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A growing rift emerges between Biden and Obama amidst Israel-Hamas fallout

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

Amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, an unexpected casualty has emerged: the relationship between President Joe Biden and his former boss, Barack Obama. Reports indicate a growing divide between the two political heavyweights who once served side by side in the White House.

NBC News revealed that during the early weeks of the Israel-Hamas war, Biden privately credited his unwavering public support for Israel and claimed initial success in influencing the Israeli government. Allegedly, Biden expressed that Obama and his closest aides had dismissed his advice, dating back to his vice presidential role in 2014, when Israel launched a military assault on Gaza.

Biden reportedly argued that Obama's decision to publicly admonish Israel's actions during the 2014 conflict instead of embracing them hindered any potential influence on the Israeli government. White House spokesperson Andrew Bates countered the claims, stating that Biden's senior White House and national security ad-



Biden reportedly argued that Obama's decision to publicly admonish Israel's actions during the 2014 conflict instead of embracing them hindered any potential influence on the Israeli government. (Photo via NNPA)

visers were unaware of such comments and found them inaccurate.

John Kirby, a spokesperson for the National Security Council, defended Biden's approach, stating, "The approach we're taking now is working."

However, Obama, who has maintained a low profile since leaving office, seemed to differ from Biden's staunch support of Israel. Obama, in an interview on "Pod Save America," expressed a nuanced perspective, acknowledging the complexity of the Israel-Palestine issue.

"If you want to solve the prob-

lem, then you have to take in the whole truth. And you then have to admit nobody's hands are clean. That all of us are complicit to some degree," Obama said, distinguishing between the Palestinian civilians and the militant group Hamas.

Obama's comments, while not a direct swipe at Biden, contrast with the current administration's unwavering support for Israel. Additionally, as Politico noted, Obama's comments "buck the company line Democratic leaders have been using on this matter." The outlet

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People In The News ...



Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.



Claudine Gay

NDG Quote of the Week: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
- Nelson Mandela

Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Duke University plans to welcome National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. as the 2024 Environmental Justice and Racial Equity Fellow. A distinguished civil rights leader, global business figure, faith leader, and public intellectual, Chavis will bring his wealth of experience to the inaugural fellowship, linking his teaching, research, and service contributions with Duke's overarching strategic objectives, notably climate change and racial equity.



Throughout his illustrious career, Chavis, a North Carolina native, has been a stalwart advocate for social, environmental, and political justice, coining the term "environmental racism" and

leading prominent organizations such as the NAACP, National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, and National Council of Churches.

An organizer of the Million Man March, Chavis has led the NNPA, the trade association of over 230 African American newspapers and media companies comprising the Black Press of America, for nearly a decade. His fellowship promises to enrich Duke University through expert instruction and scholarly research, offering a valuable opportunity for the community to delve into critical issues at the intersection of environ-

mental justice and racial equity.

"Dr. Chavis' appointment elevates the perspectives of climate justice and the intersection of race and environmental quality in the implementation of Duke's Climate Commitment," said Lori Bennear, the Stanback Dean of the Nicholas School of the Environment.

In the upcoming spring semester, Chavis will co-convene an undergraduate course titled "The Lived Experience of Race and Racism" alongside Duke Public Policy Professor Jay Pearson. The Office of Undergraduate Education and the Office of the Provost are

supporting the study, which will examine the complexities of race and racism while highlighting the socially constructed nature of race and its implications across legislative, political, legal, economic, and material dimensions.

"Rev. Dr. Ben Chavis is a giant in this regard," Pearson noted. "We are fortunate to have someone with his experiential expertise and well-deserved reputation earned from working on the front lines for racial justice over many decades. I am honored to share an educational space with him and look forward to the synergies we create during the

semester and beyond."

Now open for registration, the course aims to provide students from Duke and Triangle-area colleges and universities with knowledge, effective communication strategies, relationship building, and collaborative racial equity planning.

The Office of the Provost has scheduled a free, public fireside conversation on Monday, Jan. 22, at 5:30 p.m. at the Karsh Alumni and Visitor Center. Provost Alec Gallimore will engage in a conversation with Chavis, discussing his impactful work and contributions to the fields of environmental justice and racial equity.

Claudine Gay

Harvard President Claudine Gay will continue in her position despite increasing criticism and demands for her removal, considering her recent testimony on antisemitism; the university's highest governing board unanimously endorsed her on Tuesday.

Harvard University's Board of Overseers released a statement expressing their support for President Gay amidst the current challenging situation. "We fully support President Gay, standing together in unity and agreement."

The controversy ensued after the hearing before a



House subcommittee on December 5. During the session, Gay and two other university presidents were criticized for not clarifying if supporting the genocide of Jews would go against their universities' code of

conduct. As the situation escalated, opponents intensified their demands for Gay to be fired.

However, support for Harvard's independence and opposition to political meddling came together in the form of letters signed by faculty members and alumni in her honor. Concurrently, a petition was disseminated in support of her removal, which reflected the divergent viewpoints present in the Harvard community.

Liz Magill, the President of the University of Pennsylvania, resigned this week because of criticism about her testimony. Magill, like Gay, abstained

from specifically determining whether endorsing the genocide of Jews contravened campus speech regulations, instead stating that the matter was "context-dependent."

Because of the controversy, Gay subsequently issued a statement of remorse and provided further clarification regarding her stance, emphasizing that threats

of violence "are abhorrent, they have no place at Harvard, and those who threaten our Jewish students will be held accountable."

In spite of Gay's apology, which called for her resignation, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce launched an investigation into the Harvard learning environment.

Gay expressed her com-

mitment to the university community in an interview with the Harvard Crimson by stating that Harvard will never tolerate threats towards Jewish students. Gay, who graduated from Harvard in 2006, was the dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences before becoming president in July. She is the first Black person to hold this position.

Art Rust

In the glitzy world of sports talk radio, where mega-contracts make headlines and charismatic hosts dominate the airwaves, there is an unsung pioneer whose name rarely echoes through the halls of fame. As Tom Brady secured an industry-leading \$375 million contract with Fox Sports, surpassing his legendary playing career earnings, and Jim Rome and Stephen A. Smith rake in tens of millions annually, there's rarely a nod to the trailblazer who laid the foundation for this now lucrative profession — Art Rust Jr.

Rust was born in Harlem on October 13, 1927, and



died in 2010 at 82. He was a maverick who changed the game of sports broadcasting. A graduate of Long Island University, Rust embarked on his broadcasting journey in the 1950s at New York radio station WWRL. His career included stints at WNBC, WMCA, and WINS Radio before he

emerged as a pivotal figure with his groundbreaking show, "Sports Talk."

While today's hosts thrive on multi-million-dollar contracts and extensive coverage, Rust's era was vastly different. Before the 1980s, sports talk radio and general sports coverage were limited to brief segments on the evening news and sporadic radio shows. Salaries barely covered the gas and tolls it took to arrive at a dusty Manhattan studio. Rust's "Sports Talk" was a game-changer, giving fans a platform to engage in conversation for three hours every night. Not to mention, guests would include legends like Muham-

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Where did all the blue skies go?

By Frederick Joseph

In times of turmoil and unrest, where the world seems to tilt on an axis of uncertainty, music emerges as a sanctuary, a temple not made with hands.

It is in the harmonies and rhythms that we find an echo of our innermost selves, a mirror to the chaos and beauty that resides within us. Music, by itself, does not discriminate or judge; it simply exists in its pure form, an unspoken language that transcends barriers and connects souls. At its best, music becomes a vessel for our fears, our tears, and our dreams. It speaks to the part of us that yearns for something beyond our trauma, beyond the strife and struggles that mark our daily lives. In the depths of its melodies, we find a refuge, a place where we can lay down our burdens, if only for the span of a song.

It is a witness and a testimony, a reflection of the times we live in and a prophecy of what we could become. In music, we find not just an escape but a return, a journey back to the very core of who we are. It is in this sacred space that we can confront our sorrows and find the strength to carry on, buoyed by sounds that resonate within our soul, reminding us that even in the darkest of times, there is a song to be sung, a note of hope to be sustained.

When I consider the profound force that music wields, my thoughts invariably drift to Marvin Gaye's seminal album, "What's Going On." In this masterpiece, Gaye transcends the boundaries of mere melody and rhythm to enter a realm where music becomes a vehicle for profound social commentary and emotional exploration. This album, more than a collection of songs, stands as a monument to the power of music to reflect, challenge, and transform the consciousness of a society.

Gaye's voice, rich and evocative, carries within it the weight of a generation's struggles and hopes. Through his melodies, he articulates the anguish and aspiration of a people grappling with the realities of war, racial injustice, and environmental neglect. All of the things we are still grappling with at this very moment. In "What's Going On," Gaye does not merely sing; he testifies. He pours his soul into every note, turning each song into a powerful narrative of pain, love, and longing for change.

Recently, in the solitude of my car, tears found their way down my face, a silent testament to a heart burdened with the weight of a world in turmoil. The air was thick with the scent of sorrow and rage, a mix as potent as it was devastating. Atrocities, not only in distant lands, but here, in our very streets, in our communities, in the very essence of our lives, seemed to press against the car windows, fogging them with the breath of despair.

It was in this moment of profound grief, in this crucible of pain, that I reached for "What's Going On." Like a trusted friend, this album has been a companion through the tumultuous journey of life, a balm in moments of unbearable ache. As the first notes spilled into the space around me, something remarkable began to unfold. The music did not push the sorrow away, nor did it silence the rage. Instead, it embraced them, acknowledged them, made them its own.

And I knew in that moment, that now, as we struggle forward as a society. This album must be called upon now, as it has been called upon in the past.

