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The Sentencing Project unveils final report in 'One in Five' series reveals mass incarceration's role in deepening inequality and harming public safety

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

The collateral consequences of a criminal conviction often amount to a lifelong disadvantage, particularly for African Americans. According to the Sentencing Project, in 2010, one in three (33%) African American adult men had a felony conviction on their record, compared to 13% of all adult men.

Researchers found that employers discriminate against job candidates who have criminal histories, especially against those who are Black. Further, application questions about criminal histories deter some people from applying to certain jobs and colleges, with a 2017 study finding that nearly half of unemployed men had a criminal conviction. Additionally, almost one-third of all U.S. jobs require an occupational license, and many licensing boards bar or impose cumbersome obstacles for people with criminal records.

Fee-based programs to seal criminal records also exacerbate racial disparities., and the Sentencing Project noted that these policies stand in stark contrast to a growing evidence base showing



Researchers found that employers discriminate against job candidates who have criminal histories, especially against those who are Black. (Photo via NNPA)

that post-incarceration employment prevents recidivism and that tackling heightened labor market discrimination against Black people with criminal records would reduce recidivism rates.

The Sentencing Project has again highlighted a critical element causing inequalities in incarceration with "One in Five: How Mass Incarceration Deepens Inequality and Harms Public Safety." The report highlights laws and policies that worsen inequality and unfairly burden communities of color. Initiated to provide an in-depth analysis of racial inequities within America's criminal legal system,

the series of reports covers a spectrum of topics.

From the progress made in the 21st century in reducing the U.S. prison population to disparities in crime and policing, the series also explores the key causes of racial and ethnic disparities in imprisonment. Additionally, it highlights reforms that have played a pivotal role in mitigating these sources of disparity.

"A primary driver of disparity within the U.S. criminal legal system is the multitude of laws and policies that intensify economic

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People In The News ...



Dave Hollister



Dr. Otis Alphonso Mason

NDG Quote of the Week: "Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in."

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dave Hollister

Some voices define an era within the confines of R&B, and Dave Hollister is undoubtedly one of them. Hollister's soulful voice has left an indelible mark on the music industry, from his roots in the platinum-selling R&B quartet Blackstreet to a flourishing solo career. Hits like "My Favorite Girl" and "One Woman Man" resonate with audiences, making him a timeless figure in music.

Born into a family steeped in musical talent, including cousins K-Ci and JoJo Halley, Calvin Richardson, and



Fantasia Barrino, Hollister's journey was destined for greatness. His distinctive voice emerged in the '90s and continues to captivate audiences today. The trajectory of his solo career

soared with the gold-selling album "Ghetto Hymns," featuring the chart-topping single "My Favorite Girl."

Hollister's musical evolution extends beyond classic R&B; he has embraced the gospel world with albums like "The Book of David: Vol. 1 The Transition" and "Witness Protection." One standout release, "Chicago Winds: The Saga Continues," showcased the growth and wisdom he gained throughout his musical odyssey.

However, Hollister is not just a musician but a man of transformation. Overcoming struggles with substance

abuse, he found solace in becoming a pastor. Now, he embarks on the "Matters of the Heart Tour," a poignant journey he reflected on in an exclusive interview with the National Newspaper Publisher's Association's (NNPA) "Let It Be Known," hosted by NNPA's social media correspondent Totally Randie.

At 55, Hollister reflected on the surprise of being labeled an "OG" (Original Gangster) in the industry. "Kind of a shock to me when they say you can't mention R&B without me; I never aspired to be a star; I just really wanted to put

my feelings on record and hopefully change someone's life."

He dismisses aspirations of stardom, expressing a genuine desire to share his feelings and impact someone's life through his music. In discussing his age and the "OG" label, Hollister humorously notes, "I'm an OG now, that's crazy, they call me an OG. I turned 55 in August, and I still feel like OGs are Frankie Beverly, Charlie Wilson, and Ron Isley types."

The tour, aptly named "Matters of the Heart," delves into Hollister's experiences, including his

two divorces. He candidly discusses the toll it took and the realization that personal growth is crucial for relationship success. "When we start looking at us in a relationship, we have a better percentage rate of making it."

In his intimate City Winery setting, Hollister revisits familiar tunes, allowing his audience to connect with the music they love. Despite requests for new material, he values giving fans what they paid for and cherishes the connection with his supporters.

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Dr. Otis Alphonso Mason

(Black PR Wire) St. Augustine, FL -- Dr. Otis A. Mason, a beloved educator, veteran, and community leader, peacefully embraced the sunset of his life on January 9, 2024 in St. Augustine, Florida. He was 95.

Born and raised in St. Augustine's Lincolnville neighborhood, and the youngest of three boys, Dr. Mason is highly regarded by his peers as the consummate educator. Dr. Mason dedicated his life to his family, education and community service. He diligently served the St. Johns County community



as a teacher, a supervisor of elementary education, a principal, and holds the distinction of being the first African American elected school superintendent in the state of Florida, where he was the St. Johns County

Superintendent of Schools for eight years before retiring in 1992.

Otis Mason earned his bachelor's degree in Physical Education with honors from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) in 1950. While there, he also pledged the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, making lifelong friends at FAMU, throughout Florida, and nationwide. In 1958, Otis obtained his master's degree in Education Administration from New York University. And in 2022, he was conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters (DHL) from FAMU.

Determined to pass it forward, he also worked to send many students from St. Augustine to FAMU who later returned to St. Johns County as teachers. In his position as Supervisor of Elementary Schools, Dr. Mason was instrumental in implementing the full integration of St. Johns County Schools. During his ad-

ministration, more African Americans were appointed to key positions such as principals, assistant principals and administrators than ever before. He also focused on improvement. He directed significant renovations to St. Augustine High School: the auditorium in 1986 and the media center, B Hall, and cafeteria in 1991.

During his tenure as St. Johns County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mason was inducted into Florida A&M's Gallery of Distinguished Educators and named to the university's Sports Hall of Fame for baseball. Dr. Mason was also a member of Sigma Pi

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Terry Thomas

(PRNewswire) -- McCormick & Company, Incorporated (NYSE: MKC), a global leader in flavor, today announced that Terry Thomas, Chief Growth Officer of Flowers Foods, Inc. has been appointed to the Board of Directors of McCormick effective January 23, 2024.

Mr. Thomas has more than 30 years of domestic and global experience in the CPG industry, spanning across all channels and numerous categories. He brings a deep understanding of the retail landscape with expertise in sales and all key commercial functions. Mr. Thomas is Chief Growth Officer for Flow-



ers Foods, one of the largest producers of packaged bakery foods in the United States with sales of nearly \$5 billion. There, he is responsible for leading and managing growth strategy, product development and innovation, marketing, sales, food service, and net revenue management.

As a member of the executive leadership team, he is actively involved with corporate strategy, mergers and acquisitions, and uncovering new revenue streams for the company. Prior to joining Flowers Foods in his executive role, he served on the board of directors for three years, during which time he was a member of the Audit and Finance Committees.

Prior to joining Flowers Foods, Mr. Thomas was the Global Chief Customer Officer for Unilever Plc where he led shopper marketing, consumer insights, e-commerce, sales, long-range planning, and category management. During his

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Disparities Perpetuate Nation's Racial Wealth Gap

Black neighborhoods and shopping districts stripped of \$406 billion

By Charlene Crowell

For America, Black History Month brings opportunities to revisit our nation's lessons, achievements, and unfulfilled promises, capturing our attention as well as our hopes. Yet nothing hits home harder than the painful reminders of how so much of Black America continues to struggle financially, despite an economy that reports low unemployment, a robust stock market, and low inflation.

Whether discussing kitchen table economics, or yesterday's grievances, money – or the lack thereof – is an ongoing and dominant concern. Now is a good time to examine the policies and practices contributing to why Black wealth remains so elusive for people whose work ethic is often far larger than their paychecks.

The Federal Reserve's recently updated Survey of Consumer Finance 2019-2022, analyzes post-pandemic trends – particularly as they affect racial wealth gaps.

In 2022, Asian-Americans had a typical family wealth of \$536,000, the highest of any race or ethnicity, and nearly twice the typical white family's wealth of \$285,000. But these six-figure wealth assets did not include either

Black or Latino households. Instead, a typical Latino family held only about 20 percent of the wealth of the typical white family (about \$61,600), and Black family wealth was even lower at \$44,900, only 15 percent of the wealth held by white families.

"Despite strong growth in wealth for non-white families over the past two surveys, we remain far from racial equality, reflecting the large differences in wealth that have persisted for decades," states the report. "Taking a slightly longer-run view, since the Great Recession the typical Black and Hispanic family has had between about \$10 to \$15 of wealth for every \$100 held by the typical White family," the report continues. "This ratio has closed only modestly in the past two surveys. The typical Black family went from having about \$9 in wealth for every \$100 held by the typical white family in 2013 to around \$16 in 2022; the typical Hispanic family went from having about \$10 in wealth for every \$100 held by the typical white family in 2013 to around \$22 in 2022."

