African American population in 2022. With the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic continuing, the NCHS has highlighted the positive strides in health outcomes, particularly for Black Americans.

The comprehensive report utilizes provisional vital statistics data for 2022, providing crucial insights into the nation's health landscape. Notably, life expectancy at birth for the entire U.S. population increased, reaching 77.5 years in 2022—a significant rise of 1.1 years from the preceding year. The positive trend is reflected in both genders, with males experiencing a 1.3-year increase (74.8 years) and females seeing a rise of 0.9 years (80.2 years).

The report also highlighted the marked improvement in life expectancy for the Black non-Hispanic population. The data indicated a substantial increase of 1.6 years,



The comprehensive report utilizes provisional vital statistics data for 2022, providing crucial insights into the nation's health landscape. (Photo via NNPA)

elevating life expectancy from 71.2 in 2021 to 72.8 in 2022. Health officials said that represents a step towards narrowing historical disparities but also signals a promising shift in health outcomes for Black Americans.

The report attributed a significant portion (84.2%) of the overall increase in life expectancy to decreases in mortality due to COVID-19. Other contributors include reductions in mortality related to heart disease (3.6%), unintentional injuries (2.6%), cancer (2.2%), and homicide (1.5%). However, the gains could have been more pronounced if not for counterbalancing increases in mortality due to influenza and pneumonia (25.5%), perinatal conditions (21.5%), kidney disease (13.0%), nutritional deficiencies (12.6%), and congenital malformations (5.9%).

While the report paints an optimistic picture of health improvements, it emphasizes that the upswing in life expectancy doesn't fully offset the 2.4-year loss observed between 2019 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Racial and ethnic disparities persist, with

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People In The News ...



Sandra Day O'Connor



Kim Person

NDG Quote of the Week: "You can't hold a man down without staying down with him."

- Booker T. Washington

Sandra Day O'Connor

Sandra Day O'Connor, the trailblazing legal luminary who shattered the glass ceiling as the first female Supreme Court justice, breathed her last on Friday morning in Phoenix, Arizona. She was 93.

The icon's battle with dementia was disclosed to the public in October 2018 through a poignant letter in which she expressed her inability to continue participating in public life due to the advancing condition. Politico first reported her death.

During her remark-



able 24-year tenure on the bench, Justice O'Connor left an indelible mark on American jurisprudence. Her pivotal role in landmark decisions on contentious issues such as affir-

mative action and abortion underscored her influence. Notably, O'Connor played a crucial role in the 5-4 decision in Bush v. Gore, a verdict that ultimately led to George W. Bush's victory in the 2000 presidential election.

In recognition of her transformative contributions to the American judiciary, O'Connor received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009. Her appointment in 1981 paved the way for subsequent female justices, including Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan, solidifying her leg-

acy as a true pioneer.

Born in eastern Arizona, O'Connor initially aspired to be a rancher but pursued a different path, overcoming gender-based employment discrimination to become the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court. In a career that exemplified resilience, she served as a deputy county attorney, worked as a civilian attorney in Germany, and became the first female majority leader in the United States for the Arizona Senate.

O'Connor, appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981, embraced the signifi-

cance of her historic role, according to Politico. "I felt a special responsibility... I could either do an adequate job so it would be possible for other women to be appointed without [people] saying, 'Oh, see, a woman can't do it,'" O'Connor said.

Even a battle with cancer couldn't dampen O'Connor's resolve. She underwent a mastectomy in 1988, emphasizing her determination to continue her judicial duties without interruption.

A moderate conservative, O'Connor defied easy categorization, often serving as a swing voter

in high-profile cases. Her nuanced approach to abortion, evolving from an initial stance against it to a decisive vote in favor of upholding Roe v. Wade in 1992, showcased her commitment to legal principles and precedent.

In 2006, O'Connor stepped down from the bench to care for her husband, who was battling Alzheimer's, and was succeeded by Samuel Alito. Her legacy, however, extended beyond her judicial contributions. The Supreme Court, initially unprepared

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Kim Person

(PR.com)-- Award-winning Gospel singer, Kim Person, cracked the Top 10 on the Billboard Top Gospel Albums chart this week.

Her latest project, "Speak Life And Live" (released Friday 10/6/2023), grabbed the #10 position.

You can find her newest radio single, "Fall On Me", on the "Speak Life And Live" EP as well. "Fall On Me," produced by Phillip Bryant (Tamela Mann, Maranda Curtis, JJ Hairston), is the testimony of how Kim implored the Spirit of God to aid her through some gruelling life challenges.



Kim shares, "This song comes from the depths of my heart. I found the strength to rise above my pain and discovered the power of surrender. Let this song be a reminder that, even in the darkest of times,

there is always a glimpse of hope. Sit back, close your eyes, feel the emotions in the lyrics, and let the music soothe your soul."

In addition to this milestone, Kim's 2021 radio single "Wonderful" (from the 2021 "Journey 2.0" EP), reached the Top 30 on the Mediabase Gospel Airplay chart. Kim was also nominated for three (3) Stellar Awards last year in the following categories: Albertina Walker Female Artist of the Year, Traditional Female Artist of the Year, and Traditional Album of the Year. She also performed "Wonderful" during the Pre-Show at the 37th Annual Stellar Gos-

pel Music Awards held in Atlanta, GA, July 15-16, 2022.

A native of Lumberton, NC and currently based in Raleigh, NC, Kim Person's "Journey 2.0" EP was the follow-up to the 2019 "The Journey" album, which peaked at #2 on the Billboard Top Gospel Albums chart and #25 on the Billboard Heatseekers chart.

"Journey 2.0" spent six (6) weeks in the Top 10 of the Billboard Top Gospel Albums chart. Kim also earned her inaugural Stellar Award nominations for New Artist of the Year and Contemporary Female Artist of the Year in 2020. In addition, she won the Shirley Caesar Music Outreach Award at the 2019 Lamplighter Awards, sponsored

by The Light 103.9 FM (Urban One) in Raleigh, NC.

Follow Kim's continued journey on social media - FB: @KimPersonMusic and IG: @IamKimPerson.

You can also find, download, and stream "Speak Life And Live" on your favorite digital music outlet, including Apple Music, iTunes, and Spotify.

Rep. George Santos

GOP Rep. George Santos of New York has become the third congressman in the last 50 years to be expelled from the chamber. Santos, who has faced allegations of lies, fraudulent activities, and bizarre behavior, witnessed his downfall primarily at the hands of fellow Republicans who found his conduct too egregious to tolerate.

Among the fabrications, Santos falsely claimed that his mother perished during the September 11, 2001, terror attacks and later awkwardly walked back comments that he was Jewish, adding to a litany of untruths. His expulsion also follows a sweeping



23-count superseding indictment by the Department of Justice (DOJ), charging him with conspiracy, wire fraud, making false statements to the Federal Election Commission (FEC), falsifying records, aggravated identity theft, and access device fraud.

On Friday, members of

Congress voted to expel him. The resolution required a two-thirds majority vote to succeed. House Speaker Mike Johnson announced that 311 members of the House voted to expel Santos. 114 members voted against the expulsion, and two members recorded themselves as "present."

He is the first member of Congress to be expelled since the Civil War who was not convicted of a felony beforehand.

Expulsion is handled administratively in the same way as a vacancy, such as due to death or resignation, according to a former House parliamentarian. The House clerk assumes con-

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The North Dallas Gazette, formerly Minority Opportunity News, was founded in July 1991, by Mr. Jim Bochum and Mr. Thurman R. Jones. North Dallas Gazette is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Minority Opportunity News, Inc.

Dallas' minority elected officials need to do more to ensure fair and equitable inclusion

In January of 2023, the City of Dallas reached out to minority newspapers to request a service agreement. The purpose of the service agreement was to establish a rate for any future advertising campaigns to streamline the process of securing and paying for multicultural advertising.

The North Dallas Gazette approved a discounted rate for the City and executed an agreement in March of this year.

After numerous attempts to retrieve the agreement, NDG's office was informed the document was being held at a city attorney's office as of late October of this year. Now held up for nine months, the agreement remains unsigned, meaning the minority publications, which serves Dallas minorities, cannot be considered for ad space.

The City's stonewalling since March of 2023 and its failure to execute the agreement begs the question of whether the City is really interested in engaging the minority community?

Dallas is a richly diverse



city, with approximately 42% of its population base Hispanic, 28.6% White; 23.7% Black, 5% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 3.5% Asian, according to the most recent United States Census data. This makes Dallas a majority minority city and calls for representation of the diverse cultures that make up the community, including 65.8%, who are minorities.

Dallas City Council reflects the diversity of Dallas to a great extent, with seven of its 14 City Council members either Hispanic or Black, including Jesse Moreno, Zarin Gracey, Carolyn King Arnold, Jaime Resendez, Omar Narvaez, Adam Bazaldua, and Tennell Atkins.

The extent of this representation is of course depen-

dent on how politically active the people of Dallas are, and how well their voices are being heard. To a larger extent, said representation will depend on how effectively governing bodies disseminate information to the various neighborhoods in Dallas.