The purpose of this essay, then, is to delve into the profound sanctuary that "What's Going On" provides, to explore its uncanny ability to offer solace during

both global and local hardships, and to underscore why, in this era fraught with turmoil, its message and essence are more necessary than ever.

Like a steady flame in a raging storm, this album speaks to the soul of humanity in its most vulnerable state. It is in Gaye's piercing lyrics and the soul-stirring melodies that we find a reflection of our own hurt, a resonance with all that is aching inside of us. In a world where the drums of war and genocide beat incessantly, where the specter of racial injustice haunts our streets, and the cries of the oppressed rise into an explosion, "What's Going On" emerges as the enduring spirit of hope and resilience.

When considering the significance of "What's Going On," it is crucial to frame it within the social and political climate of its era. The early 1970s, a period marked by tumult and transformation, when cities were cauldrons of unrest, streets echoed with the cries for justice, and the very oxygen the world breathed in, was laced with change—change that was as inevitable as it was painful.

In this maelstrom of upheaval, "What's Going On" emerged not merely as an album but as a searing commentary on the state of the nation. Gaye, with the soul of a poet and the keen eye of a social critic, encapsulated the despair, hope, and the search for meaning that defined this era. The album spoke to the heart of the African American experience, echoing the anguish over racial injustice and the longing for peace and equality. It was a mirror held up to society, reflecting the deep divisions and unhealed wounds of a nation grappling with its soul.

The Vietnam War, with its senseless carnage and imperialistic motives, bled into the consciousness of the American people, leav-

ing scars that would never truly heal. Gaye's poignant lyrics in songs like "What's Happening Brother" and "What's Going On" captured this disillusionment, the sense of betrayal felt by many, especially the African American soldiers who fought and killed for a country that still denied them basic rights.

The album also resonated with the emerging environmental movement, a cry for the wounded earth, as evidenced in "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)." It was a prescient warning about the dangers of neglecting our planet, a message that remains alarmingly relevant in our times.

Initially, the album was met with skepticism from Gaye's record label, wary of its departure from his established hit-making formula. Yet, upon its release, "What's Going On" was a revelation, a commercial and critical success that shattered the conventions of what soul music could be. It transcended boundaries, appealing to a diverse audience, and breaking new ground in its thematic depth and musical complexity.

The album's genius lies not only in its lyrical prowess but also in its musical innovation. Gaye blends elements of jazz, gospel, and rhythm and blues, creating a sound that is both familiar and revolutionary. This fusion serves as a metaphor for the unity he seeks in society—a harmonious blend of diverse voices and experiences. The music, layered and complex, mirrors the complexities of the social issues it addresses. It invites the listener to delve deep, to feel not just the rhythm, but the pulse of the times.

I remember, as if through a veil of years now worn thin, the moment I was first introduced to Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On." I was no older than eight-years-old, a child still un-

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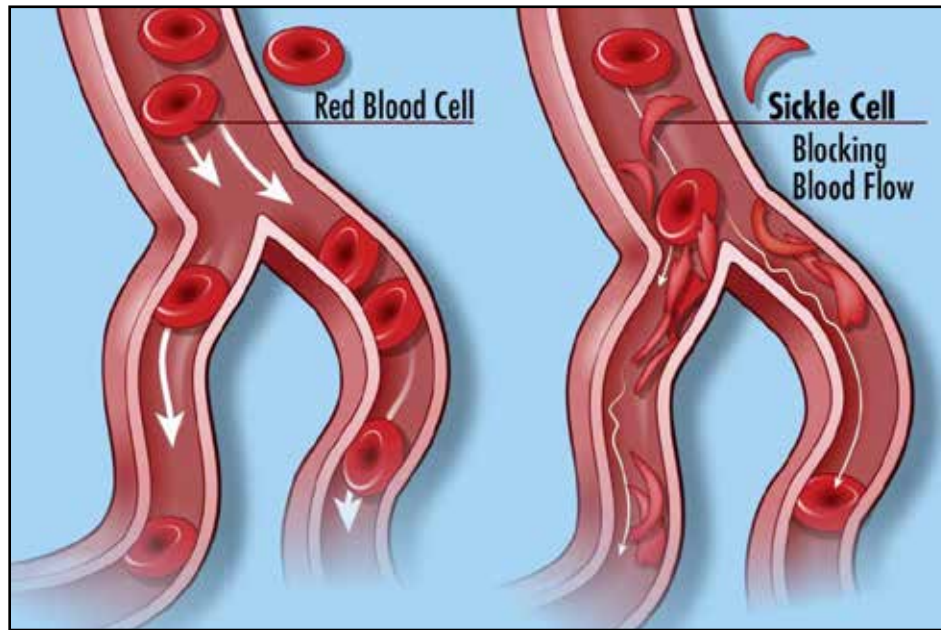
FDA approves groundbreaking cell-based gene therapies for Sickle Cell Disease

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has greenlit two revolutionary cell-based gene therapies, Casgevy and Lyfgenia, marking a significant leap forward in treating sickle cell disease (SCD) for patients aged 12 and older.

The approval by the FDA signifies the commencement of a novel epoch in managing sickle cell disease, providing optimism to individuals whose lives have been significantly disrupted by the arduous condition.

Sickle cell disease, a group of inherited blood disorders, affects around 100,000 individuals in the United States and is predominant among African Americans. Health officials said the root cause of SCD is a mutation affecting hemoglobin, a crucial protein in red blood cells responsible for oxygen delivery. The genetic problem causes red blood cells to have a unique “sickle” shape, which can lead to vaso-occlusive



Sickle cell disease, a group of inherited blood disorders, affects around 100,000 individuals in the United States and is predominant among African Americans. (Illustration via NNPA)

events (VOEs) or vaso-occlusive crises (VOCs), which are very painful and damage organs. The recurrence of these crises poses life-threatening risks and potential disabilities.

“Sickle cell disease is a rare, debilitating, and life-threatening blood disorder with significant unmet need, and we are excited to advance the field,” said Nicole Verdun, M.D., director of the Office of Therapeutic Products within the FDA’s

Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research.

Casgevy, a groundbreaking cell-based gene therapy, is the first FDA-approved treatment employing CRISPR/Cas9, a revolutionary genome editing technology. The therapy is for individuals 12 years of age or older who have recurrent vaso-occlusive crises. It changes the patient’s hematopoietic stem cells using CRISPR/Cas9, a technology that can precisely edit DNA.

The edited cells are then transplanted back into the patient, enhancing the production of fetal hemoglobin and preventing the sickling of red blood cells.

Lyfgenia is another cell-based gene therapy that uses a lentiviral vector to change genes. The FDA approved it for those 12 years of age or older who have SCD and a history of vaso-occlusive events. Lyfgenia changes blood stem cells to make HbAT87Q, gene-

therapy-derived hemoglobin that looks like adult hemoglobin and makes it less likely that red blood cells will sickle. Both therapies utilize the patients’ blood stem cells, administered through a one-time, single-dose infusion following myeloablative conditioning.

“These approvals represent an important medical advance with the use of innovative cell-based gene therapies to target potentially devastating diseases and improve public health,” said Dr. Peter Marks, director of the FDA’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research.

The Casgevy and Lyfgenia applications received Priority Review, Orphan Drug, Fast Track, and Regenerative Medicine Advanced Therapy designations. Casgevy was granted approval to Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Inc., and Lyfgenia to Bluebird Bio, Inc.

The FDA said its approval of Casgevy was based on a single-arm, multicenter trial evaluating its safety and effective-

ness in adult and adolescent SCD patients. Of the 44 treated patients, 93.5% achieved freedom from severe VOC episodes for at least 12 consecutive months. Common side effects included low platelet and white blood cell levels, mouth sores, nausea, and musculoskeletal pain.

Lyfgenia’s approval was based on a 24-month multicenter study, with 88% of patients achieving complete resolution of VOEs between 6- and 18-months post-infusion. Side effects included stomatitis, low blood cell levels, and febrile neutropenia. A black box warning highlighting the risk of hematologic malignancy accompanies Lyfgenia’s label, emphasizing the need for lifelong monitoring in patients.

“Today’s actions follow rigorous evaluations of the scientific and clinical data needed to support approval, reflecting the FDA’s commitment to facilitating the development of safe and effective treatments for conditions with severe impacts on human health,” Dr. Marks asserted.

Health impacts of abuse more extensive than previously thought, research says

(Newswise) — People who have been subject to abuse are more likely to experience physical and mental health effects than previously thought, according to a new study.

In a global review and meta-analysis of evidence published in *Nature Medicine* today, researchers have found that there are elevated risks between intimate partner violence or childhood sexual abuse, and some health conditions including major depressive disorder, maternal miscarriage for partners, and

alcohol misuse and self-harm among children.

Globally, one in three ever-partnered women have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and around 20% of young women and 10% of young men have experienced some form of childhood sexual abuse. However, research investigating health outcomes associated with intimate partner violence and childhood sexual abuse has been limited.

The authors found that exposures to intimate partner violence had a mod-

erate association with an increased risk of major depressive disorders (63%) and an increased risk of maternal abortion and miscarriage (35%). Childhood sexual abuse was shown to be moderately associated with an increased risk of alcohol use and an increased risk of self-harm (45% and 35%, respectively). The authors indicate these findings are larger in magnitude and more extensive than previously suggested.

Dr Joht Singh Chandan, Clinical Associate Profes-

sor in Public Health at the University of Birmingham and senior co-lead author of the paper said:

“This comprehensive study marks a significant step in understanding the profound health impacts of intimate partner violence against women and childhood sexual abuse. Our findings reveal not only the alarming associations these forms of violence have with conditions like major depressive disorder, miscarriage, alcohol use disorders, and self-harm, but also underscore the

urgent need for robust preventive measures and support systems.”