Recently the Brookings Institution independently analyzed the Fed's data in a new publication entitled, Black wealth is increasing, but so is the racial gap, citing the effects of public policies

against Black participation in proven wealth-building assets.

"Policies that privilege whiteness are reflected in higher levels of wealth for the average white family, which can be leveraged across generations to generate greater wealth and advantages," wrote Brookings. "This became very clear during the pandemic: Black households made major gains through housing and business equity, yet that growth paled in comparison to white households' gains from investment returns."

For example, Brookings found that in 2020 Black businesses employed 1.3 million people and created over 48,000 new jobs. If access to capital could be available to more entrepreneurs to begin new businesses, or expand existing ones, greater Black wealth likely would result.

In a separate but related analysis, Brookings examined how redlining of Black business districts suppressed wealth-building, similarly to how lowered appraisal values of Black homes suppress wealth-building in majority-Black neighborhoods.

"Our research found that storefronts and shopping centers in communities with higher shares of Black residents are valued measurably

lower than otherwise comparable properties in communities with fewer Black residents", wrote Brookings last November in Building Black wealth through community real estate ownership. "We estimate that the undervaluation of majority-Black ZIP codes results in aggregate wealth losses of \$171 billion in retail space for the owners of these properties... By comparison, owner-occupiers of housing lose an estimated \$235 billion in majority-Black ZIP codes."

Imagine what Black wealth could be derived if these billion-dollar discounts were removed from Black and Latino communities. Until or unless public policy reforms effectively address these historic inequities, racial wealth gaps will persist. The financial bottom line – regardless of color – is that people cannot invest what they do not have, or are shut out from mainstream lending. Let's embrace the lessons of history and enact policies to increase lending for minority homes and business owners, to close the nation's racial wealth gaps.

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

New report reveals racial wealth gap widens in the U.S.

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

A new report from WalletHub, a personal finance website, has found that the racial wealth gap in the United States is alive and well. The report, titled "2024's States with the Biggest & Smallest Wealth Gaps by Race/Ethnicity," compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia across 21 key metrics, ranging from the median household income gap to the unemployment rate gap.

The report found that the

median household wealth for Black Americans is just \$14,100, compared to \$187,300 for non-Hispanic white households. Hispanic households also lag behind, with a median household wealth of \$31,700.

"The racial wealth gap is a persistent problem in the United States," said Jill Gonzalez, a WalletHub analyst. "There are many factors that contribute to this gap, including unequal access to higher education and employment for minorities, as well as residential segregation."

The report also found that the racial wealth gap

is more expansive in some states than others. For example, the District of Columbia has the broadest racial wealth gap, with a median household wealth of \$281,700 for non-Hispanic white households and just \$11,100 for Black households.

"Even decades after the Civil Rights Movement, there is still a high degree of wealth inequality among racial groups in America," WalletHub Analyst Cassandra Happe stated. "These gaps persist not just in held wealth but also in wages, poverty rates, homeownership rates, and unemploy-

ment rates. Part of this wealth disparity is due to unequal access to education, which can put some people on a better financial footing from the start."

Statistics show that the racial income gap grows larger and larger each year, said Irving L. Joyner, a law professor at North Carolina Central University's School of Law. Joyner said the growth of the gap has grown because those with more wealth have benefited more abundantly from their investments and ability to survive the eco-

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Signs of accelerated aging found in brains of individuals with alcohol use disorder

(Newswise) — The brains and blood of people with a history of excessive drinking show cellular evidence of premature aging. In a new study published in *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research*, DNA taken from people with alcohol use disorder showed signs of changes in genetic regions indicative of increased biological age. Accelerated biological aging may help explain why excessive alcohol use has been shown to be a significant risk factor for premature death and neurodegenerative diseases.

Scientists extracted DNA from the brains of 144 deceased individuals with alcohol use disorder as well as from blood samples of 200 men with and without



CHUTERSNAP / Unsplash

alcohol use disorder. They ran analyses on the samples to assess certain markers of biological age, specifically telomere length, epigenetic clocks, and mitochondrial DNA counts. Epigenetic clocks are machine learning-based algorithms designed to identify the deterioration of biological functions, signifying bio-

logical aging.

The study found that people with alcohol use disorder showed increased biological age in the BA9 region of the brain, which plays a role in executive control and working memory. The epigenetic clock associated with this finding is designed to capture changes that occur due to environ-

mental and disease processes. This finding may suggest increased inflammation in the brains of individuals with alcohol use disorder.

Blood samples showed increased biological age as measured by epigenetic clocks in individuals with alcohol use disorder. Across all subsets, most markers of biological age showed small to medium statistically significant correlations with chronological age in both the blood and the brain samples. Shorter telomere length and shorter DNA methylation telomere length were indicative of older chronological age.

This is the first study to analyze blood and brain samples simultaneously using multiple measures of

biological aging in people with alcohol use disorder. As alcohol use disorder is thought to be a disorder of the brain, the researchers for this study examined tissue from three regions of the brain associated with addiction processes. The BA9 region in the frontal cortex plays a role in working memory and executive control, the ventral striatum is associated with the rewarding effects of drugs, and the caudate nucleus plays a role in habit formation. Previous studies have shown increased biological age in blood samples of people with alcohol use disorder.

Follow-up studies with larger and diverse samples, ideally with blood and brain

samples from the same individual, and detailed phenotypic information about alcohol intake, AUD-related symptoms, and age at onset are needed to provide more insight into the mechanisms of accelerated biological aging in AUD.

Biological aging markers in blood and brain tissue indicate age acceleration in alcohol use disorder. L. Zillich, M. Cetin, E. Hummel, E. Poisel, G. Fries, J. Frank, F. Streit, J. Foo, L. Sirignano, M. Friske, B. Lenz, S. Hoffmann, K. Adorjan, F. Kiefer, G. Bakalkin, A. Hansson, F. Lohoff, O. Kärkkäinen, E. Kok, P. Karhunen, G. Sutherland, C. Walss-Bass, R. Spanagel, M. Rietschel, D. Moser, S. Witt.

Researchers find dangerous airborne neurotoxin near Great Salt Lake

(Newswise) — Pioneering new research by a Bowling Green State University environmental toxicologist has identified a potential connection between a reduction in Utah's Great Salt Lake and long-term consequences for human health.

Dr. James Metcalf, an associate professor of Biological Sciences at BGSU, teamed with partners of the Wyoming non-profit institute Brain Chemistry Labs to collect air and water samples from the Great Salt Lake during three months in 2022, the results of which showed an alarming result of water-level decrease.

The collected samples indicated an increased presence of BMAA, an airborne neurotoxin highly correlated to increased levels of ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

The Great Salt Lake has lost 71% of its surface area

since 1984, exposing increasingly more lakebed — which likely has significant air quality implications for the greater region surrounding Salt Lake City, a metropolitan area with 2.5 million residents.

"In terms of public health, the fact that we're exposing more lakebed could result in more toxins being made airborne, and more toxins being made airborne could result in more people being exposed," Metcalf said. "Increased exposure may affect long-term diseases like ALS and Alzheimer's."

The research recently was published in the academic journal *Toxins*, and Metcalf presented the findings during a press conference at the Utah State Capitol building in Salt Lake City.

To collect data, the research team employed a trained helicopter pilot in Ogden, Utah, to take them to sample multiple sites

across the region during August, September and October of 2022. Following collection, they tested samples using mass spectrometry, which revealed a complex set of issues facing the Great Salt Lake.

Due to the nature of the region — an arid climate with a major city in a valley near the Rocky Mountains — smog from vehicle exhaust already has been an issue in Utah, but the research found an additional air quality concern.

"There were two things that were surprising," Metcalf said. "One is that the toxins in the air and the toxins immediately below in the lakebed didn't really match up, so it suggested that the toxin in the air may be coming from a broader swath of the lake as well. The second is that we were surprised at how much toxin was in some of those air samples."

Metcalf's research also

has implications close to home for BGSU and the larger Great Lakes region. In 2014, cyanobacteria fed by runoff produced the toxin microcystin, which temporarily caused the city of Toledo's water supply to be unsuitable for public consumption.

Understanding how these toxins operate, where they are liable to be found and how to mitigate their effects is critical to public health, Metcalf said.

"We know from 2014 that cyanobacteria can really shut down these large lakes," Metcalf said. "The research suggests that toxins like microcystin and BMAA are quite common in the environment, especially in the environments where nutrients and runoff are present, so we're potentially exposed from a wide range of places and we need to understand what's there."

"We need to understand

what's in the air and what's in the water."

In the case of the Great Salt Lake, Metcalf said several factors have contributed to the decreased surface area and increased exposure of the lakebed.

Because the Great Salt Lake is terminal — other waterways run into, but not out of, the lake — it is particularly susceptible to reductions from contributing factors like less snow and drought conditions exacerbated by climate change, and also from overuse of water by humans.

Combined, these factors could be leading to an increase of airborne BMAA.