The minority press wants all Dallas residents to see news and information that is relevant to them. We want to notify them of events in their communities and tell them of opportunities that could stimulate and enrich their lives. The goal of the minority press is to keep all Dallas citizens informed, represented and engaged.

Smaller newspapers like minority paper publications often face budget challenges, and they tend to lack advertising campaigns to get

needed information out.

When cities focus their advertising budgets in large publications, like the Dallas Morning News, minority communities are left out of the loop and fail to receive information about community events and opportunities their City has for them. Dallas citizens, represented by a wide variety of cultures and preferences, have been deprived of information that is relevant to them and information that could improve their lives for the better.

While in the Texas legislature, Mayor Eric Johnson worked to help the Dallas minority press. He pledged his support during his mayoral run, yet turned his back on the community press as Mayor.

Though, through its Minority/Women Business Enterprises certification, the City of Dallas claims to have a policy of ensuring minority businesses have opportunities to compete for City's contracts, the City is falling short in communicating with Dallas minorities through the local minority press.

It takes more to 'Stop the Hate' than saying the words



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

"Stop The Hate, Spread The Love" are powerful words that convey the idea that we all should be able to get along. But the reality is that it takes more than just words to bring about the desired change in so much of our national attitudes and consciousness. We know that hate is rooted in the idea that the person or persons or groups hating are "better" than the objects of their hate and that those who are the objects of such hate, must first be dehumanized to justify the less than human feelings and at-

titudes against them.

Perhaps the answer has always been just in the mirror as we look at ourselves. One of the two golden rules that Jesus taught carries the answer. Simply that "We should love our neighbors as we love ourselves." Another way of stating this is that we should treat others as we would have them treat us. How many people do we know who actually hate themselves? We know that some do and that those have been diagnosed with mental problems.

While many people argue against religion even being mentioned outside of calls for a National Day of Prayer when disaster strikes, because of false assumptions about the Separation of Church and State,

the reality is that prayer and prayer gatherings where people pray one for another, offset violent responses to acts of hate and harm from others engaged in such conduct.

The Civil Rights demonstrations in which we saw peaceful gatherings met with dogs and high pressure water hoses as well as violence, revealed that the failure to meet hatred and violence with hatred and violence, won out in the end. Those being beaten were not loving the people beating them, but they were not giving the desired response to justify the continuation of the inhumane treatment they were receiving.

We spread the love by doing what Jesus did when he said "Father forgive them,

for they know not what they are doing" Sometimes, "forgiving" is harder than fighting.

The solution is encouraging the development of personal reflections on the harm and inhumanity that is inflicted on others when we respond in hatred to that which either we do not understand, dislike or have a fear of because of the difference we see in someone else.

Yes, it takes more to "Stop The Hate and Spread The Love" than just saying it. It takes self examination as to how we want others to treat us and realizing we must give that same treatment and respect because the objects of our thoughts are just as human as we are.

Keep up with the news

O N L I N E

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CDC says America is at a crossroads with HIV/AIDS

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

On the eve of World AIDS Day, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention put out a call for urgency and a collective commitment to ending the HIV pandemic in America.

Agency officials said while there has been recent progress in HIV prevention, the world remains at a crossroads.

“Without sufficient investment in HIV prevention, we risk turning back the clock on the progress we’ve worked so hard as a nation to achieve,” Dr. Robyn Neblett Fanfair, Acting Division Director in the Division of HIV Prevention at the National Center for HIV and the CDC, wrote in a letter on Nov. 30.

“Together with ongoing commitment, we can honor the hundreds of thousands of lives lost to HIV-related illness in the United States and millions worldwide by ensuring that everyone benefits equally from four



The CDC estimates that 1.2 million people in America have HIV, and 1 in 8 carriers don't know it. (Photo via NNPA)

decades of groundbreaking scientific advances,” Fanfair stated.

The CDC estimates that 1.2 million people in America have HIV, and 1 in 8 carriers don't know it. Although new infections have declined overall, the CDC noted that tens of thousands of people in America continue to get HIV each year, and progress isn't reaching all groups equitably due in part to deeply entrenched social determinants of

health. Officials said expanded efforts will be vital to reducing these disparities, and HIV prevention resources have not kept pace with needs.

“This progress is promising. However, substantial and widening disparities persist, and efforts must be further strengthened and expanded to reach all populations equitably,” Fanfair continued. CDC officials added that community engagement has been a cru-

cial part of HIV prevention work since the beginning of the epidemic, and ongoing community engagement remains core to Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S (EHE's) success.

“Through EHE, CDC and its partners are implementing innovative, whole-person approaches designed to identify and address factors related to inequity and get powerful HIV prevention tools into the hands of every person who needs them,”

Fanfair wrote.

“For example, implementation in limited EHE jurisdictions of the pilot #ShesWell: PrEP for Women initiative, part of CDC's Let's Stop HIV Together (Together) campaign, showed increases in a range of outcomes, including PrEP knowledge and awareness and conversations with health care providers about PrEP.”

For EHE to be successful, interventions must be brought to scale to address inequity and eliminate longstanding barriers to care that require a significant and sustained infusion of new resources, Fanfair asserted. “However, HIV prevention resources have not kept pace with needs, and allocated funding has consistently fallen short of former and current president's requests for funding the EHE initiative,” Fanfair added. Investing in HIV prevention saves lives, health officials demanded, adding that effective HIV prevention is also cost-saving. Officials said reaching

EHE goals by 2030 would prevent over 255,000 HIV cases and save over \$100 billion in direct lifetime medical costs.

However, the ability to make further progress in stopping HIV transmission hinges on the ability to bring to scale innovative approaches designed to address disparities and their drivers, including HIV stigma, racism, and other social and structural determinants of health, CDC officials cautioned.

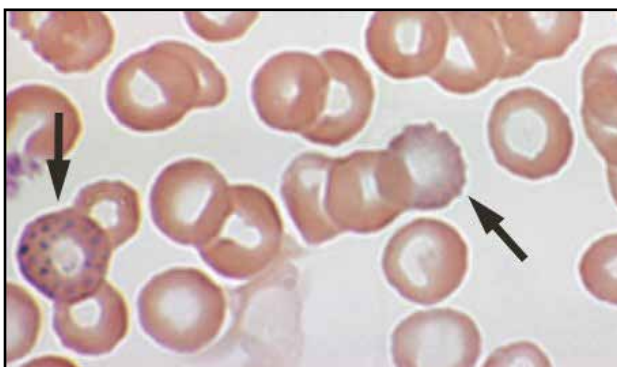
“On the 35th anniversary of World AIDS Day, we stand at a crossroads. Without sufficient investment in HIV prevention, we risk turning back the clock on the progress we've worked so hard as a nation to achieve,” Fanfair said. “Together with ongoing commitment, we can honor the hundreds of thousands of lives lost to HIV-related illness in the United States and millions worldwide by ensuring that everyone benefits equally from four decades of groundbreaking scientific advances.”

White House advances ambitious plan to eliminate lead exposure

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

In its effort toward creating safer communities, the Biden-Harris Administration said it is actively addressing the pervasive issue of lead exposure, with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) unveiling a proposal to fortify the Lead and Copper Rule, identified as a crucial step in achieving the president's vision of a lead-free future.

The proposal mandates water systems to replace lead service lines within the next decade, aligning with the president's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—a groundbreaking \$50 billion investment in upgrading the



The proposal mandates water systems to replace lead service lines within the next decade, aligning with the president's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—a groundbreaking \$50 billion investment in upgrading the nation's water infrastructure. (Photo via NNPA)

nation's water infrastructure. With over 9.2 million American households, particularly in low-income and minority communities, relying on lead pipes, this initiative is a pivotal move to ensure access to clean drinking water.

The White House said

the EPA's proposal goes beyond mere lead service line replacements, incorporating stringent measures such as enhanced tap water sampling requirements, comprehensive lead service line inventories, and streamlined actions to mitigate lead health risks. Already,

the EPA has allocated over \$3.5 billion for lead service line replacements, significantly impacting homes, schools, and buildings.

Further bolstering those efforts, the American Rescue Plan's State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund, with an investment exceeding \$20 billion, supports water infrastructure projects, emphasizing the administration's commitment to clean water initiatives.

The newly launched Get the Lead Out (GLO) Initiative partners with 200 underserved communities, providing crucial technical assistance to access funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for lead service line removal. Key financial commitments

include a \$340 million investment in Philadelphia and a \$336 million loan for Chicago, both directed toward lead pipe replacement.

In addition to comprehensively addressing lead exposure, the administration said it's tackling hazards in paint, dust, air, soil, food, and workplaces. Proposed EPA regulations aim to strengthen lead-based paint hazard removal standards, which are particularly crucial for protecting children and communities.

The administration's commitment extends to international collaboration, with partnerships between the CDC and the EPA's Office of International Affairs focusing on global initia-

tives such as the Global Child Thrive Act.

The CDC's Lead Detect Prize, a \$1 million initiative to speed the development of sophisticated point-of-care blood lead tests, is one example of how the White House described innovations in blood lead testing as a priority. This initiative reflects the administration's commitment to enhancing testing accuracy and lowering environmental contamination risks.