Professor Emmanuela Gakidou from the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington and senior co-lead author of the paper

“While we’ve shed light on these critical health issues, our research also highlights the gaps in current knowledge and the necessity for continued investigation to fully grasp the extensive consequences of such violence. It’s im-

perative that we use these insights to inform policy, healthcare, and community interventions, ensuring a safer and healthier future for individuals affected by these pervasive forms of violence.”

Dr Nicholas Metheny, Assistant Professor in the School of Nursing and Health Studies at the University of Miami said:

“Our research marks a pivotal shift in how we perceive the societal and health burdens of intimate

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'Dictator' Trump and allies forewarn of retaliatory measures against media, others in potential second term

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

On the far-right wing Steve Bannon's podcast, a former Donald Trump ally, Kash Patel, who served in the Justice Department and held key positions in the Defense Department and National Security Council, made it clear that if the former president secures another term, his administration will take legal action against individuals in the media—both criminally and civilly.



"We're closing the border and we're drilling, drilling, drilling," Trump proclaimed. "After that, I'm not a dictator." (Photo via NNPA)

During the podcast interview, Patel conveyed the intention of the prospective administration to target al-

leged conspirators within both government and media circles concerning the 2020 election, which Trump

lost to President Joe Biden. The statement aligns with Trump's persistent claims of election fraud, despite widespread refutations from federal and local officials, numerous courts, former campaign staff, and even his own attorney general.

In a subsequent Fox News Channel Town Hall on the same day, the twice-impeached former president, who faces 91 criminal charges that mainly stem from his alleged attempts to fraudulently overturn his loss to Biden, evaded a direct commitment to abstain

from potential retribution in a second White House term, responding to a question with an accusation against the Biden administration of abusing power. "We're closing the border, and we're drilling, drilling, drilling," Trump proclaimed. "After that, I'm not a dictator."

In the Bannon interview, Patel, who works for the Center for Renewing America, a conservative think tank connected to a network of groups hoping Trump will come back, made it clear that Trump would go after media figures who al-

legedly spread false information about the 2020 election.

Trump, whom a judge also found to have committed massive business fraud, was ordered to pay the writer E. Jean Carroll \$5 million this year after a civil jury concluded that he sexually assaulted her.

"We're putting you all on notice," Trump threatened in his Fox News appearance.

Trump's history of targeting the media, labeling

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Nature and animal emojis don't accurately represent natural biodiversity—Researchers say they should

Newswise — The current emoji library doesn't accurately represent the "tree of life" and the breadth of biodiversity seen in nature according to an analysis presented December 11 in the journal *iScience*. A team of conservation biologists categorized emojis related to nature and animals and mapped them onto the phylogenetic tree of life. They found that animals are well represented by the current emoji catalog,

whereas plants, fungi, and microorganisms are poorly represented. Within the animal kingdom, vertebrates were overrepresented while arthropods were underrepresented with respect to their actual biodiversity. The researchers argue that creating a more diverse and representative emoji catalog could aid conversations around biodiversity and its conservation in the digital era.

"While the biodiversity

crisis may seem distant from the online world, in our increasingly digitized society, we should not underestimate the potential of emojis to raise awareness and foster appreciation for the diversity of life on Earth," write conservation biologists Stefano Mammola, Mattia Falaschi, and Gentile Francesco Ficetola. "The development and maintenance of diverse and inclusive emoji sets are crucial to ensure the equitable

representation of the tree of life in digital communication tools and to effectively convey messages on the importance of all the organisms for the functioning of

the biosphere."

To assess the taxonomic comprehensiveness of the emoji tree of life, the team categorized all of the emojis related to nature and

animals available in Emojipedia (a curated online catalog of emojis) and then compared emoji biodiver-

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Congrats to Campus Teachers of the Year!



Joyce Foreman
Dallas ISD
District 6

As we prepare for our winter break, I congratulate each and every one of the Campus Teachers of the Year, in District Six and across Dallas ISD. Our teachers are the key to the future for our students, and I appreciate them all for the diligence and compassion they exhibit every day. Those selected to represent

their individual schools as Campus Teacher of the Year have earned the recognition and respect of their peers, and we salute them for their accomplishments.

I can't wait to see which of them will be honored as districtwide Teachers of the Year for elementary, secondary, and choice/magnet schools, to be announced in the spring. See the full list here.

Male residency program cohort launching soon

The district's Black and Latino Male Resident

Teacher Program is about to launch its eighth cohort, and is looking for men who want to serve as teachers and role models for our students, especially our boys.

If you or someone you know are interested in becoming an educator and helping to inspire our students, you are invited to apply to the program, which launches in the spring semester.

Applicants should have a bachelor's degree in any field with a grade point average of 2.5 or higher. Start

the process at dallasisd.org/springadjunct.

Homegrown star continues to shine

Sha'Carri Richardson continues to impress, not only with her speed and athleticism but also with her grace as she makes her mark in the world and adds to a growing list of accolades.

Besides being named the fastest woman in the world, seeing her hometown track named in her honor, and having the City of Dallas proclaim a "Sha'carri

Richardson Day" last month, she has now been named the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Female Athlete of the Year and one of Forbes Magazine's "30 Under 30" for 2024. Keep on shining, Sha'Carri!

Coach of the Month

Congratulations to Carter High School's Coach James Spencer for receiving October's Coach of the Month Award. He pushes his Cowboys to achieve in the classroom as well as on the field.

Meals during the holiday break

District schools and offices will be closed for the winter break from Dec. 25 until Jan. 8. Students return on Jan. 9. To make sure that all our students have access to nutritious food during the break, the district will distribute pop-up meals at no cost for kids 18 and under, and for students up to 21 years old with disabilities, at select schools. Each package will include three breakfast and lunch options. For dates and school locations, please visit www.dallasisd.org/FCNS.

\$93 million slated to support research and development at HBCUs, TCCUs and MSIs, and postsecondary completion for underserved students

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) announced today \$93 million in grant awards to 20 colleges and universities to support research and development at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and to improve completion rates for underserved students.

The grants are being provided under the Research and Development Infrastructure (RDI) program and the Postsecondary Student Success Grant (PSSG) program. The RDI program provides funds to HBCUs, TCCUs, and MSIs to transform their research infrastructure, including strengthening research productivity, faculty expertise, physical infrastructure, and



Adetayo Adipolu / Unsplash

partnerships leading to increases in external funding. The PSSG program aims to equitably improve postsecondary student outcomes, including retention, transfer, credit accumulation, and completion, by leveraging data and implementing, scaling, and rigorously evaluating evidence-based approaches.

This funding builds on the more than \$25 billion in funding to HBCUs, MSIs,

and TCCUs through the Department since President Biden took office. Specifically, \$7.3 billion in cumulative investments in HBCUs, \$474.5 million for TCCUs, and \$18.1 billion for MSIs.

"The Biden-Harris Administration recognizes the urgency of this moment in higher education and that creating opportunities for students of color and other underserved students to

succeed in today's most cutting-edge fields has never mattered more," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "These grant awards will help many of our nation's most inclusive and diverse colleges and universities expand their capacity to drive research and innovation, and propel more students to graduation day and fulfilling careers. This is how we Raise the Bar for college excellence and attainment in this country and close equity gaps in higher education that have no place in the 21st century."

RDI program grants are being awarded to five HBCUs, two TCCUs, three Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and a dual HSI and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI).

For HBCUs and MSIs, the grant will support institutions in increasing their level of research activity in alignment with the Carnegie Classification designations to move from the Doctoral and Professional Universities (D/PU) classification toward the Doctoral Universities with High Research Activity (R2) classification. It also will increase their classification from the Doctoral Universities with High Research Activity (R2) toward the Doctoral Universities with Very High Research Activity (R1) category. For TCCUs, the funds will support an increase in research activities, undergraduate research opportunities, faculty development, research development, and infrastructure, including physical infrastructure and human capital devel-

opment. Because of their central role in educating underserved students, including students of color, it is important for HBCUs, TCCUs, and MSIs to excel in research activity that can impact funding, faculty and student recruitment, student research opportunities, and promote diversity in graduate students and faculty at an institution.

Nine institutions are receiving grants through PSSG to fund evidence-based strategies that result in improved outcomes for underserved students. The funding is being awarded to six grantees that are in the early phase and three grantees in the mid-phase/expansion phase, based upon the amount of existing research validating their effectiveness in improving student postsecondary education outcomes.

Report: Adopting AI could prevent \$77 billion of unpaid teacher overtime

NEW YORK CITY, N.Y. — A new report has revealed that U.S. teachers work a combined 1.75 billion hours of overtime every year - equivalent to \$84 billion in unpaid hours - but that the support offered by AI tools could shrink that figure by over 85 percent.

According to the analysis published by educational publisher Twinkl, U.S.

teachers work an average of 15.1 hours a week above what they're contracted to work - but are exempt from receiving overtime pay under current Department of Labor regulations.

The findings reference 2023 data from the Department of Education, which suggests teachers could each regain as many as 13 hours a week by embracing AI tools.

The repercussions of high work hours for America's 3.2 million teachers have severely impacted teacher turnover, which has experienced highs over the past three years. During the 2021-2022 school year, national turnover rates reached 10%, while in some of the most underserved schools, teacher turnover exceeded 16 percent.

"The numbers speak for themselves. Teachers are leaving the profession in unprecedented numbers, and unpaid overtime is a major contributing factor," said Jude Schroeder, ex-teacher and now U.S. Manager at Twinkl. "Teachers will always be crucial, and AI will never replace the essential element of face-to-face instruction, but there are so many ways in

which AI can help make teaching a more sustainable and rewarding career."

These saved hours, the report says, are from saved time completing non-teaching activities such as lesson planning, grading papers, and reporting data.