"Climate change will have a big effect on things like snowpacks that feed the Great Salt Lake, but secondly, it's also about how we use water," Metcalf said. "Water is a finite resource that we need to live. Perhaps we don't need lush green lawns in places

where lush green lawns are not suitable. The Great Salt Lake is in a desert, so I think people need to think about how we use fresh water, how we reuse wastewater and how we live our lives."

Metcalf hopes to replicate the study near Lake Erie to compare the behavior of toxins in a different climate to better understand how they operate and how they can be mitigated.

Though more information is needed, Metcalf said the results demonstrate the importance of protecting our natural resources.

"If we can protect environmental health, we can protect human health," Metcalf said. "Those two things are so intertwined that if you protect one, the other benefits. We need to do more analyses, more samplings and more time points, but this research is a signal to say something might be awry."



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Biden takes aim at excessive bank charges, propose significant reduction in overdrawn account fees

By Stacy M. Brown
WI Senior Writer

President Biden has announced a proposal to dramatically reduce the cost of overdrawing a bank account. The initiative targets what it views as unnecessary financial burdens on consumers, particularly those living paycheck to paycheck.

The proposed regulation could cap the overdrawn account fee at \$3, which would represent a significant difference from the current banking landscape where fees can soar to as much as \$39. “When companies sneak hidden junk fees into families’ bills, it



The proposed regulation could cap the overdrawn account fee at \$3, which would represent a significant difference from the current banking landscape where fees can soar to as much as \$39. (Photo via NNPA)

can take hundreds of dollars a month out of their pockets and make it harder to make ends meet,” Biden stated. “That might not matter to the wealthy, but it’s real money to hardworking families—and it’s just plain wrong.”

The Consumer Financial

Protection Bureau (CFPB) outlined two approaches for banks to calculate overdraft fees. The first requires banks to charge customers only the cost of overdraft services, with a mandate to disclose the costs to the CFPB transparently. Alternatively, a benchmark

fee could be implemented across all affected financial institutions, with proposed figures of \$3, \$6, \$7, and \$14. Officials said public input and industry feedback will determine the final fee structure.

Overdraft fees have long been contentious, with research indicating that the average fee is \$26.61. The CFPB and public records from banks reveal that major banks still generate approximately \$8 billion in overdraft fees annually. Experts reported that the burden of these fees disproportionately affects low-income households and communities of color.

“This is about the com-

panies that rip off hardworking Americans simply because they can,” added Biden, who has made eliminating what he calls “junk fees” a cornerstone of his economic agenda leading into the 2024 election. “Banks call it a service—I call it exploitation. Today’s proposal would cut the average overdraft fee by more than half, saving the typical American family that pays these fees \$150 a year. That would add up to save families \$3.5 billion every year. Unfortunately, some Republicans in Congress continue to defend these exploitative fees.”

The proposed rules would apply to banks with assets

exceeding \$10 billion, impacting approximately 175 large financial institutions. “This is just one part of my administration’s broader plan to lower costs for hardworking families,” Biden asserted. “We’re going to continue doing everything in our power to bring down costs and grow our economy from the middle out and bottom up, while standing up to extreme Republican attempts to provide more giveaways to the wealthy and big corporations and undermine competition.”

Should the rule be adopted and withstand political and legal challenges, the new regulations could take effect late in 2025.

Racially inclusive large language model, Latimer, opens waitlist

Announces Partnership with Morgan State University’s Center for Equitable AI and Machine Learning Systems

NEW YORK (PRNews-wire) -- The first inclusive Large Language Model (LLM), Latimer.ai, today announces that it has officially opened its waitlist to several thousand people and organizations that signed up for Beta access. These early adopters join students at the Historical Black College & University (HBCU) Miles College in Alabama, one of the first HBCUs to agree to recommend the LLM as a research tool.

Latimer is also excited to announce a burgeoning partnership with Morgan State University, a Carnegie-classified high research institution and Maryland’s largest HBCU. The initial engagement will specifically focus on work with the university’s Center for Equitable AI and Machine Learning Systems (CEAMLS) to test and validate Latimer’s performance and functionality while inviting all Morgan State students to use the LLM.

“The Center is proud to partner with Latimer as we strive towards a future where AI transcends its tra-



Steve Johnson / Unsplash

ditional boundaries to capture the complex mosaic of African American history and culture. Our collaborative efforts will intensify the pursuit of unbiased AI, ensuring that the digital landscape is as diverse and inclusive as the communities we serve. Through this partnership, we are not just shaping technology but crafting a more inclusive digital narrative for generations to come,” says Morgan State University CEAMLS director, Kofi Nyarko.

“We are thrilled to be reaching the next stage of Latimer’s launch,” says John Pasmore, Latimer Founder and CEO. “Latimer represents an AI evolution, a model built to better

serve distinct audiences by augmenting the data available to accurately answer queries about the history and culture of Black and Brown audiences.”

Latimer is the premier online Artificial Intelligence resource for accurate historical information and bias-free interaction for Black and Brown audiences. Unlike other LLM’s, Latimer uses licensed content from esteemed sources, such as the recently announced exclusive partnership with New York Amsterdam News, to build its training platform. The model is constructed as a Retrieval Augmented Generation (“RAG” Model); in this construction, the Latimer-specific data is used

to build a new vector database that responds to queries with more recent information. At the same time, the overall application still uses a base or foundation model for queries that are not specific to its dataset.

“We are in conversations with global brands and advertising and creative agencies who want to speak to their audiences authentically and without bias. As we

build out Latimer, we will enable systems that allow for automation and continue to make the content more reliably free of bias and inaccuracies. Latimer is the first of its kind – a model that looks to ensure the representation of Black and Brown people, now and into the future,” adds Pasmore.

Consumers looking to experience the new plat-

form can join the waitlist on the Latimer website: www.latimer.ai.

AI is amplifying the bias, inaccuracy, and erasure of Black and Brown cultural data. Latimer was built to solve this. Founded and led by serial entrepreneur John N. Pasmore, Latimer has gathered some of the most notable names across

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McCowan Dance Scholars take center stage at the Meyerson

On Sunday, January 14, 2024, a portion of McCowan Elite Dance Company, under the direction of Ms. La'Mia Stromile, performed in the 41st Civil Rights Movement Concert: A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. held at The Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas.

The featured MMS student artists included:

- Cook-Dyson, Bryce 7th grade
- Kelley, Trendyn 7th grade
- Pratt, Kyndall 7th grade
- Walton, London 7th grade

The scholars were selected for the opportunity

to participate following TBAAL's invitation to participate in the event as a result of their student leadership skills and high interest in dance as a career choice.

"This experience granted our McCowan Middle School students the opportunity to display what they have been learning in my class regarding dance performance etiquette and collaboration with other dancers and choreographers," said Stromile.

The Civil Rights Movement Concert: A Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. garnered four Emmys, under the direction of Mr. Curtis L King, Founder

and President of The Black Academy of Arts & Letters, a special place that provides opportunities for young artists to cultivate experience toward careers in the arts.

Fun Fact: Ms. Stromile had the privilege to grow up in The Black Academy of Arts & Letters and performed for many years in The Civil Rights Movement Concert. She started back in 2005 when Laylah Hathaway was the featured artist. She's had the privilege to perform with Fantasia, Rueben Studdard, Chrisette Michelle, Ledisi, Karen Clark Sheard, and many others.



Sweeping student loan debt relief measures surpass 3.7 million beneficiaries

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

President Biden continues to make significant strides in alleviating the student loan debt crisis, announcing the approval of debt cancellation for an additional 74,000 student loan borrowers. The latest action contributes to the record-breaking relief the administration has provided to more than 3.7 million Americans.

Earlier this month, Biden announced the accelerated implementation of a crucial provision under the Student Aid for Voluntary Education (SAVE) plan, which the administration said has helped 3.6 million Ameri-



The latest action contributes to the record-breaking relief the administration has provided to more than 3.7 million Americans. (Photo via NNPA)

cans by canceling their student debt. Biden said the plan aims to create a more affordable student loan repayment structure while providing life-changing support to students and their families.

"Today, my administra-

tion approved debt cancellation for another 74,000 student loan borrowers across the country, bringing the total number of people who have had their debt canceled under my administration to over 3.7 million Americans through various

actions," Biden said in a statement on Jan. 19.

The beneficiaries of the latest round of relief include nearly 44,000 teachers, nurses, firefighters, and other public service professionals who have earned forgiveness after a decade of dedicated service. Additionally, close to 30,000 individuals who have been in repayment for at least 20 years without receiving relief through income-driven repayment plans will now see their debts forgiven.

Biden credited the success of these relief efforts to the corrective measures taken to address broken student loan programs. He asserted that these fixes have removed barriers prevent-

ing borrowers from accessing the relief they were entitled to under the law.

The president outlined the broader achievements of his administration in supporting students and borrowers, including achieving the most significant increases in Pell Grants in over a decade, aimed at assisting families with incomes below approximately \$60,000 per year. Other accomplishments include fixing the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and introducing the most generous income-driven repayment plan in history, known as the SAVE plan, he said. Borrowers are encouraged to apply for this plan at studentaid.gov.