“As the Biden-Harris Administration marks its first anniversary, these comprehensive efforts showcase an unwavering dedication to eradicating lead exposure and ensuring a healthier, safer future for all,” officials stated.



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A Year of Political Fireworks: Trump’s legal odyssey, GOP infighting, and congressional expulsion

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

In a rollercoaster year of political drama, 2023 unfolded with Republicans engaged in a high-stakes power struggle, setting the stage for a cascade of events that would rock the political landscape.

The year kicked off with a heavyweight bout within the Republican ranks, as Kevin McCarthy clinched the Speaker of the House position after a fierce battle that took 15 rounds of voting. The twist? McCarthy had to agree to a provision allowing any caucus member to trigger a vote



The year kicked off with a heavyweight bout within the Republican ranks, as Kevin McCarthy clinched the Speaker of the House position after a fierce battle that took 15 rounds of voting. (Photo via NNPA)

for his removal. This move would come back to haunt him when MAGA firebrand Matt Gaetz seized the opportunity after President Joe Biden decisively outmaneuvered McCarthy in negotiations to avert a government shutdown that

former President Trump, the MAGA prince, had ardently sought. In terms of Trump, the year began with the former president entangled in a legal web woven by New York politicians. E. Jean Carroll’s lawsuit against

Trump resulted from a one-year look-back window that Gov. Kathy Hochul signed and opened in November 2022. The civil jury sided with Carroll, awarding her a hefty \$5 million in damages. But that was just the tip of the legal iceberg for the wannabe dictator. New York District Attorney Alvin Bragg upped the ante, bringing criminal charges against Trump related to alleged hush money payments intended to bury his extramarital affair with porn star Stormy Daniels. Special Counsel Jack Smith followed suit, indicting Trump separately for election interference and mishandling classified

documents. Trump found himself navigating a legal labyrinth, with Georgia District Attorney Fani Willis later adding racketeering charges, alleging an attempt to overturn the 2020 election results in Georgia. The twice-impeached former president will be facing 91 felony criminal charges in 2024 after a civil jury found him guilty of sexually assaulting a woman. Remarkably, amidst these legal storms, Trump maintained a strong lead as the GOP’s top pick for the 2024 presidential nomination. Some polls showed him ahead of President Biden in a hypothetical

general election matchup. As the Republicans grappled with defending the events of January 6, 2021, and new House Speaker Mike Johnson faced allegations of using offensive language in a controversial book, the dramatic year continued for Republicans with the expulsion of New York Representative George Santos. Santos became the third congressman in the last 50 years to be ousted from the chamber, facing accusations ranging from lies and fraudulent activities to bizarre behavior. Santos’s fabrications, including false claims about

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Texas Democrats urge DOJ intervention as ‘Operation Lonestar’ faces increased scrutiny

Congressmembers Jasmine Crockett and Greg Casar, alongside fellow Texas Democratic Reps. Colin Allred, Joaquin Castro, Lloyd Doggett, Veronica Escobar, Lizzie Fletcher, Sylvia Garcia, Vincente Gonzalez, Al Green, Sheila Jackson Lee, and Marc Veasey, have penned a

letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland and the Department of Justice (DOJ) demanding heightened federal oversight of Texas’ controversial ‘Operation Lonestar’ (OLS) program. Initially conceived by Texas Governor Greg Abbott, “Operation Lonestar”

has stirred significant controversy, with reported incidents resulting in at least 74 deaths and numerous instances of violence and mistreatment of migrants over the past year. Investigations have uncovered the use of razor wire and buoys in the Rio Grande, deadly vehicle pursuits, and pro-

longed detention without due process. Concerns are escalating with Abbott set to sign Texas S.B. 4 into law this week, potentially granting law enforcement more extraordinary powers to detain individuals suspected of being foreign nationals and raising fears of increased violence against

migrants and the targeting of Latino Texans. Expressing their apprehensions in the letter, the Democratic representatives highlighted the lack of remedial and preventive actions at the federal level despite ongoing abuses spanning nearly two years. The letter emphasized the

necessity for the DOJ to assert field preemption and address the recurring violations under ‘Operation Lonestar,’ urging clarity on the administration’s stance regarding the legal interference of federal immigration law by Texas officials and

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Game #	Game Name / Odds	\$	Official Close of Game	End Validations Date
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2477	\$200,000 Colossal Cash Overall Odds are 1 in 3.77	\$5	12/15/23	6/12/24
2461	20X Cash Blitz Overall Odds are 1 in 4.99	\$1	1/17/24	7/15/24
2498	Ca\$h Payout Overall Odds are 1 in 3.79	\$5	1/17/24	7/15/24
2516	Instant \$1,000! Overall Odds are 1 in 3.95	\$10	1/17/24	7/15/24
2465	200X Cash Blitz Overall Odds are 1 in 3.68	\$20	1/17/24	7/15/24

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DOE announces \$277 million in education innovation and research grants to help address academic recovery

As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's ongoing work to address academic recovery, including supporting student success in math and reading, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) today announced \$277 million in new grant awards to advance educational equity and innovation through the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant program. State-administered test scores from the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years show some early signs of rebounding from the major disruptions of the pandemic, but not enough are back to pre-pandemic levels—and the recovery has been uneven—with the students most impacted still furthest behind. We have a long way to go, especially for communities and students who have been exposed to longstanding inequality. These new grant awards can help us get there with \$90.3 million



Yustinus Tjiuwanda / Unsplash

for STEM, \$87.2 million for social emotional well-being, including student engagement, and \$76.5 million for projects in rural areas.

"This \$277 million in grant awards from the Biden-Harris Administration will fund some of the nation's most promising efforts to raise the bar for academic recovery, excellence, and equity in education," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "I am especially excited to have the Department of Education support in-

novative efforts across the country to enhance literacy, math, and STEM instruction broadly in underserved communities and set the stage for young people to succeed, as well as learn how to address real-world problems in today's most cutting-edge fields. All of this year's grantees are pioneering exciting, evidence-based strategies to close opportunity gaps and provide young people with the engaging and impactful learning experiences they deserve so that they can achieve at high levels."

The EIR programs help create, implement, replicate, and expand entrepreneurial, evidence-based innovations to improve outcomes for historically underserved learners and to rigorously evaluate such innovations. The EIR grants have been awarded to 45 grantees to advance educational innovation, research, and develop new solutions to addressing persistent educational opportunity gaps for students who have been historically underserved.

These awards are announced as the Department celebrates the one-year anniversary of the YOU Belong in STEM initiative, which supports the implementation and scaling of equitable, high-quality STEM education for all students from PreK to higher education—regardless of background—to prepare them for 21st century career readiness and global competitiveness.

"Diversity is the strength

of our nation; it fuels innovation and progress. In celebration of the YOU Belong in STEM anniversary, the Department is pleased to support these new EIR grantees that advance our goal to create a more inclusive STEM community, while also supporting student success in math and reading," said U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Cindy Marten. "As the Department continues to advance equity and innovation, we invite everyone to join us in celebrating the YOU Belong in STEM anniversary and the positive impact these EIR grantees will have on shaping the future of education."

The 2023 cohort of EIR grantees represents a wide range of innovative approaches that Raise the Bar and advance academic excellence, student engagement, social and emotional development and well-being, and create pathways for global engagement for

schools across the nation—including more than \$100 million in grants for strategies designed to support success in math and reading. For example:

- The Concord Consortium's project will employ a strategy to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) education to expand access to AI programs in math and literacy for students underrepresented in the computing field, including African American and Hispanic students, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, living in remote rural areas, or in under-resourced schools, as well as develop teachers' competency for implementing AI in math program.

- The Education Development Center will launch a project titled "Math for All: Expanding Professional Learning to Improve Mathematics Outcomes for Students in High-Need

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Two PVAMU faculty, staff members receive distinguished awards by The Texas A&M University System

By Kerry Laird
Prairie View A&M

The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents named two Prairie View A&M University employees as recipients of this year's Regents Professor and Regents Fellow awards for outstanding performance during 2022-2023.

Ananda Amarasekara, Ph.D., of PVAMU's Brailford College of Arts and Sciences, received a Regents Professor Award. Rukeia Draw-Hood, Ph.D. of the College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources, received a Regents Fellow Award.

"I am humbled to be recognized as one of the recipients of this prestigious award in The Texas A&M University System," said



Ananda Amarasekara, Ph.D.

Dr. Amarasekara, professor and head of the Department of Chemistry and Physics. "I am looking forward to continuing our efforts to improve teaching, research and service further at this great institution."

Serving on the faculty for 20 years, Dr. Amarasekara's research interests focus on renewable energy and sustainable transportation fuels and storage using



Rukeia Draw-Hood, Ph.D.

Li-ion batteries. His work appears in more than 150 peer-reviewed journals.

He also authored Handbook of Cellulosic Ethanol, which offers "comprehensive coverage on the growing science and technology of producing ethanol from the world's abundant cellulosic biomass," according to the book's cover.

According to The Texas A&M University System

website, the Regents Professor Award is the "highest honor bestowed by system on faculty members."