"It's not about taking teachers out of the classroom, but rather empowering them within the classroom. Teachers spend so

much time completing administrative tasks that less and less energy is left for actual in-class teaching. AI is fantastic for eliminating the time-draining aspects of teaching, which are causing teacher burnout and, ultimately, driving them out of the profession," added Schroeder.

Several AI-powered

See OVERTIME, Page 16

Man versus nature, and the way back

By Lori Lee
NDG Contributing Writer

Living in urban areas is a relatively recent phenomenon, said Dr. Michael Jerratis, professor of Environmental Health Sciences at UCLA. As he explained, we evolved in nature. An internationally recognized researcher, Dr. Jerratis has spent his last 22 years uncovering the health effects of different socioeconomic and built environments.

A human's affection for nature is surrounded by mystery, he notes. Since man has gained safety and shelter in nature over thousands and thousands of years, a trust for the natural world is embedded in the human psyche. This has created an innately positive reaction to nature, which has become a genetic response.

The term biophilia refers to this innate positive association. From the Greek bio or "life," and philia, "love," the term refers to the evolutionary trait or unlearned predisposition to things that are favorable to survival. Nature promotes psychological well-being and men-



The complex urban systems that make up cities have become an important area of scientific research and debate about public investment around the world. (Sebastian Unrau / Unsplash)

tal restoration, explained Wilson. Nature, linked to reduced cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses, also eases attention deficit disorder and depression. More recently, UCLA researchers found increasing vegetation, tree canopy and park space, particularly in green-poor areas, moderately lengthened life and dramatically improved life for people of color.

Determinants of life expectancy include environmental factors, like green space, pollution, and housing, explained Jerratis. Social determinants of education, income, race and ethnicity and lifestyle

behaviors, like smoking, exercise, and not having insurance also play a role. The researchers mapped out life expectancy according to census tracts and found that those with more green space, especially those with large tree canopy, were related to moderate increases in life expectancy.

Non-white people have far less access to park space, said Bz Zhang. Zhang is a Project Manager for the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust (LANLT), which designs and builds public green spaces in underserved areas of Los Angeles. Their team works from an equity lense toward environmental

justice.

Leveraging the strengths of public agencies and pulling in actors from non-profits, LANLT produces climate resilient and culturally significant, well loved amenities, said Zhang. The agency has been busy pulling up asphalt and greening schoolyards, as it seeks to mitigate green gentrification, while ensuring those most vested in their community can remain.

Another actor in the effort to green underinvested areas is Rachel Malarich. As assistant director of environmental services for Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC), Malarich has overseen the planting of thousands of trees in central Los Angeles. As the nation's first city forestry officer, Malarich oversees Los Angeles' Urban Forestry Management Plan. The plan sets goals for plantings, maintenance, and preservation, which includes education

campaigns to encourage new developers to preserve existing trees.

With billions of funding available through recent federal infrastructure legislation, cities and counties can accomplish urban greening. As organizations across the country work to achieve common goals, they are guided by the Justice 40 Initiative, which seeks environmental justice, while setting the most disadvantaged communities--the lowest 40%--as priorities for investment.

Most often, large infrastructure projects have divided or displaced communities, explained Jon Christensen, adjunct assistant professor at UCLA. We should work to give back and ensure that everyone has access to amenities that affect health, said Christensen.

Marcos Trinidad is also working to expand the urban forest in Los Angeles.

As director of Audubon Center at Debs Park, Trinidad explained how mapping is used to identify areas that are deficient in urban vegetation and trees. In efforts to bring green space to these communities, Trinidad strives to also bring opportunities in the form of jobs and education. His is a story of what one organization is doing against the backdrop of many other efforts nationwide. Their original volunteer model is looking toward a holistic, hybrid model that includes workforce development and funding to support jobs and a sustainable urban forest, he said.

Trinidad brings with him a deep, personal connection to nature. Some of these communities may not prioritize trees or green space, said Trinidad, but he wants people in underserved communities to experience the luxury of hearing birds in

See NATURE, Page 13

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Groundbreaking Dallas DA Craig Watkins passes away at home on Tuesday

Craig Watkins, who was a pivotal district attorney in Dallas, died at home on Tuesday. He was 56 years old.

While his death has been confirmed, the cause of death has not been released. His family appreciates the well wishes of the community, and has asked for privacy during this difficult time.

Watkins grew up in Dallas and attended Prairie View A&M before obtaining a law degree from Texas Wesleyan University.

He became the first Black person elected to the district attorney's office in Texas in 2007. While there he started the nation's first Conviction Integrity Unit, which reviewed possible cases of wrongful convictions and led to the release of dozens of innocent inmates.

While advocating for the innocent, Watkins still maintained a 99.4% successful prosecution rate in going after criminals.

He was defeated in 2015 by Republican Susan Hawk, who would later re-



Former Dallas DA Craig Watkins (File photo)

sign the position.

Current DA John Creuzot remembered Watkins fondly in a statement to NDG.

"I am saddened to learn of the passing of my former colleague Craig Watkins," Creuzot said. "Craig was bright and ambitious and for his life to end so prematurely is a tragedy, however, he leaves behind a powerful legacy."

"He made history as the first elected African Ameri-

can district attorney in Texas. His fierce focus on the prosecution of child abuse cases and his creation of the first Conviction Integrity Unit in the nation are testaments to his vision and ability to effect change.

"Craig was perfectly human, and those who knew him are better for it. I am proud to have known him, to have worked with him, and to have been elected to the same office he held. He will be missed."

Spreading that holiday cheer...



For the third year, Neiman Marcus donated an entire seating of their annual Breakfast with Santa to children living in foster care, served by Dallas CASA. The children along with their Dallas CASA volunteer or caregiver, were invited on Sunday, December 3, for a truly memorable morning. Santa and an enthusiastic Elf greeted the children, who came dressed in their holiday best to enjoy a delightful breakfast, balloon creations and beautiful live music. After breakfast the children marveled at the glittering decorations and had their photos taken with Santa. (Courtesy photo)



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Dr. Terre Quinn, First Place Winner 2023-24 National Ms. Senior America. (Courtesy photo)

Ms. Senior America to be featured in MLK Parade on Jan. 15

By Sandra Crenshaw
"From Where I Sit"

National Ms. Senior America, Dr. Terre Denise Quinn and her court will be featured guests in the 2024 Martin Luther King Parade sponsored by the H.E.L.P.

Foundation.

Dr. Quinn, a general surgeon from Allen, Texas, won the nationally known pageantry during the Halloween weekend last October.

Terre, as she is affectionately called, was among forty-nine state winners who graced the stage in Atlantic City with beautiful women over the age of 60. The pageant which celebrates a woman's "Age of Elegance." It is a search for the gracious lady who best exemplifies the dignity, maturity and inner beauty of all senior Americans.

Each contestant competed in a private interview, evening gown competition, talent show, and a recorded

speech on their philosophy of life.

Dr. Quinn, who was crowned Ms. Texas 2022-23 said from the Tropicana Hotel, "I hope God uses me in a special way — to serve my community with the combination of surgical knowledge and empathy."

Dr. Quinn, specializing in the diseases of the breast, hosts the Medical Minute, a 30-second social media clip that discusses health topics. The mother of two children, Dr. Quinn is involved in

a nonprofit organization called Sister's Network Inc, an organization that supports African American women affected by breast cancer.

"Medicine is big business, and I'd like to keep it feeling personal as long as I'm practicing, Quinn said. "I would also like to partner with some of the local school districts to educate young women, especially about the warning signs of

See PARADE, Page 15

Lenny Kravitz sets the record straight on black awards controversy

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

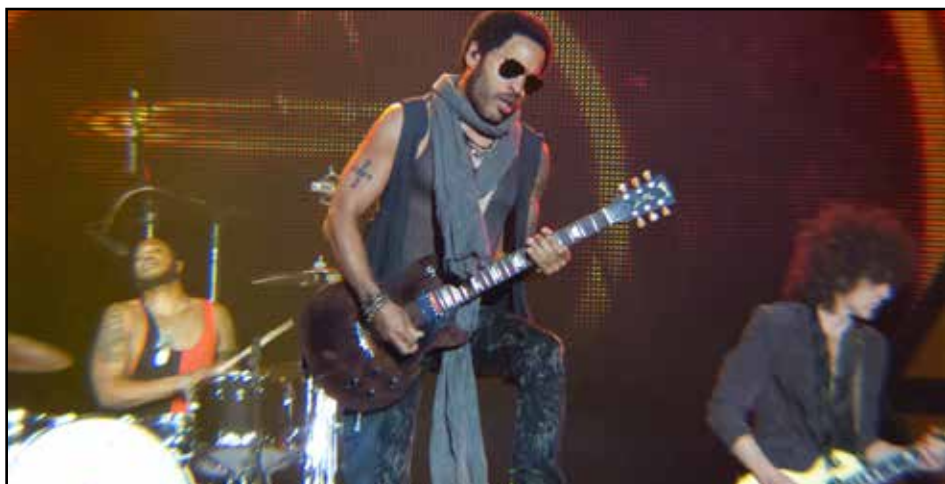
Iconic rock star Lenny Kravitz has clarified his comments regarding his absence from Black Awards programs, emphasizing that his concerns were not directed at Black-owned media companies. In response to his comments to Esquire, the National Newspaper Publishers Association's Let It Be Known digital news broadcast had taken Kravitz to task, questioning whether Kravitz or his publicists and handlers were

ignoring Black media. The National Newspaper Publishers Association is the trade association of over 230 African American-owned newspapers and media companies comprising the 197-year-old Black Press of America. The show also tweeted at Kravitz on X, inviting him to explain why he chose to take his beef to mainstream media if he had been concerned about the Black Press.