In response to challenges, including the Supreme Court's decision on the student debt relief plan, Biden affirmed the administration's commitment to finding alternative paths to deliver relief to as many borrowers as possible, as quickly as possible.

"From Day One of my administration, I vowed to improve the student loan system so that higher education provides Americans with opportunity and prosperity, not the unmanageable burdens of student loan debt," Biden asserted. "I won't back down from using every tool at our disposal to get student loan borrowers the relief they need to reach their dreams."

OneScreen unveils next-gen interactive tech for educators

SAN DIEGO (EINPresswire.com) -- With the new year, interactive displays are bringing a host of new upgrades to the classroom. Today, OneScreen announced the arrival of the Touchscreen T7 with EDLA certification, faster processors and more advanced security to protect private information.

Teachers will be able to see the improvement right away, such as a single sign-on card to save time, an Octa-core processor for speedy

operations, 128 GB of storage to hold more class materials and Android 13 for the latest learning apps. The T7 also features an EDLA-certified OS for native access to Google's most popular education tools and enhanced security.

"We really have teachers and education leaders to thank for the advances of the T7," said OneScreen CEO Sufian Munir. "They spoke out clearly about what they needed most, and our engineers made it

real with a combination of AI and the latest technical advances. I'm extremely proud of what we've been able to achieve, working together."

OneScreen is best known in the Education field for its Screen Skills Guru service, providing free, unlimited help and training on everything OneScreen builds, software and hardware. The Screen Skills Gurus answer questions and offer real-time, practical help by video, voice, and chat. They

are ready to help in multiple languages, 24 hours a day, five days a week.

The most popular upgrades built into the T7 include:

- Beacon - a software for priority notification so anyone in school with a badge can get help immediately
- Google Voice Assistant - a digital teacher's assistant right on the remote
- Drag & Drop split screen - anyone can now run Android learning apps and Windows tools at the

same time

- Scribe - software for real-time transcription with translation and AI-enabled summaries

- Neural Processing Unit (NPU) - putting the power of AI into multi-tasking for flawless video and no more downtime

- Zero-bonded Gen2 IR touch - extreme precision and pressure sensitive for a realistic feel to writing on the screen like nothing before

- 4 USB Type-C ports -

more inputs for the devices teachers use - 3 in and 1 out for easily sharing lessons from and to any device

- QuizWiz - the wildly popular AI-enabled auto quiz generator for instantly turning any text you input into a multiple choice quiz

- LearningHub - remote learning software with 1-click lesson capture and student engagement reporting

- Android 13, 8GB RAM,

See TECH, Page 11

Bloomberg expands Historically Black College and University (HBCU) Trading Challenge in its second year

Students from HBCUs compete in real-world investing event on the Bloomberg Terminal learning risk management, investing and data analytics skills within financial markets

(Black PR Wire) Bloomberg for Education and Bloomberg Human Resources have expanded the reach of this year's Bloomberg and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Trading Challenge to new universities and shifted to evaluate participant investment performance against a developed market (DM) index.

The Bloomberg and HBCU Trading Challenge exercises the financial acumen of college participants through a virtual investment competition on the Bloomberg Terminal. Geared towards Black students in the US who are typically under-represented in the finance industry, the challenge was



Desola Lanre Ologun / Unsplash

created to help HBCU students build marketable skills and knowledge needed to compete for finance jobs

and provide hands-on experience that they will use in their future careers.

This year, students in-

vested \$1 million virtual US dollars across companies in the DM index in a closed network, with the assis-

tance of university faculty and assigned Bloomberg mentors. The winner was decided based on the trade performance of participants, benchmarked against real DM indices on the Bloomberg Terminal.

"The new focus on developed markets stocks builds on last year's ESG-specific challenge to introduce another layer of difficulty and further replicate real world experiences," said Emily Perrucci, Global Head of User Support at Bloomberg. "Fund managers often must consider ESG factors as part of managing a much larger, diverse portfolio. We want to ensure students have a well-rounded understanding of market indices to be best

prepared for future careers in finance."

Participating universities included Clark Atlanta University, Howard University, Hampton University, Morehouse College, Morgan State University, Spelman College and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). Jaeden Patterson, a Senior at FAMU was this year's winner. "The advice I would give to future participants is to take advantage of your resources," said Patterson. "The mentor that was provided through the challenge helped me navigate unfamiliar functionality on the Bloomberg Terminal. Additionally, I was able to

See TRADING, Page 14

Apple selects 15 Black- and Brown-owned businesses for first-of-its-kind Impact Accelerator

CUPERTINO, CALIFORNIA Apple today unveiled its first class of 15 Black- and Brown-owned businesses on the cutting edge of green technology and clean energy, who will join the company's Impact Accelerator to support equity and opportunity in the environmental sector. Part of Apple's Racial Equity and Justice Initiative, this program will help to combat systemic barriers to opportunity, while also advancing innovative solutions for communities most impacted by climate change.

The 15 businesses are based across the US — from Silicon Valley in Cali-



Apple.com

fornia, to Detroit, Michigan, to tribal nations across the Midwest — and driving innovation in energy efficiency, solar, green chem-

istry, recycling, and other environmental areas. Many share a specific focus on bringing clean energy, opportunity, and vital services

to vulnerable and underserved communities.

"We are thrilled to welcome our first Impact Accelerator class, and look

forward to seeing how these innovative businesses will expand their work to protect the planet and our communities," said Lisa Jackson, Apple's vice president of Environment, Policy, and Social Initiatives. "On our journey to our 2030 carbon neutral goal for our supply chain and products, we're determined to help create a greener and more equitable future for all people. The businesses we're partnering with today are poised to become tomorrow's diverse and innovative industry leaders, creating ripples of change to help communities everywhere adapt to the urgent challenges posed by cli-

mate change."

Selected companies will participate in customized training, and have access to Apple experts and an alumni community. The Impact Accelerator is tailored to support Black-, Brown-, and Native American and Indigenous-owned businesses that share Apple's focus on innovation and commitment to the environment as they achieve their next stage of development. Following the three-month virtual program, the companies will be considered for opportunities to act as suppliers to Apple as it works to become carbon neutral for its supply chain and products by 2030.

HOLLISTER, from Page 2

"To sum it up, [R&B music] is missing heart," Hollister remarked. "They go viral when they're talking about [the anatomy] and [sex acts], or getting money. The funny thing to me

is that, at my concerts, there are 25, 27, and 30-year-olds, and I know they're there because of their parents. Their parents listen to my music."

Beyond music, Hollister

shared personal aspects of his life, from his love of cigars and pipes to reflections on relationships. As a hopeless romantic, he acknowledges the joys of being in a committed partnership and the challenges of navigating the single life after six years

of solitude.

"I'm not meant to be alone. I am a hopeless romantic with the right one," Hollister insisted. "I enjoyed being married ... when you get to this part of our life, it seems more emotional for us now. Sex

means more to me now because I have to have some kind of attachment. It's about the connection."

Hollister's journey involves resilience, growth, and a commitment to genuine connections. As he continues to touch the hearts

of fans on the "Matters of the Heart Tour," his music remains a testament to the enduring power of soulful storytelling in the world of R&B.

View the entire interview at www.youtube.com/@LIBK-NEWS.

Grammy-award winning singer Patti Austin to appear in stage workshop as Mary Cardwell Dawson, founder of National Negro Opera Company

(Black PR Wire) Boston, MA - Grammy Award-winning R&B, pop, and jazz singer Patti Austin returns to Boston to mentor a young theatre group in a workshop production of "If the Walls Could Talk", based on the life of Mary Cardwell Dawson (1894-1962) who founded the historic National Negro Opera Company in Pittsburgh in 1941.

The stage project, as well as a just-released CD of songs titled "Songs for Mary", are being produced under the umbrella of the Over My Shoulder Foundation (OMSF) in Boston. OMSF is a non-profit organization founded by Boston songwriter Dawn Carroll and Patti Austin with the goal of raising awareness of the impact of mentor-



Patti Austin (Courtesy photo)

ing. The announcement was made in recognition of the January 21-25 National Thank Your Mentor Week. Details of the stage

workshop production will be announced in the coming weeks.

Mary Cardwell Dawson was determined to bring

opera to African American audiences, and was herself a beloved mentor to hundreds of musicians. The headquarters of the National Negro Opera Company was a grand Victorian home that many called "Mystery Manor". The mansion became a gathering place and refuge for Black celebrities who could perform in public but were not allowed out in public after sunset including boxer Joe Louis, baseball great Roberto Clemente, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, and so many others. Each song on the 15 song soundtrack is about the legends who stayed at the mansion.

The grand manor has fallen into significant disrepair, and was named to

the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered sites in 2020. Happily, the newest owner has created a nonprofit organization to restore and maintain the Queen Anne-style mansion. Over My Shoulder Foundation also has plans to film a documentary of the preservation and restoration of the mansion.