The Fellow Award recognizes "exemplary professional service to society that has created large and lasting benefits to Texas and beyond." Both awards recognize excellent contributions to the University, as well as to the people of Texas and beyond.

"I consider it a privilege to be able to serve volunteers, youth and their families through extension education," said Dr. Draw-Hood, program leader of PVAMU 4-H and Youth Development. "I am most grateful to our dedicated team of youth development professionals and supportive administrators."

In total, the board recog-

nized 14 faculty members and 13 agency service, extension and research professionals this year for their exceptional work and dedication.

The Regents Professor Awards began in 1996, and the Regents Fellow Awards began in 1998. More than 300 Texas A&M system faculty members and 188 agency professionals have received the awards over the years.

"From research to service, these individuals' accomplishments over the last year exemplify The A&M System's commitment to finding solutions and serving Texas," said Bill Mahomes, chairman of The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents. "I hope their example will inspire others."

The awards selection process commences with the chancellor issuing a call for nominations. Subsequently, the chief executive officer of each relevant entity considers the final nominations.

These nominations undergo a comprehensive system-level review involving academic vice chancellors and previous award recipients. Ultimately, the nominations are submitted to the chancellor and the board for their final approval.

"It is a great honor to have that service recognized by the Texas A&M University System," said Dr. Draw-Hood, whose PVAMU work spans 12 years. "I am humbled by the nomination and selection for this prestigious award."

City of Richardson wins Best in Texas Marketing Awards for Cottonwood Art Festival and Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival

The City of Richardson won 29 Best In Texas Kaliff Marketing Awards for Cottonwood Art Festival and Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival at the Texas Festivals & Events Association (TFEA) Conference held Nov. 12-19. The annual TFEA/Kaliff Marketing Awards program recognizes and encourages excellence in promotional campaigns and more than 530 entries were submitted for 60 categories.

“For more than 50 years, the City of Richardson has continued to create cultural, artistic and other signature events for the community to bring their families and friends to experience,” said Richardson Parks and Recreation Director Yvonne Falgout. “This award competition includes events across the State of Texas, and we’re proud to be named finalists and honored recipients for Cottonwood Art Festival and Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival. We look forward to celebrating these festi-



City of Richardson

vals in 2024 and appreciate the support of our sponsors, partners, staff and volunteers.”

Cottonwood Art Festival is a semi-annual juried art show held in May and October at Cottonwood Park. Ranked in the Top 10 Fine Art Events by Art Fair Source Book, Cottonwood also received the TFEA Award of Excellence in Festival and Event Promotion within the budget of \$250,001-\$750,000 for the following:

- Gold – 1st Place for best Video Promotion, Event Website, Event/Organization E-Newsletter, Facebook Site, Instagram Site, Single Newsletter Display Ad, Promotional Photograph, T-Shirt Design and Festival/Event Merchandise.
- Silver – 2nd Place for best Event Program, Promotional Poster, Commemorative Poster and Invitation.
- Bronze – 3rd Place for best Single Digital Social

Ad and Outdoor Billboard.

“TFEA is proud to help all of our festivals and events in the state grow bigger and better, not only for the thousands of attendees and sponsors, but also, for the economic impact these festivals and events have in our local communities,” said Mary Margaret Campbell, former Chair of Texas Festivals & Events Association.

“Communities become known for the festivals and events they host,” said Kay

Wolf, founding member of the Texas Festivals & Events Association.

Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival is held every May at Galatyn Park Urban Center and the three-day weekend includes five stages of entertainment for thousands of music fans to experience. The 2023 event received 14 Awards of Excellence in Festival and Event Promotion within the budget over \$750,000 for the following:

- Gold 1st Place for best Event Video Promotion, Radio Promotion, Event/Organization E-Newsletter, Instagram Site, Street Banner, Onsite Décor and Festival/Event Merchandise
- Silver 2nd Place for best Commemorative Poster
- Bronze 3rd Place for best Facebook Site, Single Digital Social Ad, Best Event Program, Single Newspaper Display Ad, Promotional Poster and Promotional Photograph

Celebrating 54 years, the semi-annual Cottonwood Art Festival is a ju-

ried show ranked among the Top 10 Fine Art Shows in the country. Local artists staged the first Festival at the scenic Cottonwood Park in Richardson, Texas in its humble beginnings in 1969.

Cottonwood has since established itself as an internationally award-winning signature art event and become a tradition within the community. The Festival designed outreach programs as innovative tools to mentor students, designed to broaden the interest in visual arts beyond the art festival, and bring the art world into classrooms. www.cottonwoodartfestival.com.

Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival began in 1993 and is produced by the City of Richardson Parks & Recreation Department. Follow Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival on social media with the official hashtag #WAMFEST24 or visit www.wildflowerfestival.com for more information.

Congressional Leaders Advocate for Rosa Parks Day Federal Holiday

As the nation approaches the 68th anniversary of Rosa Parks’ historic arrest, U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell of Alabama’s 7th District, along with Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Chairman Steven Horsford and Representative Joyce Beatty, held a press conference on Capitol Hill to rally support for H.R. 308, the Rosa Parks Day Act. The proposed legislation aims to designate December 1 as a federal holiday in honor of Rosa Parks, recognizing her pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement.

December 1, 1955, marked a turning point in American history when Rosa Parks, a courageous African American woman, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing

to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger. Her act of defiance ignited the Montgomery Bus Boycott and became a catalyst for the broader struggle for civil rights.

Sewell, representing the district where Rosa Parks’ arrest occurred, emphasized the significance of recognizing this momentous occasion. As Rep. Sewell’s first bill in the 118th Congress, the Rosa Parks Day Act (H.R. 308) is of particular significance to the congresswoman and CBC members.

“Rosa Parks’ bravery on that December day changed the course of history, and it is only fitting that we honor her legacy with a federal holiday,” Sewell stated. “It’s time for our nation

to officially recognize the contributions of a woman and a Black woman to the fight for equality.”

Currently, the United States lacks a federal holiday dedicated explicitly to honoring a woman or a Black woman. The Rosa Parks Day Act seeks to rectify this by amending Section 6103(a) of Title 5, United States Code, to include “Rosa Parks Day” as a legal public holiday, placing it alongside other significant national observances.

The bill’s proponents argue that recognizing Rosa Parks’ arrest as a federal holiday would pay tribute to her courage and serve as a broader symbol of the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.





The latest tiebreaker occurred during the confirmation of Loren Alikhan as a U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia. As vice president, Harris serves as the president of the Senate, granting her constitutional authority to break ties. (Photo via NNPA)

Vice President Harris makes history in Senate with 32nd tie-breaking vote

By Stacy M. Brown
For the *Washington Informer*

On Tuesday, Dec. 5, Vice President Kamala Harris broke the previous record set by John C. Calhoun in the 19th century for the most tie-breaking votes cast in the U.S. Senate. Harris has now cast 32 tie-breaking votes, eclipsing Calhoun's record of 31 during his tenure as vice president from 1825 to 1832.

The latest tiebreaker occurred during the confirmation of Loren Alikhan as a U.S. District Judge for the

District of Columbia. As vice president, Harris serves as the president of the Senate, granting her constitutional authority to break ties.

Harris's accomplishment is noteworthy not only for its historical significance but also in the context of the current political landscape. The U.S. Senate has been narrowly divided throughout the Biden administration, comprising 48 Democrats, 49 Republicans, and three independents. Of the independents, Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and An-

gus King of Maine caucus with Democrats, while Arizona Sen. Kyrsten Sinema left the Democratic Party in 2022 to register as an independent.

The surge in tie-breaking votes contrasts with previous administrations, as former Vice President Mike Pence cast 13 tie-breaking votes, while President Joe Biden did not cast any during his vice presidential tenure in the eight years of the Obama administration.

In a speech on the Senate

See HARRIS, Page 16

← LONESTAR, from Page 5

law enforcement.

The lawmakers stressed their acknowledgment of the challenges at the southern border and the need for bipartisan solutions to address the broken immigration system. However, they underscored the imperative to ensure that actions taken at the border are legal and that the rights of all individuals, regardless of nationality, are protected.

"While Governor Abbott ramps up his escalated actions under OLS, we continue to see civil rights vio-

lations and illegal actions, whether it is the continuing 'trespassing' arrests of immigrants, razor-wire installations, or physical interposition by DPS and Texas Guard personnel preventing migrants from accessing safety and medical care, as illustrated from a video last month showing a Texas National Guard soldier accosting a migrant stuck in barbed wire," the representatives wrote.

The letter concluded with a call for the DOJ to brief Congress on the recent

findings of the Operation Lonestar investigation and a request to deploy federal civil rights observers to the affected areas.

Crockett further called for a DOJ briefing to update Congress on the ongoing investigation into 'Operation Lonestar' and requested a commitment from the DOJ to deploy federal civil rights observers to the impacted regions. "It is critical that DOJ assert its rightful field preemption and send a strong message regarding OLS abuses," she insisted.



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Film Review: 'Renaissance: A Film By Beyoncé'

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

(***) Mother/wife, CEO and performer. Beyoncé knows who she is. Now the rest of the world will too. Just like her Beehive, a fan club that she showers with love and devotion: "My heart is full. My soul is full."