In a statement, Kravitz expressed the importance of setting the record straight. "It is important to me to set the record straight on re-

cent media reports based on an interview I did," Kravitz asserted. "My Black musical heritage means a lot to me, and I owe my success to my supporters who have taken this journey with me over the span of my career." He went on to clarify the specific nature of his comments, stating, "The comment I made was not about 'Black media' or the 'Black community.' I was specifically referring to black award shows in particular." Kravitz, whose biggest hits include "Amer-

See KRAVITZ, Page 10



In a statement, Kravitz expressed the importance of setting the record straight. "It is important to me to set the record straight on recent media reports based on an interview I did," Kravitz asserted. "My Black musical heritage means a lot to me, and I owe my success to my supporters who have taken this journey with me over the span of my career." (Photo via NNPA)

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Emmy-winning actor Andre Braugher dies at 61

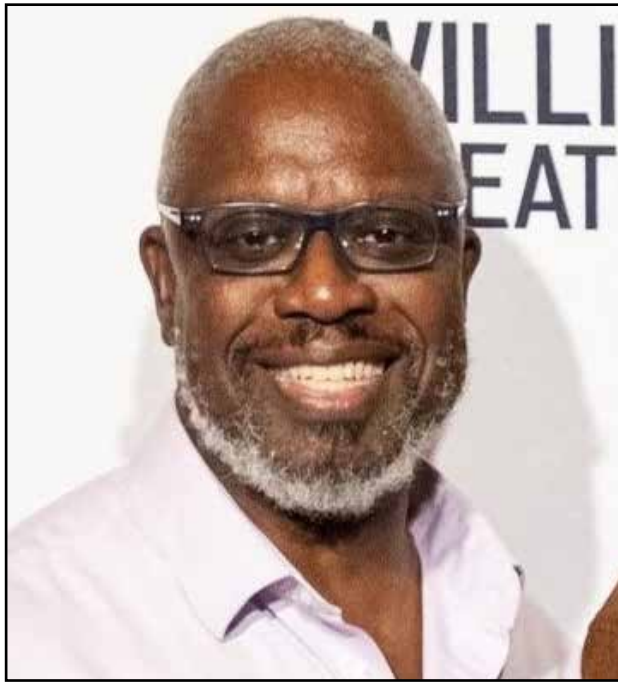
By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Renowned actor Andre Braugher, celebrated for his compelling performances in iconic television series such as “Brooklyn Nine-Nine” and “Homicide: Life on the Street,” has died at 61 after a brief illness. His publicist, Jennifer Allen, first confirmed the news to Variety.

A two-time Emmy winner, Braugher gained widespread acclaim for portraying Captain Raymond Holt in the police procedural comedy “Brooklyn Nine-Nine” from 2013 to 2021. Braugher’s character, an officer who appeared tough but displayed his care for all, was paired with Andy Samberg’s Detective Jack Peralta, the polar opposite of Holt.

Many may recall Braugher’s role as Detective Frank Pembleton on NBC’s “Homicide: Life on the Street,” which earned him the title of lead actor Emmy in 1998 when he departed from the series. In the critically acclaimed police drama that Barry Levinson, Tom Fontana, and David Simon created, Braugher stood out due to his intense performances.

In addition to his Emmy successes, Braugher received acclaim for his role as a master criminal in



Renowned actor Andre Braugher, celebrated for his compelling performances in iconic television series such as “Brooklyn Nine-Nine” and “Homicide: Life on the Street,” has died at 61 after a brief illness. (Wikimedia)

the FX series “Thief,” for which he earned another Emmy in 2006. His multifaceted career prompted reflection on the complex portrayal of police officers in the media, as discussed in a 2020 Variety cover story where he emphasized the need to address the depiction of law enforcement on television collectively.

Born in Chicago, Braugher graduated from Stanford University before pursuing drama at the Juilliard School. His career began with a notable role as a Union soldier in the film “Glory,” portraying Thomas Searles, a free Black man who joined the first Black

regiment. From there, he seamlessly transitioned to television, notably appearing in “Kojak,” “Homicide: Life on the Street,” “Hack,” and “House, M.D.”

Braugher’s versatility extended to the big screen, where he left an indelible mark with roles in films such as “City of Angels,” “Frequency,” “Poseidon,” “Primal Fear,” “Duets,” “The Mist,” “Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer,” “Salt,” and “The Gambler.”

His wife, Ami Brabson, who also starred in “Homicide: Life on the Street,” and their three children survive him.

KRAVITZ, from Page 9

ican Woman,” and “It Ain’t Over Til It’s Over,” insisted that his comments were meant to express concern about ensuring that Black artists are recognized for their work in what is now being called ‘non-traditional’ Black music. “Rock and Roll is the music we were instrumental in creating and is a part of our history,” he stated. “We must retain our heritage and celebrate that together.”

In his comments to Esquire that initially raised comments, Kravitz, a four-time Grammy winner, questioned why Black entertainment publications didn’t celebrate his success and expressed disappointment at never receiving invitations to events like the BET or Source Awards.

“Here is a Black artist who has reintroduced many Black art forms, who has broken down barriers—

just like those that came before me broke down. That is positive. And they don’t have anything to say about it?” he stated in the interview. Kravitz later acknowledged the contributions of networks like BET and others. “BET and countless others have paved the way for this type of recognition,” Kravitz asserted.

“I hope that by sharing my concern, a spotlight will be shone on this issue. Love and peace.”

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Biden announces preliminary agreement on CHIPS and Science Act

President Joe Biden on Monday, Dec. 11, announced the first preliminary agreement under the CHIPS and Science Act to bolster America's semiconductor industry and strengthen national security. The groundbreaking deal, aimed at revitalizing U.S. leadership in semiconductors, already has spurred over \$230 billion in planned investments in the sector since its inception.

The United States, credited with inventing semi-

conductors—the tiny chips that power an array of devices from smartphones to sophisticated weapons systems—has seen its global market share dwindle from nearly 40% to just over 10%. The Biden administration warned that the decline poses a significant threat to national security and leaves the nation vulnerable to disruptions in the global supply chain.

"My CHIPS and Science Act aimed to change that, and already, we are re-

talizing America's leadership in semiconductors, strengthening our supply chains, protecting national security, and advancing American competitiveness as a result of the law and our 'Investing in America' agenda," Biden stated.

"Since I took office, companies have announced over \$230 billion in planned investments in semiconductors and electronics," he said.

Under the CHIPS and Science Act, the Depart-

ment of Commerce's latest move involves a preliminary agreement with BAE Systems, Inc., for a CHIPS incentive award totaling approximately \$35 million. Once finalized, the White House said the award will facilitate the modernization of an aging facility in Nashua, New Hampshire, quadrupling its production capacity for crucial chips vital to national security, including those utilized in F-35 fighter jets.

"Today marks a key mile-

stone for our implementation of this historic law," the President remarked, emphasizing this initiative's critical role in protecting national security and advancing American competitiveness.

The White House anticipates the BAE Systems, Inc. award to have a twofold impact, advancing national security goals and stimulating local investment and job creation. The modernization of the Nashua facility is expected to enhance

its production capabilities, supporting the growing demand for semiconductor technology in various applications, Biden asserted.

"Over the coming year, the Department of Commerce will award billions more to make more semiconductors in America, invest in research and development capabilities to keep America at the forefront of new technologies, strengthen our national security, and create good-paying jobs," he insisted.

EMOJIS, from Page 5

sity to real-world biodiversity. They also assessed how emoji biodiversity changed between 2015 and 2022 to determine whether the emoji catalog is evolving to better represent biodiversity as more emojis are added.

Overall, the team identified emojis representing 112 distinct organisms—92 animals, 16 plants, 1 fungus (likely *Amanita muscaria*), and 1 microorganism (likely *Escherichia coli*). "Currently available emojis encompass a broad range of animal species, while plants, fungi, and mi-

croorganisms are underrepresented," the researchers write. "Such strong taxonomic bias is in line with current societal awareness of biodiversity, which tends to prioritize animals over other taxa."

Next, the researchers examined the biodiversity characteristics of the animal emojis in more detail. In some cases, they were able to identify individual animal species (for example, the bald eagle and giant panda emojis), while other emojis were only identifiable to the genus or family level (for example, emojis

that represent ants or crocodilians).

Overall, 76% of the animal emojis represented vertebrates, 16% represented arthropods, and 4%, 2%, and 1% represented mollusks, cnidarians, and annelids, respectively. Given that there are 1,302,809 described species of arthropod and only 85,423 described species of vertebrate, this means that the current emoji catalog underrepresents arthropod biodiversity and overrepresents vertebrates.

"This rule can be problematic, as it risks hampering the extension of emojis in order to better cover the actual biodiversity of our

planet," the researchers write.

However, emoji biodiversity does appear to be increasing. In 2015, there were only emojis for 45 animal taxa, but this increased to 78 in 2019 and 92 in 2022. As well as increasing in number, animal emojis also became more representative of biodiversity over this time period. In

2015, there were only emojis representing vertebrates, arthropods, and mollusks, but annelids gained representation in 2020 with the addition of the "worm" emoji, which most likely represents an earthworm, and cnidarians gained representation in 2021 with the addition of a red coral emoji.

"This increase in phy-

logenetic diversity driven by less-known taxa emphasizes a positive trend of enhanced opportunities for emoji-fying biodiversity communication, allowing users of digital platforms to discuss a range of biodiversity-related topics and sentiments more effectively, beyond the icons depicting iconic species," the researchers write.

ISRAEL, from Page 1

noted that former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently told CBS News' Norah O'Donnell that calls for a ceasefire "would be such a gift to Hamas because they would spend whatever time there was a ceasefire in effect rebuilding their armaments, creating stronger positions to be able to fend off an eventual assault by the Israelis." And former Speaker Nancy Pelosi similarly parroted the "gift for Hamas" line.