Patti Austin, who has recently been nominated for yet another Grammy Award for Best Jazz Vocal Album, is passionate about mentoring the next generation: "It is so critically important that young people have an opportunity to work closely with adults, and especially on a project like this one that reflects on an almost forgotten chapter of both Black history and women's

history. Through mentoring, our goal is to break down barriers that separate people of different generations and cultures."

The songs on the CD "Songs for Mary" that form the soundtrack for the stage musical were written by Dawn Carroll with longtime Boston rock veteran Jon Butcher, whose production, arranging, guitar and vocal skills are prominently featured. In addition to rap, the songs embrace rock, pop, jazz and even classical music.

To find out more about Mary Cardwell Dawson, the CD "Songs for Mary" and the efforts to preserve the Victorian manor home of the National Negro Opera Company, please visit <https://songsformary.com>

MASON, from Page 2

Phi, Beta Xi Chapter in the Orlando area.

The backstory of Otis Mason is as impressive as his life's work. Dr. Otis A. Mason was an ambitious student at a young age. He graduated from Excelsior High School, St. Augustine's first African American public high school in 1946. In the high school yearbook, he listed his aspiration to one day become the superintendent of schools, totally unheard of during the height of segregation. Later, he put his dreams into motion when he began teaching at his alma mater, Excelsior, in 1950. Due to the Korean conflict, his first teaching year was cut short and he was drafted into the US Army. This did not deter him, and after serving two years in the Army, he returned to the classroom at Excelsior. The following year, he was assigned to work at the new Murray High School as a science teacher and assistant football and baseball coach. In 1960, he was named Principal of W.E. Harris School in Hastings, where he re-

mained until joining the staff of the St. Johns County School District as Supervisor of Elementary Schools in 1966. Today, the Otis A. Mason Elementary School in St. Augustine bears his name and is a testament to his achievements and his service to the community.

Dr. Otis A. Mason was a noted community leader and volunteer who dedicated his life to service. Dr. Mason and his wife Myrtis founded the Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center. The museum promotes and educates the public on the 450+ years of African American history in St. Augustine. Nearly a century before the Lincolnville Museum began its educational mission, this building served as the educational center for the Black youth of Lincolnville.

As a president of the Fort Mose Historical Society, Otis worked feverously to bring the history of the first African American settlement to the public. Fort Mose is a living history museum commemorating the legacy and achievement of

America's first free Black community. Dr. Otis A. Mason served as an Advisory Board Member of the Fort Mose Historical Society.

Preceding his death, Dr. Otis A. Mason was almost as busy in retirement as he was when he was St. Johns County Superintendent of Schools. Although he had been retired for more than 30 years, he didn't stop. He continued to work with community and regional groups. Dr. Mason kept a special connection with education through the school named after him.

Dr. Otis Mason was a man of irresistible humanity who helped guide educational achievements against all odds. For his pivotal role in education and his valiant devotion to educating future generations, he will always remain an exemplary role model for today's graduates.

All of his life, Dr. Mason put the needs of others above his own. His humility in doing so set an example to everyone of what public service truly means. His leadership laid the groundwork for the foundation of educational excellence.

Dr. Mason was a lifelong member of St. Paul A.M.E. Church of St. Augustine, Florida, where he served as a steward, class leader, and finance committee member. His personal motto was to "Do the best you can to help as many as you can." In his

spare time, Dr. Otis A. Mason enjoyed spending time with his family and going fishing. His favorite scripture was Psalm 23. As his loved ones prepare to say goodbye to him, they want to think of him fondly as "he's gone fishing."

To continue Dr. Otis A. Mason's legacy of service, the family has established the Dr. Otis A. Mason and Myrtis H. Mason Scholarship Fund at Florida A&M University for students from St. Johns County majoring in education.

Film Review: 'ISS' is powerful and out of this world

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

(**1/2) Blast off! This gripping sci-fi/dra/thr holds attention from the moment astronaut Dr. Kira Foster (Ariana DeBose, West Side Story) enters the International Space Station (I.S.S.).

In the near future, in the middle of nowhere and far from earth, Foster is welcomed by fellow Americans Gordon (Chris Messina, King Richard) and Christian (John Gallagher) as she enters the I.S.S. They introduce her to Russian astronauts Alexey (Pilou Asbaek), Nicholai (Costa Ronin) and the other woman at the station Weronika (Masha Mashkova). The crew screams: "Welcome!" They seem oblivious to their differences: "We don't talk politics."

That unique beginning of Nick Shafir's imaginative



script pans out well. Great premise. Strong unusual setting. Director Gabriela Cowperthwaite takes that seed of creativity and develops it into a film that mixes suspense, drama and sabotage into a thrilling survival story.

The interiors are claustrophobic (production designer Geoff Wallace) in the most sci-fi ways. You understand how isolating and precarious the situation is for all the astronauts. Any disruption

can be life threatening. Any screw-up could doom them all. There's nothing around them except space. No rescue mission can save them from disaster. They're totally dependent on each other. Until they aren't.

Messages from earth arrive, indicating that the world is aflame and a U.S./Russia conflict rages. Fear and mistrust take over. Foster fields the communicate from the Johnson Space Center in Houston and

passes it on to her American colleagues: "War has broken out below. And we were told to take the I.S.S. by any means nec-

essary!" That command pushes the crew into doing sneaky, hostile things. It's a creepy, uneasy dynamic that doesn't dissipate until the movie ends.

The proceedings are written like a play with little movement, focusing on building the characters, relationships and undercurrents. Not the action sequences. So, when there is an indiscretion, fight or attempted murder it's extremely intense. Like people making crucial decisions in a lifeboat that's sinking and suddenly someone gets pushed overboard.

Then someone else. Then someone else.

On a small budget, Cowperthwaite makes a movie with as much tension and gravitas as a blockbuster space film (Gravity). Nothing comes between the audience and the astronauts. It's like the viewers are hidden in a compartment witnessing the whole thing. Aghast that people would do these horrible things to each other. Yet knowing that their lives depend on how cunning they can be. That's the mark of smart

See ISS, Page 16

Courtesy Blecker Street

HIP HOP DANCE AT ITS BEST
ROME AND JEWELS

RENNIE HARRIS
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'My Power in Three' book signing celebrates MLK and Black History

As we celebrate Black History Month and the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr., Verna Thomas-Melton is honoring the achievements of community leaders who have played a significant role in Black history in Dallas, Texas. Verna was a founding contributor and played a crucial role in creating the first bronze statue of Martin Luther King in Dallas.

Verna Thomas-Melton is organizing her first book signing and documentary filming event in Dallas. The event will be attended by Dallas leaders and public officials. It will showcase her book "My Power in Three," which narrates her authentic spiritual autobiography. The event will take place on Saturday, January 20th, 2023 from 1:00 to 3:00 P.M. at the Freedom Missionary Baptist Church located at 3715 Southwestmoreland in Dallas, TX.

Verna is a philanthropist, entrepreneur, and community advocate from Fort Worth and currently resides in Garland, Dallas County. She is renowned as the founder



and director of Verna's H.E.L.P. Foundation. Verna is an avid writer who shares her experiences as a black woman and brings to light the often-overlooked aspects of identity such as race and class. She stresses the importance of recognizing these aspects while discussing how individuals identify

themselves and how others perceive and treat them in society.

Verna has documented her 43 years of experience and accomplishments in transforming the state of Texas and the DISD special education program. In 1975-

See SIGNING, Page 14

DFW Metro NAACP, Denton Black Film Festival, others to host gaming expo and tournament

For the second year in a row, DFW Metro NAACP Metro is hosting an event designed to increase technology skills among youth ages 10-18. The free Gaming Expo & Tournament will take place on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024, at the Denton Civic Center, 321 E. McKinney Street in Denton from 9 a.m.-7 p.m.

Helping DFW Metro NAACP run the event are Texas Gaming Empire, Denton Black Film Festival, Blacks in Technology, CBATES and Thirsty Minds. Plus, the Gaming Expo & Tournament will run in conjunction with the 10th Anniversary of the

Denton Black Film Festival.

Thrilling competitions in Street Fighter 6, Mario Kart 8 Deluxe and Super Smash Bros. Ultimate will be held. Gaming industry speakers from Xbox, Gearbox, National Society of Black Engineers, Robot Entertainment and Epic Games will tell attendees about how they can join this exciting industry.

Reverend Crystal Bates, DFW Metro NAACP's president, said, "We want young people to bring their A-game to our Gaming Expo & Tournament and showcase and learn skills, all while having fun. This

event will blend technology, creativity and competitive spirit. This will not be just a celebration of digital skills and gaming but also a platform for students and young professionals to connect, learn and showcase their talents. We will present fantastic giveaways and cash prizes and provide meals and snacks."

Last year's Youth Hackathon was a rousing success with approximately 75 attendees. About 600 participants are expected to attend this year's Gaming Expo & Tournament.

To register for this exciting event, visit www.dfw-metronaACP.org.

"PREPARE TO BE ECSTATICALLY BLOWN AWAY!"