The Destiny's Child lead singer has some news. She's grown as a solo artist. From a vocalist who can dance her ass off, to a leader who can knit together a family of musicians, dancers, designers and stage crew members and produce an astonishingly beautiful concert tour. One that cataloged 56 dates in 39 cities grossing \$579M. Eighth highest grossing concert tour—ever. Highest grossing Black tour—ever. Furthermore, she's written, co-directed (James B. Merryman, Mark Ritchie) and stars in this doc/concert film.

For those who couldn't get (afford) tix to the tour, here it is. Best seat in the house. Front row when you'd want it. Views from afar when you need perspective. Even in midair



when she rides a silver horse figure up into the rafters (cinematographers Dax Binn and Kenneth Wales). Most of the well-known songs from her career are sung, danced to and choreographed to a T. Favorites from her recent Grammy-winning album Renaissance, including the chart-topping hit "Break My Soul" and the powerful "Cuff It," are performed and echoed by audiences that numbered up to 70,000

in one stadium.

The song interpretations are astutely and artistically clipped together from several concerts. As one routine is in full display, magically the singers and dancers' costumes change color. Same song, same vocals pulled together from different venues. Unfortunately, the editors' judicious snipping doesn't include the film's length. At 2h 49m, forward momentum ebbs and flows.

Axing 30 minutes of footage would have made everything more consistently mesmerizing and rhythmic.

Delving into Beyoncé's personal life becomes quite intimate. Mom, kids, husband and her much loved but deceased Uncle Johnny, a gay man who introduced her to house music and made her costumes, are all part of this portrait. Sometimes she's profound: "I created a space where everyone is free." Sometimes not so much: "A diva is female hustler." Hearing her philosophize about her life, time, artistry and psyche is

good for the most part but in the long run it bloats the footage. Though the Beehive may beg to differ.

The clear highpoints are the dazzling performances. Hard to name another singer/dancer who can top what she does, bring that energy on tour and be even better in concert than she is on record. Second billing must go to the eye-catching lighting design, glittery costumes and astounding scenery. This is a show of shows. Add in guest performances, by Megan Thee Stallion, Kendrick Lamar and Diana Ross, and the

star quotient is heavenly.

By film's end, minus a couple of lapses, Queen B has pulled you in. She's self-assured, loving, sensitive, thoughtful, imaginative, determined and ready for the next phase in her life. Joy.

Joy is what Beyoncé brings to this very entertaining and tender doc. A contagious sense of optimism and acceptance for everyone. Moviegoers who weren't ardent fans before, will be now. Brava.

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.

Creative sisters seek to inspire...



Madison Symonne is a dynamic sibling duo who writes children's books about family life lessons. Their purpose is to provide everyday families with stories and motivational clothing that allow them to express their personality and step outside their comfort zone. Anaia Symonne and Aliyah Madison are the 11 and 9 year old sisters and children's book authors that makes up Madison Symonne. Their picture and chapter books are based on lessons learned from their parent's. With big dreams and high aspirations Anaia who loves to dance wants to be a choreographer, while Aliyah strives to become a teacher someday. Meanwhile, their literary chops are on full display at madisonsymonne.shop. (Courtesy photo)

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'Lord, have mercy!' Jamie Foxx returns to spotlight at Critics Choice Celebration

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

In an emotional comeback, Oscar-winning actor Jamie Foxx took center stage at the Critics' Choice Association's Celebration of Cinema & Television on Monday, December 4, marking his first major Hollywood appearance since a medical emergency in April left him battling for his life.

Foxx, 55, made a surprise entrance at the event to honor Black, Latino, and AAPI achievements in the entertainment industry. Anita Bennett, the creator of Urban Hollywood 411, reported that Jurnee Smollett, Foxx's co-star in the Prime Video film "The Burial," introduced a montage of clips from Foxx's illustrious career and presented him with the night's prestigious Vanguard Award.

Bennett noted that as Foxx stepped onto the stage, the audience erupted in applause. The actor, known for his versatility in acting and music, delivered a mix of jokes, songs, and heartfelt moments. However, emotions ran high as he opened up about his recent health struggles.

"I've been through something. I've been through some things. It's crazy, I couldn't do that six months ago, I couldn't actually walk to..." Foxx's voice trailed off, and he fought back tears, prompting someone from the audience to encourage him to take his time.

"Six months ago, I could not fathom that I would be here," Foxx continued, alluding to the unexpected medical emergency that led to his hospitalization in Georgia on April 11 while



Foxx, 55, made a surprise entrance at the event to honor Black, Latino, and AAPI achievements in the entertainment industry (Photo via NNPA)

filming the Netflix movie "Back in Action." Although he did not disclose the specifics of his illness, he shared that there were moments when he doubted his recovery.

"It feels good to be here. I cherish every single minute now. It's different," Foxx said, while also humorously recounting moments when strangers recognized him during his low-key rehabilitation in Chicago. He told the audience that early on, he wasn't sure he'd pull through. "I wouldn't wish what I went through on my worst enemy because it's tough... when it's almost over, when you see the tunnel. I saw the tunnel — I didn't see the light," he said. "I want to thank you for all the prayers."

Foxx continued: "The one thing that I have to get used to now is [when people say] 'Lord, have mercy, Jesus. I'll be driving, and somebody will pull up and hit me with that.' He then recalled undergoing physical rehabilitation in Chi-

cago after being released from the hospital.

Foxx said his family went to great lengths to protect his privacy, and he wore a face mask so no one would recognize him. "No one knew where I was. No one knew what was going on," he explained, adding that a woman who worked at the rehab center's front desk eventually made him remove the mask.

"The Black lady that was checking me in... at one point she said, 'Well baby, I'm gonna have to see your face if I'm going to sign you in here. I run a tight ship, and I'm gonna have to see your face,'" Foxx said while doing an impression of the woman.

As he continued the story, he began to get emotional. "I took the mask down and she saw me... she said, 'Lord, have mercy, Jesus. I've been praying for you,'" Foxx recalled. "I said, 'Wow.' And that indicated that once I did get out of all of this, I was going to be alright."

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Consistency key to corporate expressions of racial solidarity

(Newsweek) — ITHACA, N.Y. — Why do some corporate expressions of solidarity with marginalized groups register as genuine, while others seem performative or even backfire?

An analysis of statements by Fortune 500 companies following the 2020 police killing of George Floyd finds that costly actions, such as donating money to social justice groups, aren't enough to convey allyship to Black Americans. Companies must also demonstrate a consistent, long-term commitment to diversity and racial equity, according to research co-authored by James T. Carter, assistant professor

of organizational behavior at Cornell University.

"Money is just a small piece of the puzzle with respect to Black Americans' allyship assessments," said Carter. "A company could give millions of dollars, but they are not capturing the benefits of that donation unless they are also consistent."

"Sincere Solidarity or Performative Pretense? Evaluations of Organizational Allyship," published Dec. 3 in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

Organizations are increasingly expected to signal solidarity in response to high-profile "mega-threat" events targeting an identity

group, the scholars said, with research showing that people may perceive companies as complicit in racial violence if they remain silent.

After Floyd's murder, when seemingly every major company — some with inconsistent records on diversity — released ally statements, the research team sought to identify the factors driving marginalized groups' evaluations of allyship. The scholars first collected public statements released by nearly 350 Fortune 500 companies during the two months following Floyd's death.

To investigate the role of consistency, the researchers noted if companies placed

in the top 100 of Fortune magazine's Measure Up initiative, which ranks Fortune 500 companies relative to one another based on 14 diversity and inclusion metrics.

More than 1,300 Black Americans evaluated the statements — eight per person, randomly selected, for a total of more than 10,000 evaluations — rating the extent to which they agreed that a company was an ally to Black people.

Statements that signaled costs received better evaluations than those that didn't. But costly elements only predicted positive evaluations for companies that communicated consistent attention to the

issues — in this case, those appearing in Measure Up's top 100.

"You can demonstrate costly signals, and you should," Carter said. "But consistency is key to shaping whether people perceive an organization to be an ally or not."

To test the findings in a more controlled manner, a second study adapted a Fortune 500 ally statement into four versions that varied cost and consistency levels — changing, for example, how much the unnamed company donated to social justice organizations, whether it mentioned race or victim names, and how long it had appeared on a

recognized list of best companies for diversity.

Nearly 700 Black Americans evaluated one of the four versions of the statement for allyship and rated how authentic the company seemed. The results confirmed the relationship between cost and consistency and suggested that perceived authenticity underpinned the evaluations.

To sincerely demonstrate solidarity, the authors concluded, costly sacrifices in support of Black people are "necessary but insufficient."

Cornell University has dedicated television and audio studios available for media interviews.

Dallas Bright Futures announces the Monty J. and Sarah Z. Bennett Dallas Scholarship for college-bound DISD seniors

(PRNewswire) -- Dallas Bright Futures proudly announces the launch of a new merit and adversity-based college scholarship program for eligible Dallas youth, The Monty J. and Sarah Z. Bennett Dallas Scholarship. Available to college-bound high school seniors currently enrolled within the Dallas Independent School District ("DISD"), the philan-

thropic initiative is designed to make higher education more accessible and affordable while allowing DISD students the opportunity to pursue their academic and career goals.