Despite this, the New York Times reported that more than 100 former members of the Obama and Biden administrations issued a letter on November 17, praising Biden's "moral clarity, courageous leader-

ship, and staunch support of Israel." The gesture aimed to defend Biden's policies amid internal dissent within the administration.

And, as recently as this week, when the administration successfully negotiated a cease-fire agreement and Hamas began releasing hostages, including Americans, Biden was able to take a sort of victory lap because his policies appeared to have worked.

"The deal to pause the fighting in Gaza and facilitate the release of hostages has delivered meaningful results," Biden stated, noting that nearly 100 hostages have been returned to their loved ones. "And the

United States has led the international community to use this pause to accelerate the delivery of additional humanitarian assistance into Gaza," Biden asserted.

"More than 200 trucks loaded with aid, including food, water, medicine, shelter supplies, fuel, and cooking gas, have entered Gaza each of the last few days," he continued. "For the first time since this conflict began, aid reached northern Gaza. And yesterday, the United States airlifted more than 54,000 pounds of medical equipment and food aid to the humanitarian distribution center in Egypt—the first of three deliveries of critical supplies that will go to civilians in Gaza who need our help."



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SKIES, from Page 3

acquainted with the burdens of the world, its pains and its inexplicable injustices.

My uncle Butch was in the guest room of my grandmother's apartment in the projects of Yonkers, NY, a place that despite its pitfalls, often sang with life and familial warmth. But that day, it was different. The air was heavier, laden with a palpable sorrow. I found him there, tears carving silent paths down his cheeks, the album playing softly, almost like a prayer or a plea.

Curious and untouched by the complexities of adult grief, I asked him, "Uncle Butch, what's wrong?" He didn't answer directly, his gaze lingering somewhere far off, perhaps in a place where words find it hard to reach. But then, he looked at me, and in his eyes, I saw a deep, unspeakable sadness, a depth I had yet to understand.

He asked me to sit beside him, not in words but with a gentle motion of his hand, to stay and listen with him. So, I did. I sat there, at the foot of the bed, watching him, listening to the strains of Marvin Gaye's voice weaving through the room.

Uncle Butch, in those months that followed, grew more silent, more withdrawn, as if the weight of something unseen was pressing down upon him. And then, he was gone, taken by a disease that was spoken of in hushed, fearful tones — AIDS. I wouldn't come to learn this until I was much older. For that word, at the time, was a sentence unto itself, cloaked in stigma and sorrow.

I also did not know then, could not have known, how those songs he introduced me to, in that room filled with his tears and Marvin Gaye's soulful voice, would become my companions through trials I could scarcely imagine.

I recall, with a clarity that stings, moments such as finding a noose hung on my friend's dorm room door, the tragic night George Zimmerman was

acquitted of Trayvon Martin's murder, and watching George Floyd plead for his life — plead for his mother. In each of these moments, Gaye's voice was a soft place, wrapping around me, reminding me that in the midst of this persistent struggle, we are not alone. His words, "Mother, mother, there's too many of you crying," resonated with a truth that was as painful as it was necessary.

Gaye's voice, rich with a kind of knowing, spoke to the very marrow of my being. It was as though he had seen the world through the same lens of heartbreak, had walked the same path of outrage. In his melodies, there was a recognition of the pain, an understanding that transcended time and space. This album, with its poignant lyrics and soulful rhythms, did not offer empty platitudes or shallow promises of a brighter tomorrow. Rather, it offered something far more precious: the feeling of being seen, truly seen, in all the complexity of one's anguish and hope.

Now, as I find myself in another chapter, reflecting on current genocides, wars, and personal strife, the album plays again. Its notes are familiar, yet they always bring something new, some undiscovered wisdom or comfort.

I believe the essence of "What's Going On" is a universal language, a dialect understood by hearts across the globe, irrespective of the tongues they speak or the lands they inhabit. This album, much like the soulful cries of a gospel choir or the melancholic strains of a blues guitar, speaks to a shared human condition — a narrative woven with threads of pain, hope, love, and an unyielding quest for understanding and peace.

It is here, in this harmonious congregation of instruments and lyrics, that Gaye's work transcends the boundaries of mere musical composition. It becomes a source of comfort, something soothing

for the wounded spirit. The album does not just resonate; it empathizes. It does not merely communicate; it consoles, sharing in the collective sorrows and joys of its listeners.

Psychologists and music therapists have long recognized the potency of music as a tool for emotional healing and resilience. They speak of its ability to access parts of the human psyche that are often barricaded by the rubble of trauma and grief. This concept is vividly encapsulated in "What's Going On." Therapists often talk about the concept of 'musical mirroring' — the idea that music can reflect our inner emotional states, providing a sense of validation and understanding. In this album, mirroring is not just an artistic technique; it is a lifeline. It reaches out to those adrift in the tumultuous seas of despair and pulls them towards a shore of understanding and empathy.

Moreover, the universality of Gaye's message in this album speaks to a collective longing for a world that is kinder, more just, and more attuned to the cries of the oppressed and the marginalized.

The lasting resonance of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" persists as a lantern, guiding me through the maze of my thoughts, my griefs, and my yearnings for a world reborn from the ashes of its own destructive ways. This album, like a sermon, continues to shepherd me through the process of understanding, of coping, and, most crucially, of demanding more — not just for myself, but for all of us, for humanity in its totality.

A few days ago, the cruel hand of fate snatched away a friend, Michael Latt, a beacon of change in his own right, extinguished by the senseless violence that plagues our world like a relentless shadow. Losing Michael Latt has left a profound impact on me, both personally and in the way I view the world. Michael was more than just a community leader; he was

a ray of light and a living example of what it means to use one's privilege for the greater good. As a white man, he dedicated himself to creating access and opportunities for marginalized people, and his work was a testament to the power of empathy, understanding, and action.

He listened, he learned, and he committed himself wholeheartedly to the cause of justice and equality. His passion for making a difference was contagious, and it inspired many others to look at how they could contribute to creating a more equitable society.

Reflecting on the loss of such a person, I often find myself struggling with a profound sense of injustice. Why do terrible things happen to the best among us? Michael's untimely departure left a void that is difficult to comprehend and accept. His absence feels like a stark reminder of the fragility of life and the sometimes inexplicable nature of pain.

His departure left a tear in the fabric of our human potential. In the aftermath of this tragedy, compounded by the constant parade of despair that our daily lives seem to have become, I found refuge in the familiar yet ever-evocative strains of "What's Going On," particularly in the heartfelt cries of "Save The Children," the soulful affirmations of "God Is Love," and the poignant lament of "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)."

As the songs played, a wave of emotions washed over me. It was as though each note, each lyric, was a key unlocking chambers within my heart. In "Save The Children," there lies a haunting urgency, a plea that transcends time, speaking to our collective responsibility for the innocence that we, as a society, have failed. It is a song that echoes the cries of children lost to war, to hunger, to the very violence that claimed Michael. It is a reminder of the world we have forged, one where the laughter of children is too often drowned out by the roar of

injustice.

Then, as the album flows into "God Is Love," there is a shift, a gentle yet powerful affirmation of the divine love that underpins our existence. Here, Gaye reminds us of a fundamental truth that we often forget in our scramble for survival and significance: that to love another person is to see the face of God. This song, in its serene conviction, offered a moment of solace, a brief respite from the noise of loss and anger.

Finally, "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)" wrapped its arms around me. This song, a mournful ode to our planet's desecration, resonates with a deeper grief — a grief for a world that continues to turn its back on the very womb that nurtures it. In the haunting beauty of this melody, I found a space to release, to sit with my pain and the pain of the world, to acknowledge the wounds we inflict upon our Earth and upon each other.

In this trilogy of songs, there is an encapsulation of the human condition: our capacity for destruction and our profound longing for redemption. Gaye's voice, etched with the wisdom of a prophet and the tenderness of a friend, became a conduit for my own grief. It allowed me to grieve not just for Michael, but for all that we have lost and continue to lose in this relentless march of time and human wickedness.

There is something simmering in so many of us, a simmering volcano of discontent and despair. Yet, in this rage, there is also a thread of hope, a belief that even in our darkest hour, there is a chance for transformation, for love, for a return to the sacred truths that bind us.

In "What's Going On," Marvin Gaye does not offer easy answers or superficial solace. Instead, he offers a mirror, reflecting our flawed humanity, our collective suffering, and our enduring spirit. Which is often — exactly what we need. In this album, I find not just a means to process and cope with the tragedies

that life throws my way, but also a clarion call to push for progress — for Michael, for the children, for the Earth, and for the very soul of humanity. It is a reminder that in the midst of our pain, there lies the potential for profound change, for a love that transcends the boundaries of our brokenness.

This is why "What's Going On" remains a vital balm for souls battered by the relentless tide of global events. In a world that often feels devoid of empathy, where the news cycle churns out stories of pain and injustice with a chilling detachment, this album stands as a counterpoint. It is a reminder that our struggles are not invisible, that our pain is not unheard. Gaye's music reaches into the deepest recesses of the human experience, touching the parts of us that are too often left to languish in silence.

To listen to this album in moments of despair is to participate in a form of communion, a shared experience that connects us in our humanity. It is to be reminded that, despite the overwhelming suffering that threatens to engulf us, we are not alone. There is a power in being seen, in being acknowledged, not as a statistic or a headline, but as a living, feeling being. This album offers that recognition, that validation.

In a world that seems increasingly bent on tearing itself apart, where the cries of the oppressed are too often drowned out by the clamor of indifference, "What's Going On" resonates with a clarity that is both haunting and healing. Listening to it, we find a kind of solace, a reminder that, even in our darkest hours, we are part of something larger, something profoundly human. And it is in this recognition, this feeling of being lifted and seen, that we find the strength to carry on, to keep fighting, to keep hoping.