THE DAILY BEAST

Tina

THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL

JAN 23 – FEB 4
MUSIC HALL AT FAIR PARK
BROADWAYDALLAS.ORG

Germania BROADWAY SERIES PRESENTED BY BROADWAY DALLAS

Paris D'Adone

NNPA sponsor Nissan starts year with two big announcements

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Nissan North America, a sponsor of the National Newspaper Publishers Association's (NNPA) 2024 Mid-Winter Training Conference, has begun the new year with two major moves.

The automaker has named Vinay Shahani as senior vice president, U.S. Marketing and Sales. His appointment is effective January 18. Additionally, Nissan announced that its popular 2024 Rogue, which offers the most standard safety features and best gas-engine fuel economy in its class, will be on sale soon with a Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price of just \$28,320.

The 2024 Rogue is the first Nissan available with Google built-in, featuring Google Assistant, Google Maps and more from Google Play on a 12.3-inch color touchscreen (SL, Platinum grades).

Meanwhile, Shahani replaces Mike Colleran, who is retiring from Nissan on March 31, after more than 12 years in top regional and



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global leadership positions.

According to a news release, as senior vice president, Shahani will be responsible for all sales and marketing activities for the Nissan brand in the United States. He will also have oversight of INFINITI Americas.

"As we accelerate the transformation, we started with Nissan NEXT, Vinay brings a unique blend of Nissan background and experience with successful global automotive brands,"

flow. They can just walk up and start bringing the world into the classroom. We're removing barriers to learning, helping teachers automate repetitive tasks and giving them more time to do what they love."

Educators can get their hands on the all new Touch-

screen T7 during live demos at the Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC) in Orlando, FL, January 23 - 26, at the OneScreen booth #4124. T7 will also be appearing at the Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) conference in Austin, TX, February 3 - 7, at the OneScreen booth #423.

screen T7 during live demos at the Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC) in Orlando, FL, January 23 - 26, at the OneScreen booth #4124. T7 will also be appearing at the Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) conference in Austin, TX, February 3 - 7, at the OneScreen booth #423.

2021-2024: Vice President of Marketing, Lexus USA

2017-2021: Vice President, Integrated Marketing Operations, Toyota North America

racial wealth gap, with a median household wealth of \$104,300 for non-Hispanic white households and \$87,300 for Black families. "The racial wealth gap is a complex issue with no easy solutions," said Gonzalez. "However, the findings of our report suggest that there are some states that are making progress in closing the gap. We hope that other states will learn from their example."

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"The racial wealth gap is a complex issue with no easy solutions," said Gonzalez. "However, the findings of our report suggest that there are some states that are making progress in closing the gap. We hope that other states will learn from their example."

2013-2017: Senior Vice President & Chief Marketing Officer, Volkswagen of America

Shahani's work history includes nearly a decade at Nissan North America. After starting a job as an engineering manager at the Smyrna Vehicle Assembly Plant in 2004, he quickly moved into a managerial role within the company's marketing and sales function. From there, he held roles of increasing responsibility in sales operations; aftersales; product marketing; field sales; and marketing communications and media.

Mike Colleran joined Nissan in 2011 as vice president of Sales for Nissan Canada, and then moved to oversee Nissan's Northeast region in the U.S. He also held leadership positions overseeing the INFINITI brand, first as group vice president for INFINITI Americas, and then as glob-

al divisional vice president and vice chairman for INFINITI Motor Company, Ltd. He returned to the U.S. as senior vice president, U.S. Marketing and Sales in 2020, to implement the Nissan NEXT transformation.

"Mike Colleran has been instrumental in our Nissan NEXT transformation, providing strong and steady leadership inside the company while rebuilding the critical relationships with our U.S. dealer network," Papin stated. "Mike has led Nissan and INFINITI through challenging times, and he has our utmost gratitude as he moves onto a well-deserved retirement."

The moves and Nissan's refreshed 2024 Rogue have helped the company begin the year on a high note. With class-exclusive Google built-in5 integrated directly into the vehicle, all the new features in the 2024 Rogue can be used

without pairing or plugging in a phone. They also allow a more seamless use of existing Google Account information: for instance, addresses or points-of-interest saved on the Google Maps website or mobile app (when signed in) can easily be selected in Rogue's touchscreen for use as a navigation destination.

Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are standard on all Rogue grades (wired on S/SV, wireless on SL/Platinum), ensuring drivers can choose the connectivity functions they're most comfortable using.

The 2024 Nissan Rogue features new front and rear fascias, a new version of Nissan's V-motion grille, new inner taillights, and satin-finish exterior badges. The premium look and feel of Rogue Platinum are further elevated with

See NISSAN, Page 14

TECH, from Page 6

128GB Storage & Octa-core processor

Kelly Bolton, Executive Vice President of Marketing & Brand at OneScreen, called the T7, "The market's most impressive smartboard by far." She explained, "Teachers love it because it fits with their classroom


GAP, from Page 3

economic downturns within the economy while poorly individuals, mainly racial minorities, were forced to consume their meager resources to survive day-to-day and did not have resources which they could invest.

"For those individuals who have the financial capacity, knowledge, and needed resources to engage

in entrepreneurial pursuits, those programs can and do benefit them," Joyner remarked. "Those opportunities, however, are not readily available for the vast majority of African Americans because of the absence of the resources and business skills that are required to begin and sustain these efforts.

Hawaii has the smallest



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Ed Bell Construction is a Dallas based heavy highway contractor doing business in the North Texas market since 1963. With clients such as TxDOT, Dallas County Public Works, and the Cities of Dallas, Fort Worth, Richardson, and Mansfield (plus many others), we have a strong backlog of work in the highway market locally.

We are currently hiring for the following positions:

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Available: multiple openings
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Please visit our website: www.edbellconstruction.com/careers
Or email your resume to: careers@edbellconstruction.com

Pfizer's Submission of Cancer Drug Accepted for Priority Review by FDA

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Pfizer Inc. (NYSE: PFE) and Genmab A/S (Nasdaq: GMAB) announced that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has accepted the supplemental Biologics License Application (sBLA) seeking to convert the accelerated approval of TIVDAK (tositumab vedotin-tftv) to full approval for the treatment of patients with recurrent or metastatic cervical cancer with disease progression on or after first-line therapy.

The application has been granted Priority Review with a Prescription Drug User Fee Act (PDUFA)

goal date of May 9, 2024.

Pfizer is a sponsor of the National Newspaper Publisher's Association's 2024 Mid-Winter Training Conference, a collaboration that's part of one of the world's premier biopharmaceutical company's commitments to sustainable practices and environmental responsibility.

The NNPA, representing 250 African American newspapers and media companies in the United States, is hosting its annual mid-winter training conference in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., beginning on Wednesday, January 24, at the B Ocean Beach Resort. The theme of the 2024 conference is "Empower the Black Press, the Black

Vote, and Black America." Pfizer's continued partnership with the Black Press reflects a commitment to impactful corporate partnerships.

"The Phase 3 innovaTV 301 trial demonstrated a favorable benefit/risk profile, including improvement in overall survival, and adds to the overall data supporting TIVDAK as a treatment option for people with recurrent and metastatic cervical cancer who have limited treatment options," Dr. Roger Dansey, chief Development Officer, Oncology at Pfizer, said in a news release.

"The FDA acceptance of our sBLA for review is important progress toward continuing to offer an option that can extend the lives of more adults with cervical cancer."

The sBLA is supported by efficacy and safety data from the global, randomized, Phase 3 innovaTV 301 trial (NCT04697628), in which TIVDAK demonstrated superior overall survival (OS), progression-free survival (PFS) and confirmed objective response rate (ORR), as assessed by the investigator,

See PFIZER, Page 14



Photo via NNPA

THOMAS, from Page 2

10-year tenure at Unilever Plc, he also held the positions of US Chief Customer Officer, Senior Vice President US Grocery Channel, and Senior Vice President of the East Division. Prior to Unilever, Mr. Thomas held various leadership roles at PepsiCo including Frito-Lay, The Coca-Cola Company, The Clorox Company, and Proctor & Gamble.

Brendan M. Foley, President, and CEO of McCormick commented, "Mr. Thomas has an outstanding track record in the broader CPG and Food Industry of delivering business results and building strong teams. His deep understanding of the global retail landscape and his expertise in driving growth with leading brands makes him an excellent fit for McCormick. I look forward to working with Terry and the rest of the board to oversee our strategic direction and advance our leadership and differentiation."

Mr. Thomas's appointment is part of the board's commitment to its continuous refreshment process, ensuring it has a relevant mix of skills and experiences that complement McCormick's strategy and promote effective governance practices. The board's refreshment process continues to add experienced leaders with diverse backgrounds and perspectives that will benefit McCormick.

Mr. Thomas received a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Northwestern University and a Master of Business Administration from the J.L. Kellogg School of Management.