In its first year, the Monty J. and Sarah Z. Bennett Dallas Scholarship will offer approximately five college scholarships up to \$5,000 each that can be used by

scholarship awardees to cover tuition, books or living expenses. These include merit-based college scholarships established for DISD students who exhibit outstanding academic achievements, leadership qualities, and demonstrated commitment to improving the city of Dallas. Recognizing that financial barriers should not prevent student's

dreams, the Foundation will also award adversity-based scholarships to competitive DISD students facing

unique hardships or financial challenges that restrict their access to a college education.

"Education is the foundation for a brighter future,"

See SENIORS, Page 12

GOP, from Page 5

his mother's tragic demise during the 9/11 attacks and contradictory statements about his religious background, were laid bare. The Department of Justice delivered a stunning blow with a 23-count indictment, charging Santos with conspiracy, wire fraud, making false statements to the FEC, falsifying records, aggravated identity theft, and access device fraud.

For Democrats, the off-year election outcomes hold greater significance for 2024 than current polling, offering a more pertinent gauge for the upcoming elections regarding resource allocation, investment, and direct voter communication. The

Biden-Harris team believes big wins in the November 2023 elections showcase the Democrats' ability to outperform expectations. Biden eagerly monitored Tuesday's election returns, keen on swiftly congratulating the triumphant Democrats.

In Kentucky, Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear secured a victory over Republican Daniel Cameron by skillfully navigating the state's increasingly conservative landscape. Simultaneously, in Pennsylvania, Democrat Dan McCaffery triumphed in the state's Supreme Court election, focusing his campaign on abortion and other rights. Virginia witnessed Democrats seiz-

ing complete control of the statehouse, dealing a setback to Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin by emphasizing abortion access in legislative campaigns. From winning the high-profile gubernatorial race in Kentucky to securing a pivotal ballot measure in Ohio and gaining majorities in Virginia's state legislature, Democrats emerged as the prevailing force, placing the issue of abortion at the forefront of their successes.

As the year drew to a close, Trump's legal battles and the GOP's internal strife set the stage for an electrifying 2024 election cycle, leaving political enthusiasts waiting for the next chapter in this gripping saga that has American democracy on the brink.



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Risk of forced labor is widespread in U.S. food supply, study finds

(Newswise) — Eliminating forced labor is a vital starting point for creating a just and sustainable food supply, but most of us don't know much about the labor conditions involved in producing our food. It's possible that the people who picked and processed some of the items on our dinner table worked in conditions that involved force, fraud, coercion, or debt bondage.

In a study published July 24 in *Nature Food*, researchers at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University and the University of Nottingham Rights Lab calculated the risk of forced labor across all aspects of the U.S. food supply, excluding seafood. They found that the majority of forced labor risks came from animal-based proteins, processed fruits and vegetables, and discretionary foods—products such as sweeteners, coffee, wine, and beer. They also found that 62 percent of the risk of forced labor came from production or processing that occurs on U.S. soil.



Austin Park / Unsplash

"We often think of our risk here in the U.S. as coming from imports, but there's plenty of risk that comes from our domestic food production as well," said Jessica Decker Sparks, VG14, assistant professor at the Friedman School and senior author on the paper. "And that's important because some of the more effective tools we use to try to eliminate or mitigate risk of forced labor in the U.S. are trade bans or trade sanctions. They're focused on imports."

News reports have highlighted documented incidents of forced labor in lower-income countries, particularly in the choco-

late and coffee industries, but poverty, language barriers, and precarious immigration statuses can create populations that are just as vulnerable to exploitation in the U.S. as those overseas. Visas for seasonal agricultural laborers, for example, tie workers to a single employer who they are often dependent on for housing and transportation. Workers don't have a lot of options if an employer withholds pay or verbally, physically, or sexually abuses them. By highlighting the aspects of our food supply where the risk of forced labor is high, both domestically and abroad, the researchers hope to pro-

vide legislators and companies with the information they need to take action to prevent these kinds of abuses.

"We're talking about a systemic issue," said Nicole Tichenor Blackstone, N12, NG16, assistant professor at the Friedman School and first and corresponding author on the paper. "This research is for policymakers to inform how we can change regulation, monitoring, and enforcement of forced labor prevention; and it's also for businesses and other supply chain actors who have the power to change conditions to mitigate risk and collaborate with workers to do so."

To calculate which areas of the food industry have the highest risk for this type of exploitation, the researchers used data from the U.S. Department of Labor and State Department as well as various reports from non-governmental organizations. Along with study authors Bethany Jackson, senior research fellow at the University of Nottingham, and Edgar

Rodríguez Huerta, research fellow at the University of Nottingham, they followed the supply chain for every land-based food commodity in the U.S., looking at each stage of production, the policies in place in various locations, and any previous reports of forced labor. They also relied on investigative journalism sources, combing through 40,000 articles on forced labor in food commodities across the world for any documented incidents that might not have been included in other reports.

They found that risk is widespread in the U.S. food system. A lot of the high-risk products are hand-picked, such as tomatoes, berries, and citrus fruit, or those that require significant processing, such as boneless beef or apple juice concentrate. The goal isn't to get consumers to stop purchasing a particular food—these actions can actually hurt workers, the researchers said—but to prompt the systemic changes needed to create a food system that works for

everyone.

"It's about widening the lens," Blackstone said. "We want to broaden the conversation to make sure we're not just focusing on our own health as individuals, but also the health and wellbeing of people working to bring food to our tables."

The researchers stressed that efforts should be on guaranteeing decent work—not just eliminating forced labor, the most extreme version of worker exploitation. In the U.S., worker-driven social responsibility programs such as Milk with Dignity and the Fair Food Program have made marked improvements in labor conditions at participating dairy and produce operations. They provide a model that could potentially be replicated and scaled up to help eliminate exploitative practices across other food industries.

"Risk assessments are just one part of the package," Decker Sparks said.

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SENIORS, from Page 11

commented Monty J. Bennett and Sarah Z. Bennett. "The Scholarship Fund represents our unwavering commitment to making higher education more accessible and affordable for

students within DISD. We look forward to welcoming a diverse group of talented and motivated students to our college scholarship initiative."

Please visit www.dallas-

brightfutures.org for details regarding eligibility criteria and information regarding the application process. The first round of scholarships will be awarded in 2024 for students entering the '24-'25 collegiate year as freshmen.

The Dallas Independent

School District is located in the heart of a large, diverse, and dynamic region serving a diverse population of over 150,000 students in approximately 230 schools. The district is reported to be the second largest public school district in the state of Texas

and among the top 20 largest districts in the nation.

Monty J. Bennett and Sarah Z. Bennett are lifelong advocates of civic engagement, advocating especially for children and educational equality. They take pride in giving back to the Dallas-

Fort Worth community and have supported numerous charitable organizations over the years including the North Texas Food Bank, Special Olympics, the RISE School, the S.M Wright Foundation, and many others.

SANTOS, from Page 2

trol of the office and makes decisions on behalf of that office. Among other steps, they will determine the process for clearing out Santos' office. His district office remains fully operational to address the needs of its constituents.

The chamber's clerk will inform the governor of New York that there is now a vacancy in the third district of New York. It is then up to Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul to schedule a special election to replace him.

"We don't know who he is at all. He's a dedicated,

committed con man in the halls of Congress and has access to government secrets to a lot of things that could be damaging to this country. He has to go," remarked Republican Representative Brandon Williams.

Santos faced criticism from both sides of the aisle. GOP Representative Marc Molinaro stated, "George Santos is doing what every con man and 4-year-old does, which is to ignore the truth, take no responsibility, and point at others and suggest they are worse."

The expulsion process faced initial uncertainty, with some questioning whether a vote would occur. Democratic Representative Jasmine Crockett criticized Santos and the GOP for engaging in what she described as a distracting "dueling expulsion" rather than addressing crucial issues like the migrant crisis or passing a budget.

House Ethics Chair Michael Guest (R-MS) denounced Santos for criticizing the Ethics Committee's report that advocated for his expulsion, stating, "George Santos would have you believe that the process that he

endorsed in May is fatally flawed and that he instead is the subject of a political witch hunt."

In his defense, Santos argued that he had not been convicted of any crimes, emphasizing the lack of precedent for expulsion without a criminal conviction. House Speaker Mike Johnson expressed reservations about setting such a precedent.

However, the DOJ's indictment revealed a complex scheme Santos allegedly executed during the election cycle. Prosecutors accused him of conspiring to obtain money for his

campaign by submitting materially false reports to the FEC and inflating campaign fundraising numbers to qualify for financial and logistical support from a national party committee.

The scheme involved falsely reporting significant financial contributions from family members, never making loans, and misrepresenting financial stability. "Santos allegedly led multiple additional fraudulent criminal schemes, lying to the American public in the process," stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Smith. Added Breon Peace, the U.S. Attorney for the

Eastern District of New York, "Santos is charged with stealing people's identities and making charges on his own donors' credit cards without their authorization, lying to the FEC and, by extension, the public about the financial state of his campaign. Santos falsely inflated the campaign's reported receipts with non-existent loans and contributions that were either fabricated or stolen."