For in the end, it is not just an album we are playing; it's a map, guiding us back to ourselves and to each other.

Study shows how ethical brands fare in a recession

(Newswise) — A new study from the University of East Anglia reveals why some 'eco goods' may fare better than others as a UK recession looms.

A new study, published today, shows that when money gets tight, people are more likely to keep up more expensive ethical purchases like buying fair trade products.

The study is one of the first to look at ethical purchases using actual market data from a major UK supermarket chain.

The team studied the impact of the economic recession of 2008 on consumer

expenditure of eco-labelled food products.

They used UK supermarket loyalty card data and showed that the recession had widely different effects on the spend share of different types of eco-labelled groceries.

Dr Raychaudhuri said: "We found that the amount shoppers spent on organic products declined but the amount they spent on fair trade products increased over the same period.

"It's really interesting that the consumption of some eco-labelled goods – namely fair trade products – held up during the recession.

sion.

"We think that in a recession some consumers become relatively less price sensitive and instead focus more on the public good qualities of products. These public good attributes, therefore, become more salient or important for consumers.

"Alternatively, shoppers may be fuelled by moral motivations, and those that regard themselves as socially responsible will want to maintain that identity.

"What this means for shop and brand managers is that labelling products

clearly for their corporate social responsibility credentials could help maintain sales.

"The good news is that, recently, we have seen pay packets stage a mini-recovery, and so this will perhaps further alleviate the fall in eco-labelled consumption expenditure," he added.

This research was led by the University of East Anglia in collaboration with Prof Ada Wossink from the University of Manchester.

'Ecolabels and The Economic Recession' is published in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

NATURE, from Page 7

their neighborhoods.

As indicators of health, birds tell us how an area is supporting different species and what food is available to them. A diversity of birds is connected to an abundance of trees, while increased bird diversity can be traced to green investments in particular neighborhoods.

We are increasingly an urban species, adds Jon Christensen. Cities are now our habitat. As of 2007, over half of people live in cities, and that is expected to increase up

to 70% by 2050. The complex urban systems that make up cities have become an important area of scientific research and debate about public investment around the world, he continued. It is important to understand and invest in cities so they can be resilient to climate change. It is a matter of life and death, he said.

Inequities have shaped the urban environment, and justice requires that we remedy those inequities.

ABUSE, from Page 4

partner violence (IPV). Previously, our evidence primarily highlighted IPV's contribution to HIV and depression, substantially underestimating its broader impact. This study expands our understanding, revealing IPV's extensive influence on a wider range of poor health outcomes.

"This new perspective is crucial in elevating IPV as a public health imperative in the global sphere, hopefully igniting both political and scientific momentum towards effective prevention and intervention strategies."

4000 studies reviewed – 229 suitable for inclusion

Searching through papers published from seven databases, Emmanuella Gakidou and colleagues identified the available literature on intimate partner violence and childhood sexual abuse and their associated health effects. They reviewed over 4,000 studies, of which 229 studies met the criteria for inclusion. Using the burden of proof methodology (a meta-analytic approach for estimating a conservative measure of the elevated or reduced risk of a particular health outcome after exposure to a harmful or protective risk factor), they evaluated the strength of evidence connecting inti-

mate partner violence and/or childhood sexual abuse to health outcomes, which were supported by at least three studies.

Additional potential health outcomes were also initially identified in the study, including an association of maternal hypertensive disorders with intimate partner violence and

an association of smoking with childhood sexual abuse. However, the research concludes that due to a scarcity of evidence, these could not be included in the meta-analysis.

The authors note that the studies are observational and cannot demonstrate causality and highlight that their findings are limited

owing to the limited number of studies that explore these relationships. They suggest that their research demonstrates the wide-ranging health effects of intimate partner violence and

childhood sexual abuse but emphasize the need for further research to strengthen the evidence base.

The study was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

TRUMP, from Page 5

them as "Fake News" and the "Enemy of the People," has been a consistent theme throughout his political career. In a September post on his Truth Social network, Trump reiterated his intention to investigate NBC News and MSNBC for "country-threatening treason" and limit their access to airwaves, accusing them of threatening democracy.

In the same interview, Bannon hinted at Patel's potential role as the director of the CIA in a hypothetical second term for Trump. Meanwhile, at a

recent fundraising event, Biden expressed that he may not have sought reelection if Trump were not in the race. The president said democracy is "more at risk in 2024" and suggested that Trump and his allies aim to "destroy" democratic institutions.

Biden emphasized the urgency of preventing a Trump victory, portraying the former president as the embodiment of retribution for his supporters and someone committed to rooting out perceived "vermin in the country."



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Out to Pastor: From Roast Turkey to Reinder

By Dr. James L. Snyder

Nothing is more confusing than being in the middle of two holidays. I have just finished Thanksgiving, and now Christmas is before me. Each year, it gets more difficult to adjust to the next holiday. It's hard for me to keep up.

For months, the focus was on that roast turkey for Thanksgiving. And boy, was it a delicious roast turkey. I have a hard time comparing this year's roast turkey to last year's because I always love the one I'm eating at the time. And I cannot go back in time to last year's turkey. That turkey has been digested a long time ago.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I were

sitting in the living room, resting from all the activity during the season and watching TV. I think she outdid herself this year because everything seemed to be perfect. Everybody in the family complimented her on the Thanksgiving dinner.

It will be challenging for her to outdo the Thanksgiving dinner at the Christmas dinner. But I know she's up for the challenge.

I began complimenting her on this year's roast turkey and telling her how much I loved it. I wasn't lying because I did like the turkey this year. Not only the turkey we had on Thanksgiving Day but also all the leftover turkey we had the following week. Nothing is better than left-

overs, as far as I'm concerned.

We had enough leftovers at Thanksgiving dinner to serve dinner every day for the next week. I ain't complaining.

Sitting in the living room, I looked at The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and asked, "Are you planning to make roast reindeer for Christmas?"

She just scowled at me and did not answer. I wasn't going to give up.

"After all," I said, "your roast turkey this year was absolutely supreme. The best you've ever done. I bet you could do a great job roasting a reindeer this year."

Looking at me, she said, "Do you want to get off Santa's naughty list this

year?"

Where did that come from?

I did not know what to say because I did not know if she was joking or what. Being on Santa's naughty list in our house is a very dangerous position. For some reason, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has a connection with Santa Claus. I'm not sure what that connection is, and I'm not in a position where I can ask.

I was quiet for a few minutes, then cleared my throat, and looking at The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, I asked, "How did I get on Santa's naughty list this year?"

Staring at me, she said, "Do you really want me to tell you?"

There is nothing like being between a turkey and a reindeer during the holiday season to wreck your nerves.

The question that burned in my heart was, what did I do to get on Santa's naughty list? I knew I would be in more trouble if I asked her to tell me. So, I thought about another angle.

"Can you tell me," I asked as soberly as possible, "how I can get off Santa's naughty list?"

She stared at the TV for a moment and did not seem to hear what I was saying. I briefly thought, should I repeat myself? In the past, repeating myself has gotten me into more trouble than it was worth.

Finally, she turned, looked at me for a few mo-

ments and then said, "Do you really want to know how to get off of Santa's naughty list?"

Oh boy. What's coming next?

If I don't know how I got on Santa's naughty list, how in the world am I going to figure out how to get off?

Looking at her, I smiled gently and said, "If getting off Santa's naughty list makes you happy, then that's exactly what I want to do." I finished with a big smile on my face.

"Well," she said rather thoughtfully, "maybe if this week you take me thrift store shopping I might be able to think about it and figure it out for you."

See REINDEER, Page 15

RUST, from Page 2

mad Ali, Sonny Liston, and Joe DiMaggio.

The "Walking Encyclopedia of Sports" finally had his moment in the spotlight during the tumultuous 1981 player/owner strike in baseball. Initially hired to host the Yankees pre-game show, Rust was on air every night from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. during the summer strike, which birthed an all-sports talk radio show that captivated disheartened baseball fans and laid the groundwork for the likes of WFAN, which emerged in 1988 with an all-white crew and not even a mention or an invitation to Rust.

"Unlike today's Sports Radio format, 'The Art Rust Jr. Show' was a lot more fan-friendly," noted Steven C. Owens in an earlier piece for Medium. Rust's wife, Edna, was an integral part of his journey, and her sudden passing in 1986 led him to honor her memory at the end of each show with a heartfelt "Good Night, Edna Baby."

Rust's impact remains undeniable. While Sirius XM's Chris Russo, who got his big break at WFAN alongside Mike Francesca and others, raked in mil-

lions, Rust set the stage for their success. Steve Somers, a host at WFAN, acknowledged Rust's role in shaping the station. "He certainly set the groundwork and the foundation for WFAN," Somers asserted.

Rust affectionately referred to left-handed pitchers as "portsiders" and Yankee Stadium as "the big ball orchard in the South Bronx." In his 1976 book, "Get That N****r Off the Field!" he recounted experiences of being a Black man in the world of baseball, highlighting the racial challenges he faced.

Longtime listener Alex Belth recalled listening to Rust in the early 1980s and how he tried to get up the nerves to call in and ask if Reggie Jackson would hit 500 home runs. "For years, I listened to Art Rust Jr. His voice was knowing and sure," Belth recalled. "I felt safe in his company. Yeah, and Reggie got those 500 dingers, too."

In an era where sports talk hosts command staggering salaries, there's little reminder of Rust, a Black man who sowed the seeds that both white and Black

sportscasters are reaping. Some equate today's hosts with baseball players who fail to recognize former St. Louis Cardinal great Curt Flood.

Flood won seven consecutive Gold Glove Awards beginning in '63 and hit better than 300 in six of his 12 years with St. Louis. Flood was also a key contributor to the Cardinals' 1964 and '67 World Series championship clubs. Flood, who, upon being traded to the Phillies on October 7, 1969, took a stand that would effectively end his career and change the sport forever.