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AI, from Page 5

various industries to create a more inclusive and equitable platform and built a RAG Model with its proprietary vector database, which sits on top of a foundation model, which is currently Open AI's Chat GPT. Named for Lewis Latimer, a Black inventor whose

legacy and historical scientific contributions are often overlooked, the LLM provides users with more accurate details, reflecting the experience, culture, and history of Black and Brown people. To learn more or join the waitlist, please visit www.latimer.ai.

SEEKING CANDIDATES

Job Title: Chief Executive Officer
Wage: \$209,000 - \$288,475.00 per year
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Duties and position description:

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Google News Initiative announces collaboration with AFP to combat election disinformation

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

The Google News Initiative, which works with publishers and journalists to fight misinformation, share resources, and build a diverse and innovative news ecosystem, has joined forces with Global news agency AFP to launch a comprehensive digital course tailored for journalists and journalism students.

The Google News Initiative counts as a trusted partner of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), and sponsor of the NNPA's 2024 Mid-Winter Training Conference that begins on Wednesday, January 24, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The NNPA, represent-



Photo via NNPA

ing 250 African American newspapers and media companies in the United States, will hosts its annual conference at the B Ocean Beach Resort under the theme, "Empower the Black Press, the Black Vote, and Black America." Google News Initiative's involvement reflects a com-

mitment to impactful corporate partnerships.

The collaboration between the Google News Initiative and AFP is considered timely in anticipation of the 2024 global elections, where an estimated 2 billion individuals are expected to cast their votes, the course is strategically

designed to address the growing concern of election-related disinformation.

Reportedly, the course, divided into two segments, aims to equip participants with essential skills to counter the spread of false information. Covering topics such as efficient online searches, image and video

origin tracing, online self-protection, digital evidence preservation, and archive location, the program addresses the evolving challenges of the digital age. Advanced techniques, including climate claim verification, enhanced social media searches, geolocation, identifying witnesses to breaking news, image vetting, and identifying reliable health sources, are also part of the curriculum.

Featuring contributions from lecturers and professors from esteemed journalism institutions such as Hong Kong Baptist University, The University of Hong Kong, Journalism & Media Studies Centre

(HKU), and Sciences Po Paris Journalism School, the initiative draws on a wealth of expertise. Additionally, participants will be introduced to tools and case studies from AFP's global digital investigation team, enhancing the practical learning experience.

The announcement of this course underscores the critical importance of arming media professionals with the necessary tools to ensure information integrity during the crucial election phase. The multilingual course is now open for enrollment, reflecting a commitment to global education and the ongoing battle against misinformation.

SENTENCING, from Page 1

and social inequalities, diverting public spending from effective public safety investments," stated Nazgol Ghandnoosh, Co-Director of Research with The Sentencing Project and lead author of the report. Ghandnoosh emphasized the importance of protecting and expanding promising reforms initiated by states and local jurisdictions nationwide.

The report delves into various criminal legal laws and policies, including fines, fees, predatory pricing, exploitative wages, collateral consequences, and the diversion of adequate investments in public safety. The report proposes two key strategies to eliminate racial disparities in incarceration, including addressing sources of

inequality by limiting socioeconomic disadvantage resulting from a criminal conviction and significantly increasing investments in effective public safety programs.

The "One in Five" series concludes with a call to action, emphasizing the need for durable investments in communities of color, a reduction in policing footprint, and ongoing efforts to tackle critical drivers of racial disparity.

"Certain regulations intensify the marginalization of justice-involved people – who are disproportionately people of color – by wearing down economic and social buffers against crime and increasing the likelihood of police contact," added Ghandnoosh.

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I'm Not Diabetic But I Am A Sweet Guy

Dr. James L. Snyder

Lately, I've been very tired. Which has nothing at all to do with my age. Rather, it has everything to do with all these spam calls I get every day.

It seems most spam calls come during lunchtime when I'm eating. How dare they?

I don't know who created this idea of spam calls, but

I would like five minutes alone with them. If you know what I mean.

For me, it began with my expired car warranty. I would get calls daily telling me that my car warranty had expired and that I could remedy that situation by signing up with their warranty program. They have everything I need, so they say. What I really need is an Apple Fritter. Nobody's

ever offered me that.

One thing they did not have was my fist in their nose. But that's another story.

Finally, I responded to their calls by telling them that I had a 1915 Ford Model T, with only 896,000 miles on it. I had so many clicks following this that I couldn't count them. Thanks Henry Ford.

The in-person calls are

annoying, but it is the recorded calls that I just don't like.

I've been getting recorded calls saying that two years ago I had an accident and they would be glad to help me get the money I deserve. If I had an accident two years ago, I must've been asleep at the wheel.

Companies that call me with a recorded message will never get my business.

Then there are those Medicare calls wanting to upgrade my coverage at no cost to me.

One of the first things they want to know is my age.

I get so sick and tired of this that after a while I came up with my story.

"So, how old are you sir?"

My response, "Well, I tell you, that is a difficult

answer because every year my age changes, and I get confused, and I can't keep up with my actual age."

There's a chuckle on the other end of the line and the person says, "So, when is your birthday?"

Again, my response is, "Well, my birthday is the day I celebrate being born."

I sense a little frustration

See SNYDER, Page 15

PFIZER, from Page 12

in patients with previously treated recurrent or metastatic cervical cancer compared to chemotherapy.

According to a news release, the safety profile of TIVDAK in innovaTV 301 was consistent with its known safety profile as presented in the U.S. prescribing information.

In October 2023, results from the innovaTV 301 study were presented during a Presidential Symposium at the European So-

ciety of Medical Oncology (ESMO) Congress.

The U.S. Prescribing Information for TIVDAK includes a BOXED WARNING for Ocular Toxicity as well as the following Warnings and Precautions: peripheral neuropathy, hemorrhage, pneumonitis, severe cutaneous adverse reactions, and embryofetal toxicity. Please see below for additional Important Safety Information.

"Therapeutic options for

metastatic cervical cancer that not only demonstrate a survival advantage but also include a novel approach to treating this condition are needed," said Jan van de Winkel, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer at Genmab.

"This milestone underscores our commitment to continuing to deliver TIVDAK as a treatment option to women in the U.S. diagnosed with cervical cancer whose disease has progressed after first-line treatment."

TIVDAK was granted accelerated approval in the U.S. by the FDA in September 2021.

The accelerated approval is based on tumor response and durability of response from the innovaTV 204 pivotal Phase 2 single-arm clinical trial evaluating TIVDAK as monotherapy in patients with previously treated recurrent or metastatic cervical cancer. The data from innovaTV 301 will support global regulatory submissions.

NISSAN, from Page 11

enhancements including gloss-black fender, lower exterior, and front fascia trim pieces, a new 19-inch wheel design, and a new available Chestnut brown leather upholstery with a richer, darker color.

The collaboration between the automaker and NNPA is part of Nissan's commitment to sustainable practices and environmental responsibility.

The NNPA, representing 250 African American

newspapers and media companies in the United States, is hosting its annual mid-winter training conference in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., beginning on Wednesday, January 24, at the B Ocean Beach Resort. The theme of the 2024 conference is "Empower the Black Press, the Black Vote, and Black America." Nissan's involvement reflects a commitment to impactful corporate partnerships.

TRADING, from Page 7

take the Bloomberg ESG Certificate Course, which enabled me to identify ESG investment strategies and apply them to develop a profitable portfolio."

Students who participated in this year's challenge were invited to Bloomberg's headquarters in New York City. There, top-performing students had the opportunity to present their trading strategy to a panel of ex-

perts who offered feedback and insights on the students' experience. Students who participate in the challenge also receive direct access to Bloomberg recruiters who provide professional development support around interviewing and resume creation.

Bloomberg continues to build relationships with HBCUs and contribute to cultivating the success of its

students. By providing additional resources, like the Bloomberg Terminal, University professors are able to further enrich their coursework with the same tools that are used by financial professionals.

"Florida A&M University School of Business and Industry (SBI) has a long legacy of training students to be capable and well-prepared young business professionals. Bloomberg plays a role in that train-

ing process," said Dr. Inger M. Daniels-Hollar, Assistant Professor of Finance at FAMU. "Bloomberg access

enables us to simulate for our students the experience of sitting on a real-life desk while they're still in col-

lege — much like a law student might argue in a mock courtroom before becoming a lawyer."

SIGNING, from Page 10

81, she received help from the late Judy Lott, Francisco "Poncho" Medrano, Dr. Edward, Ray Mason, Olga Mae Raborn, Elsie Faye Higgins, J B Jackson, Judge John Whittington, Judge Frank Hernandez, and Attorney John Jordan. In 1981-83, she worked with Assistant Director Albert Lipscomb and Advisory Board Members, including the late Attorney Shirley Levin, MT "Buddy" Minyards, Judge

L A Bedford, Judge Cleo Steele, Carolyn and Starke Taylor, Jack Evans, Annette Strauss, Robert Folsom, and Fred Meyer. Together, they implemented the first North Texas Food Bank, Dallas' first homeless shelter for women and children, which is today; the Austin Street Shelter, and The Annette G. Strauss Family Gateway Center.