Santos, elected to Congress last November, was sworn in as the U.S. Representative for New York's Third Congressional District on January 7, 2023.

Michigan Ross Professor explores warning signs in banking industry

By Jeff Karoub
Univ. of Michigan Ross
School of Business

(Newswise) — Judging banks' risks by those reported profits, the researchers say, could be a simple, effective complement to other tools used by regulators assessing the health of financial institutions.

The authors used data from various financial crises, including those roiling the savings and loan industry in the late 1980s, the overall financial system in 2007-10 and regional banks earlier this year. They also examined the Russian debt crisis of 1998 and European sovereign debt crisis of 2008-11.

For each, they com-

puted a bank's return on "bad days" of the crisis as a measure of its tail risk—the extent of loss a bank experiences from a sudden, extreme negative event—and related it to the bank's profitability a year before the crisis. They found banks with higher return on investment a year before the crisis performed much worse during the crisis.

Put simply, more profitable banks in good times had higher tail risk that materialized in bad times.

It's a tempting approach, at least as long as the good times roll: Banks make a lot of return and generate a lot of profits that get distributed to their managers and shareholders. But the authors say those banks

hold riskier assets and fund them with a lot of leverage to boost their return on equity, so when the party's over, the banks' performance is much worse.

The researchers say the proximate cause of every crisis often does a good job in explaining a bank's poor performance during that specific episode, but focusing on the return on equity serves as an effective predictor across all the crises they examined.

"Overall, our message is to go after the deeper incentives behind risk-taking in banking and not only its proximate cause," said Amiyatosh Purnanandam, co-author and finance professor at U-M's Ross School of Business. "High-

er equity capital requirements and a closer monitoring of very profitable banks in good times can be useful supervisory tools."

Purnanandam says going deeper is important because too often regulators and policymakers are "fighting the last war" when they come up with a series of new regulations to fix the problems associated with a specific crisis. The next crisis, he says, "originates in some different corner of the financial system and we end up missing it."

For example, regulators made a good deal of progress in containing excessive risk-taking in the mortgage market after the global financial crisis. But the recent collapse of Sili-

con Valley Bank came from excessive interest rate risk and reliance on uninsured deposits.

The key idea of their study, Purnanandam and his colleagues say, is to go back to the first principles of risk-return tradeoff and propose an approach that is simpler and less vulnerable to manipulation. For instance, the study notes underreporting risk could only be achieved by underreporting profits, which would inhibit the ability to distribute returns to expectant managers and shareholders.

"No one measure is perfect," he said. "We do not claim that our measure is 'the only measure' or 'the perfect measure' to detect

risk. But we certainly hope that this is one simple and useful measure that the policymakers will pay attention to."

Purnanandam's co-authors are Ben Meiselman, a financial economist with the U.S. Department of Treasury who received his master's and doctorate degrees from U-M; and Stefan Nagel, a finance professor at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business who previously taught at U-M's Ross School.

In their paper, the authors say the findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in their paper do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Treasury Department.

FOOD, from Page 12

"We need to look at strategies for how we respond, but also how we prevent the problem. And that's going to require something much more transformative and

directly driven by workers."

Research reported in this article was supported by an unrestricted gift from Amazon.com, Inc.; the Tufts

University Springboard program; the Interdisciplinary Research Innovation Fund (RAFINS) at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University; and

the Nottingham Research Fellowship, University of Nottingham. Complete information on authors, funders, methodology, and conflicts of interest is available in the published

paper.

The content is solely the responsibility of the au-

thors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funders.

O'CONNOR, from Page 2

for a female justice, underwent symbolic changes, such as the designation of the first women's bathroom near the courtroom.

Post-retirement,

O'Connor founded iCivics in 2006, a groundbreaking initiative to educate children about the political process through interactive games.

SURGE, from Page 1

the white non-Hispanic advantage over the Black non-Hispanic population decreasing by 14.5% from 2021 (5.5 years) to 2022 (4.7).

"There appears to have been some recovery from covid, but we still have a way to go," William Schaffner, an infectious-disease physician at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, told the Washington Post.

"Covid remains with us and continues to put people in the hospital, and have a substantial mortality rate associated with it, particularly among older people and people who are immunocompromised," Schaff-

ner said.

Schaffner added that the lingering effects of the pandemic and other health challenges provide a reminder that the United States needs to continue its comprehensive childhood vaccination program, which typically requires children to be immunized before attending school.

"And now we have a slow erosion of that, with increasing vaccine skepticism and more and more parents withholding their children from comprehensive vaccination," Schaffner said. "We don't want to erode these very successful preventive health initiatives."

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Ain't Nothing Better Than a P&J Sandwich

By Dr. James L. Snyder

I'm not sure what happened to my closely guarded diet during these recent holidays, but I won't ask. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has been so busy cooking and preparing food that she didn't have time to oversee my diet.

I love it when a plan comes together.

As usual, I used this time for my benefit and delighted myself with all the food. And believe me, the food was delicious.

One thing I like about holiday eating is that you can always go for seconds and if careful, thirds.

As the family is around the table and the chatter continues, I can sneak another portion of that delicious turkey. There is no way I can have too much turkey. From one turkey to another, I can only say, "Gobble, gobble, gobble."

Another benefit of these holiday meals is the leftovers. Sometimes, it has been my experience that leftovers are more delicious than the original. I'm unsure if it's The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage's



culinary skill or just the quality of the food. The second time around is a winner. The third time around is not too bad, either.

In our house, the planning of the holiday meals begins in late summer. Our shelves are stocked with all kinds of food for the holidays. We have a special refrigerator in the garage stuffed with all sorts of things for the holiday.

If I had to choose which food I enjoyed the most during these holidays, I would be in trouble. Or maybe I could say, like my uncle used to say, "It's what I'm eating at the time."

I must say that the pie selection is right up at the top of the best part of the meal. There were all kinds of pies: pumpkin pie, apple pie, lemon meringue pie,

and those were just the pies I saw and ate. My plan is, if I eat only one slice at a time, I may not be caught.

I ended the holiday season well stuffed with some delicious food. No complaints from this side of the Parsonage.

The week following our Thanksgiving dinner, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I sat in the living room relaxing. I looked at her and said, "When is our next Thanksgiving dinner?"

Looking at me with one of her looks, she said, "When I find the next turkey." And then she stared at me until I was just slightly uncomfortable.

About a week after our Thanksgiving dinner, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage planned to

spend the day shopping for Christmas presents. I was instructed to get my lunch for that day.

I don't mind getting my lunch as long as she doesn't know the ingredients of my lunch. But how can you compete with all that food in our refrigerator this time of the year?

When lunchtime came, I opened the refrigerator and looked at all the delicious food. I was trying to figure out which I would pick first. No matter which one I choose, it would definitely be delicious.

Then I had one of those "Whaaaat" moments. I saw something in the refrigerator I had not thought about for a long time. I had all the Thanksgiving food in the refrigerator, and in the corner was a jar of grape jelly. I haven't seen that jar in a long time, and I'm not quite sure why I happened to see it now.

I knew the cupboard beside the refrigerator had several jars of peanut butter. What came to me at that moment was a P&J Sandwich. For those under 50, that is a Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich.

Suddenly, my tongue began wagging in culinary anticipation. There ain't nothing better in this whole wide world than a P&J sandwich. As a kid, that was my favorite lunch I took to school every day. And it doesn't matter what the jelly is, grape, strawberry, blueberry, it's all rather delicious.

Looking behind me to ensure the way was clear and that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage had not come home early, I set out to fix my favorite sandwich.

Don't get me wrong here; turkey is a wonderful sandwich. But it doesn't compete with this P&J sandwich I was about to indulge in.

I don't know who invented peanut butter, but they have greatly served humanity. Then, adding jelly to peanut butter sandwiches is another brilliant accomplishment.

Quickly, I put together my P&J sandwich, got a fresh cup of coffee, and then went to the kitchen table to celebrate my lunch. After finishing that sandwich, I was very much

tempted to go for sandwich number two. What would be wrong with that?

If The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage knows what I had for lunch, how would I explain it to her? Keeping it a secret is my number one agenda.

Munching on my P&J sandwich, I remembered what David said. "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4).

I love food, but my greatest joy is in the Lord. As I focus on Him in my daily activities, I begin to understand the important desires of my heart. It's amazing how God surprised me with something that really made my life happy. The finer things in life aren't everything. Sometimes it's the simple things that make me truly happy.

Dr. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, 1471 Pine Road, Ocala, FL 34472. He lives with his wife in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 352-687-4240 or e-mail jamesnsnyder2@att.net. The church web site is www.whatafellowship.com.

RECOVERY, from Page 6

Schools" to develop the capacity of teacher leaders to make high-quality math instruction accessible to all students. The project will be implemented across Illinois, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York.