He penned a letter to Commissioner Bowie Kuhn in which Flood began his fight against the reserve clause, which bound a player to one team unless that club chose to trade or release that player. Free agency didn't exist, so Flood decided to challenge the system. After Kuhn refused to grant Flood free agency, Flood filed a lawsuit against the Commissioner and MLB, alleging a violation of antitrust laws. The case reached the U.S. Supreme Court in 1972, and justices ruled 5-3 in favor of MLB. No active players stepped out to tes-

tify—or even attend—the trial in support of Flood.

However, in 1976, the reserve clause disintegrated, and the groundwork for free agency as we know it today was laid. "The fact that Curt Flood, one of the best all-around players of his generation, was willing to risk it all for others is one of the greatest displays

of personal sacrifice known to the sports world," said Tony Clark, the executive director of the MLB Players Association, in an interview with MLB Network.

Flood's fight forever transformed baseball economics. The average salary of an MLB player in 2023 was \$4.9 million, or about ten times the amount Flood

made over his entire 15-year career.

Art Rust Jr. is the Curt Flood for those hosting talk shows about baseball and other sports. And, like most baseball players who reap the spoils of modern economics thanks to Flood, sports talk show hosts rarely, if ever, extend a thank you to Rust.

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The Cracked Pot



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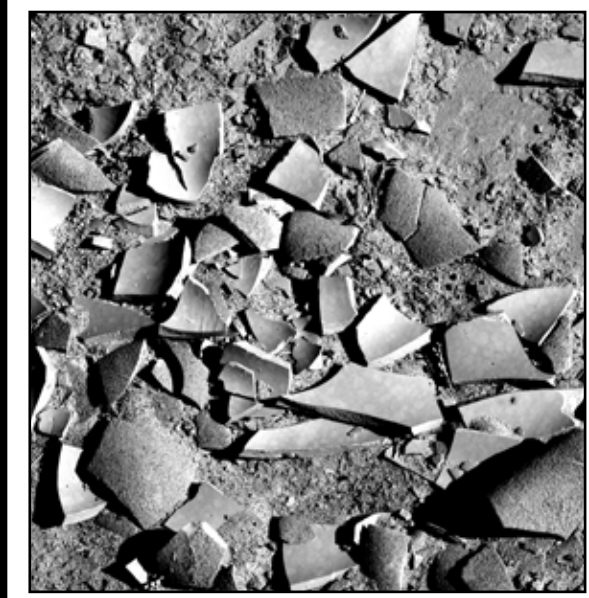
This Holiday Season, if you think that you're not important to God, ponder this:

An elderly woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole, which she carried across her neck.

One pot had a crack in it while the other was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

At the end of the walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived half full. For two years this went on daily, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water.

The perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the cracked pot



was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman. "I'm ashamed of myself; this crack in my side causes water to leak all the way

back to your house."

The old woman smiled, "Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side?"

"I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back,

you watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

Each of us has our own unique flaw. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives interesting and rewarding.

You must take each person for what they are and look for the good in them.

Smell the flowers on your side of the path. Live, Give, Love and Be Thankful!

Stop Making Excuses!

You will give your life for something – the question is what? Sports, a hobby, fame, wealth; these do not bring lasting satisfaction.

Service is the pathway to joy and fulfillment. It's

through ministry that we find meaning; life is meant for ministry.

As we serve God's purposes, our lives take on eternal importance. Paul writes, "all this makes you more significant, not less, because of what you are a part of. (1 Corinthians 12:14, 19).

If you aren't involved in something greater than yourself you just exist, God wants you to learn to love and serve others unselfishly. He wants you to make a difference in His world: What matter is not how long you live, but how effectively you live! If you're not involved in God's service what's your excuse? Abraham was old. Jacob was insecure. Leah

was unattractive. Joseph was abused. Moses stuttered.

Gideon was poor. Samson was co-dependent. Rehab was immoral. David had an affair resulting in all kinds of family problems. Elijah was suicidal. Jeremiah was depressed. Jonah was reluctant. Naomi was a widow. John the Baptist was eccentric. Peter was impulsive. Martha worried a lot. The Samaritan woman had several failed marriages. Zacchaeus was crooked. Thomas had doubts. Paul had poor health and Timothy was timid. That's quite a variety of misfits, yet God used each of them – and He will use you too, if you stop making excuses.

PARADE, from Page 9

unhealthy/controlling relationships so we can reduce the number of victims of intimate partner abuse."

The contestants competed all week long with preliminary rounds, interviews and special events including a masquerade ball.

Also In the audience was Sara Aarons, the oldest living Senior America winner

at 104 years old. Several others celebrating birthdays of 100 years old were recognized at the life altering event.

Dr. Quinn will be accompanied by Ms. Joyce Brown, 2019 Texas Senior America, Ms. CJ Johnson, who competed in 2023 Ms. Texas Sr. America and Ms. Sandra Crenshaw, who will

compete in the 2024 Pageant.

The MLK Parade is part of the City of Dallas MLK Celebration January 9--15th which includes a MLK Banquet honoring Commissioner John Wiley Price as the MLK Trailblazer. Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes III is the guest speaker.

The deadline to submit the application for the Parade is 5:00 pm on Tues-

day, December 26, 2023, or until all slots are filled. For more information See: <https://help-dallas.org/mlk-parade>.

REINDEER, from Page 14

That caught me by surprise. That would be the last thing in the world that I would ever want to do. Spending a whole day going from one thrift store to another is not my idea of having fun.

"And," she said, "if in our thrift store shopping we find a reindeer, you can buy it, and I will roast it for you."

I never know if she is joking or setting me up. I had to think about that for some time, not knowing the proper answer.

Finally, I sighed deeply

and said, "OK, my dear, I'll be glad to take you thrift store shopping anytime this week. And, I'll be glad to purchase that reindeer when you find it." I tried to smile back at her, but it was very difficult to find an appropriate smile in my inventory.

"Ha, ha, ha," she laughed very heartily.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

"Oh my dear," she laughed, "you just got off of Santa's naughty list. Congratulations."

Later that day, as I was

considering this, I was reminded of what Amos said, "Can two walk together, except they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

Sometimes, life is better when two people agree. It may be difficult to come to an agreement, but the rewards are worth the effort.

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.

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NDG Book Review: 'The Day After Yesterday is a book worth talking about

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

Sometimes, Mom talks a lot of nonsense.

She talks in random syllables, half-jokes, thoughts that come out of her mouth backwards or mixed up. You try, she laughs, you laugh, pretending that you understand but you don't. Mom has dementia and there's nothing that'll fix it, but you can read "The Day After Yesterday" by Joe Wallace and change the conversation.

Talk about your awkward encounters.

Well into his twenties, Joe Wallace was asked to sit with his "Granddaddy Joe" while Wallace's mother and



grandmother ran errands. His grandfather was once a vibrant man, and he'd been Wallace's "hero" but Alzheimer's had put a curtain of sorts between them and Wallace was "so frightened to be left alone with him."

It didn't take long for him to realize that day that his grandfather was full of

stories and it was "magical." He applied the same kind of patience when his grandmother began to experience dementia, too, and this all spurred Wallace to tell a story of his own with his camera.

The portraits he captured eventually became an exhibit, and this book.

"In the United States," Wallace says, "one in three seniors suffers with Alzheimer's or another dementia at the time of their death." Nearly \$700 billion annually is spent caring for people with dementia. Alzheimer's, as one of Wallace's subjects points out, affects Black seniors more often than it

does whites. For that matter, people with dementia need not be seniors: early-onset Alzheimer's can affect someone in their early 20s.

Listen, Wallace's subjects almost always say, and don't hide a diagnosis of dementia. There's no shame in it. Reach out to others who've received the diagnosis. Ask for help. Watch for suicidal thoughts and depression. Ask for stories, before they're lost, and be honest about what's going on. You can't change the diagnosis, but you can change your attitude toward it.

It's called The Long Goodbye for reason – and

yet, your loved one with dementia is still on this side of the sod and you know there's still some there. In "The Day After Yesterday," you'll get a new point-of-view, for both of you.

In his introduction interview, author Joe Wallace explains how he came to understand that "we could all do so much better" for those with cognitive disabilities including Alzheimer's, and why eliminating fear and awkwardness is essential. Readers will be quite taken by the then-and-now pictures, and by the conversations Wallace captured.

But beware: this isn't a

book on caregiving or advice-giving.

It's a delightful, heart-breaking, tearful, surprising collection of profiles of everyday people in their own words, people who go with the flow and deal with tomorrow when it comes. Yes, you'll find advice here but it pales in comparison to the presence that Wallace's subjects and their families exhibit.

This powerful book is great for someone with a new dementia diagnosis; it proves that life's not over yet. It's likewise great for a caregiver, gently ushering them toward grace.

Get "The Day After Yesterday." It's time for a talk.

OVERTIME, from Page 6

tools supporting educators have been released in recent months by EdTech organizations aiming to create teaching efficiency.

These tools save time and allow educators to tai-

lor materials to individual skill levels, which is especially critical as educators work to address gaps in students' knowledge caused by pandemic disruptions.

Twinkl offers a teacher report writer tool that generates student report cards based on raw performance information and a personal AI teaching assistant, "Ari," which can create adapted lesson materials aligned with curriculum

standards and differentiated to meet the needs of all learners.

You can read the full report on the Twinkl website and try Twinkl's teacher AI tools built to support edu-

cators and learners.

Twinkl began in 2010 with a single dream - to help those who teach.

Founders Jonathan and Susie Seaton, passionate education advocates, real-

ized there weren't enough options for high-quality, low-cost teaching resources for educators to instantly download and use in their classrooms. So they got to work.

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