In 1985, she revived Dallas Juneteenth by organizing

the Black on Black Love campaign, which brought together 20,000 people at Kiest Park. In 2014, she was the first to advocate for the State of Texas TEA and Governor Abbott for the need for clear totes for school stadium activities and clear backpacks for safer schools.

The book "My Power in Three" is available on Amazon, in both Kindle and hardback editions. Kindle Edition-Amazon BOC-S1GSW6M.

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It's Practical to be Peaceable



Sister Tarpley
NDG
Religion
Editor

NOTE: As we pause to celebrate the life of Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. It's hard to find a man more peaceful than he was. Therefore, we can learn a valuable lesson when we consider that.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." **Matthew 5:9.**

It was said that after listening to some children hollering and screaming at each other while talking on the phone, a man wondered why the guardian didn't stop them.

After all, a peaceable



individual speaking in a calm voice initiates good will and actively promotes peace within a home or a place of business.

Individuals learn by watching the actions of others; some are lead to think that to get along with people and to succeed in this world, one must be intimidating, abusive, aggressive, mean-spirited and even violent.

Hence, all the current

abusive behavior and death of people in homes, in neighborhoods and on the streets are seen.

To be peaceable means having a Calmness of Heart: *"A sound heart is the life of the flesh."* **Proverbs 14:30(a).**

"Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding." **Proverbs 14:33(a).**

Many medical reports indicate that anger and hostil-

ity can become triggers for strokes and heart attacks. One journal, speaking of people with heart disease, compared explosive anger to poison.

It stated that, "Getting really mad can mean getting really sick." Violence, anger, and frustration can cause sleep problems, stress, stomach and nervous conditions which can affect one's health.

On the other hand, those who pursue peace can develop "a calm heart" and reap many helpful benefits.

God's word and doctors can tell you that developing a peaceable spirit can improve your emotional, physical and spiritual health.

Read the following Scriptures for references, **Ephesians 4:22-24; Isaiah 65:17; Micah 4:1-4, and Proverbs 15:13**

Happier relationships with others will benefit when you display a peaceable spirit. "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (scream), and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And, *"Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* **Ephesians 4:31 & 32.**

Those who display an aggressive, mean-spirited behavior and abusive speech often drive others away and find themselves along, without dependable friends, family, co-workers and employees.

Hope for the Future: A peaceable spirit shows honor and respect for mankind; and for the expressed Will

of God. *"Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."* **Psalm 34:14.**

When we acknowledge God and learn to obey His life-giving teachings, this opens the door to a personal friendship with Him and with mankind.

With a strong relationship with God, we gain "the Peace of God" which is an excelling peace regardless of the challenges that life may bring.

A 'calm heart', a 'meaningful relationship' and a 'solid hope for the future'; These blessings can be yours when you do your best to "be peaceable with all men."

(Editor's Note: This column originally ran in January 2017.)

SNYDER, from Page 14

on the other line, and then they say, "Tell me what day your birthday is on."

"Well, one year it's on a Tuesday, and the next year it's on a Thursday, and then it's on a Saturday, and boy, I can't keep up with it."

Finally, I hear what I've been waiting for: a click from the other end of the line.

I don't think my age or birthday is anybody's business but mine. If I want somebody to know that information, I'll call them myself. When somebody I don't know calls me and asks for personal information, I will not cooperate. If these spam callers act foolish, I will reciprocate and act foolish to them. I'm a good actor, so says The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

I'm often confused when someone calls me and wants me to tell them when they can deliver some medical equipment that will not cost me anything. It will be absolutely free.

Of course, if I want some medical equipment, I'm going to go through my

doctor. After all, that's why I pay him all that money.

I would like to know how much money these spammers make doing the kind of job they do. They must be making money, or they wouldn't always be calling. Where do they get the money, and who in the world would be foolish enough to give them personal information?

One person asked for my Social Security number, so I gave him 123-45-6789. That has to be somebody's security number, but it certainly isn't mine.

Then the latest thing is that some spammer calls me and tells me that they are sending me some medical equipment to help me with my diabetes. And, (drumroll) it won't cost me anything. I know when somebody says it's not costing me anything, it will definitely cost me something.

"So, sir," the spammer said, "do you have diabetes?"

Why in the world do they call me thinking I have diabetes? Where are they

getting that information? I know they haven't talked to my doctor about it.

Then I had an idea. The next time a spammer called me and asked if I had diabetes, I said, "I'm not diabetic, but I am a sweet guy."

After doing that several times, one person angrily said, "Are you hitting on me?"

"No," I said, "but I sure would like to hit you."

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage often tells me not to answer any of those calls. I explain to her I need to have fun and make it hard on some of these scammers. After all, don't you get what you give?


There was a pause in those annoying calls and I had an opportunity to think about a Bible verse.


David said in Psalm 18:3, "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."

My thought was, no call from me could ever annoy God. He is waiting for me to call upon him. Whenever I call upon God, He is anxious to respond to my need. God doesn't look on me as a spammer, but a claimer of

His amazing grace.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamesnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamesnyderministries.com.

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NDG Book Review: 'Legacy: A Black Physician Reckons with Racism in Medicine'

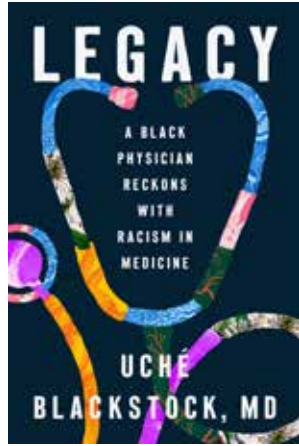
By Terri Schlichenmeyer

Ugh, suddenly, just now, you don't feel well. Not at all.

It might help to lie down somewhere for a few minutes or maybe there's something in a drawer in the bathroom you could take to feel better. Need a doctor? Having the right skin color might help, as in the new book "Legacy" by Uché Blackstock, MD.

Her career choice seemed like the most natural thing in the world.

Uché Blackstock and her twin sister, Oni, practically grew up in a hospital, doing homework in a staff room while their



physician-mother made her rounds. The girls got a front-row peek into what it was like to be a Black female doctor and because of their mother's influence, it never entered their minds to choose another career. That inspiration lin-

gered: after their mother died young of cancer, Blackstock chose to work as an ER doctor, caring for her Brooklyn and Bronx neighbors like her mother did. Blackstock knew the history: Black people had long been objects for experimentation, without painkillers and without their permission. Early in the last century, Black midwives were forbidden from practicing because of a testing matter. A document called the Flexner Report led to low numbers of Black doctors for nearly a century.

She also knew the statistics: Black patients are less likely to get pain

medications than are white patients. Black mothers are at a higher risk than white mothers for maternal death, miscarriage, and problems at delivery. Half of all medical treatment in the U.S. today happens in an ER, and many of those patients are Black, poor, and without a safety net.

Knowing these things, working under those facts, took its toll.

When she was small, Blackstock played with her mother's leather medical bag and the treasures inside it. She dreamed of carrying it to her own patients someday but her job, meant to help people, left her exhausted, frustrated,

and emotionally tangled.

It was time to try something else...

This year, if you're average, you'll spend roughly fifteen minutes face-to-face with your doctor at an appointment. You'll come prepared, and so will your physician; bring "Legacy," and you'll come with stats that are alarming, although very little of it's new.

Indeed, the news lately has been full of stories of Black patients and subpar care and author Uché Blackstock underscores every bit of that news with personal experiences to support the facts, scattered inside a dual biography of her and her mother. Readers

will enjoy the stories of Blackstock women becoming physicians and you'll be dismayed at generational and historical roadblocks they overcame. Read these triumphs, but don't lose sight of the other important thing here: remember, as Blackstock often urges, that advocating for one's self or a loved one is key to maintaining health and surviving.

Readers concerned about their well-being will be glad they read this book. Biography fans will love it for different reasons. Either way, getting what you want out of "Legacy" is easy, and you'll feel quite well about it.

ISS, from Page 9

intuitive direction. The kind that makes movie situations seem real. The kind that keeps theater and streaming audiences riveted.

The interstellar performances push the dread factor up to high levels that

will fray viewers' nerves. All the characters seem normal until they don't. Until desperation and survival instincts make them do unthinkable things. DeBose is the vulnerable protagonist audiences will relate too.

Her friendly demeanor, naivete, robbed innocence and call to action become increasingly compelling as the film heads to its climax. Her supporting actors make it hard to see who's friend and foe until life-or-death decisions are made and all fend for themselves.

Nick Remy Matthews' fluid camerawork is as effective as Anne Nikitin's intense musical score and Colin Patton and Richard Mettler's precision editing. Stunt coordinator G. Peter King herds and coaches

the space crew well, aiding Cowperthwaite's astute guidance. The visual effects (Chris LeDoux) take you to the station and abandon you there. Sound effects make you hear every eerie creak. Very heady. Very scary.

With U.S./Russian relations on thin ice these days, this scenario hits real close to home. Or outer space. Brilliant.

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.

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