• WestEd through their Mid-phase grant will serve schools throughout the Michigan, New Mexico, Nevada, Texas, and Utah regions. The project will meet the critical needs for both disciplinary literacy and foundational reading skills in high-need 8th and 9th graders by leveraging two evidence-based interventions—the Apprenticeship for Academic Literacy curriculum and through modernizing texts, streamlining the curriculum, and

integrating foundational reading skills.

• Unbounded Learning, Inc. will launch their Reading Reimagined project to provide professional learning to grades 2-5 teachers. The project covers foundational literacy, language variation and style shifting, lesson plans, and job-embedded coaching to prepare teachers to provide differentiated instruction designed to help students "style shift" to General American English (GAE). This grantee has partnered with the University of California-Irvine and the American Institutes for Research.

• The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction will focus its PRISM (Patterns for Reaching and Impacting Students in

Math) project to improve math outcomes for high-need students through the creation and testing of strategies to enhance the adoption and use of its Patterns framework, a comprehensive professional learning program designed to improve math outcomes, particularly for high-need students.

Since day one, and through historic investments like the American Rescue Plan, the Biden-Harris Administration has worked to help every school accelerate academic achievement, open safely for in-person instruction, and build communities where all students feel they belong. Today's announcement builds on these extensive investments in K-12 schools to accelerate academic success nationwide.

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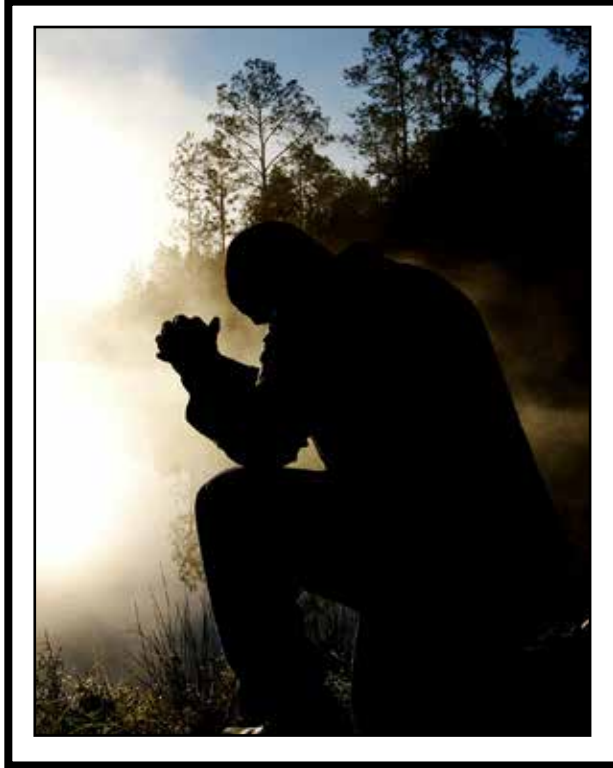
"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.

The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." **Romans 8:14-16.**

Joshua and Caleb are described in Bible Scripture as men who had a different spirit. They were two of the 12 spies sent into the Promised Land to determine if it could be taken as God had promised it to them.

The other ten gave a bad report that instilled fear in the people, which ultimately caused a rebellion. This resulted in an entire generation dying in the desert.

Joshua and Caleb were the only two who were led by the Spirit of God, ver-



sus the spirit of fear. They were the only ones to enter the Promised Land from their generation.

Are you an individual led by the Spirit of God? The verse above tells us that those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God.

"But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will

I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." **Numbers 14:24.**

Caleb was a Spirit of God man. The Spirit led him. He was not led by fear.

Many believers have failed to enter into their own Promised Land because they have failed to be led by the Spirit of God

rather than by fear of the unknown.

Fear prevents Christians from entering into what God has promised for them. God has reserved an inheritance for Christians that is exceedingly good.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," **Ephesians 3:20.**

God described the Promised Land as a land of milk and honey. Christian's own Promised Land is the same, a land of milk and honey.

But, they must be led by the Spirit of God to enter in. Christians cannot be led by fear, reason and analysis, or even skill. The Spirit must lead them.

God's plans are bigger than Christians could ever imagine. He will always honor His promises. His love shows no bounds and He always look at the heart.

However, it is good for Christians to remember that God will discipline Christians when they stray and the Holy Spirit will convict the heart and speak to the mind to keep Christians in line with God's purpose.

Something to Ponder: Get B.A.D. Not MAD -- I saw a man with an acronym on his shirt that had "I'm B.A.D."; being curious I asked the man, "What does B.A.D. stand for? He said:

B.A.D. stands for "Blessed And Delivered." A little advice for the Christian for this Holiday

Season and for the rest of your life.

1) When the enemy tries to attack you, be B.A.D. Pray for the enemy! 2) When things don't see to be going right on your job, be B.A.D. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

3) When things are not looking good in your life, be B.A.D. Talk to people and take it to the Lord in prayer.

4) When folks scandalize your name, be B.A.D; and take it to the Lord in prayer. Get with somebody that you can just be B.A.D. with and praise the Lord.

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NDG Book Review: 'Lena Horne: Goddess Reclaimed' is an elegant tome

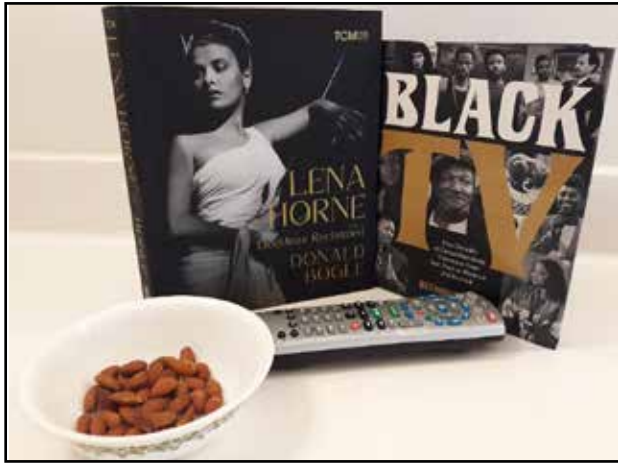
By Terri Schlichenmeyer

The person on the screen looks just like you.

And that's important. Once was a time when you rarely saw a Black face in entertainment unless you were specifically looking for one — which is why these great books on Black entertainers are so essential to read...

First of all, elegance almost oozes from "Lena Horne: Goddess Reclaimed" by Donald Bogle, a gorgeous book which is a part of the TMC Library.

Bogle begins his narrative in the spring of 1993, when "a radiant Lena Horne entered the famous MGM recording soundstage for the first time in nearly forty years." She



was there to shoot footage for a compilation movie on entertainment and, says Bogle, it was "a bittersweet experience."

From there, he takes readers through the briefest of childhood biographies before getting to the good stuff: Horne's career that began in Harlem. It was the

Depression, and competition for the best positions at the Cotton Club was fierce; despite that the Club had other beautiful women onstage, it was Horne who "caught the eye of just about everyone who saw her."

Filled with everything you want to know about

Lena Horne, her life, loves, and many of her contemporaries, "Lena Horne: Goddess Reclaimed" is comprehensive and wide. It's one of those books you'll want to keep on your coffee table, to browse and show off. Bonus: carefully chosen photos enhance what you'll read.

If the small screen is more your thing and you want to remember how far television's come over the decades, then you'll want "Black TV" by Bethonie Butler.

Ask any TV viewer about their favorite show or series and if it's got a full cast of Black actors, you'll probably find it in this heavy volume. Comedies, dramas, even variety series have their own chapters;

Flip Wilson, Redd Foxx, Arsenio Hall, Diahann Carroll, they're all in here.

With this book on your lap, you'll take a trip to the Soul Train studio, and visit the Huxtable living room. Remember how In Living Color skewered almost everything? Remember the night James Evans died? Which Sister, Sister twin was your favorite? Is the new version of The Wonder Years realistic enough for Black audiences?

This book is absolutely packed with insider information, memories, stars, guest stars, and lots of pictures to nudge your nostalgia and send you looking for something to binge-watch on repeat or to catch new. It's a great book to

share with generations who missed seeing these shows live. Or just sit and read "Black TV" and let that be tonight's entertainment.

If these books on Black entertainment aren't enough for you, then be sure to look around for more. Author Bogle has several other biographical volumes on the shelves. You'll find books about and by Black stars, books about specific movies and TV shows, retrospectives that will take you way back, and more behind-the-scenes peeks of your favorite series. Your bookseller or librarian will be able to put these books in your hand because they're good like that.

And so are these books.

HARRIS, from Page 8

floor earlier this year, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer praised her historic achievement. Schumer

emphasized the circumstances of Harris's tenure, characterized by a closely divided Senate and a highly

partisan environment.

He acknowledged the weighty responsibility placed on the vice president as president of the Senate, noting that Harris has

played a crucial role in passing pivotal legislation. From the American Rescue Plan to the Inflation Reduction Act and the confirmation of federal judges, Schumer

commended Harris for her contributions to the functioning of the Senate.

"When it's mattered most, Vice President Harris has provided the decisive vote

on some of the most historic bills of modern times," Schumer asserted. "All of us thank her for making the work of the Senate possible."

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