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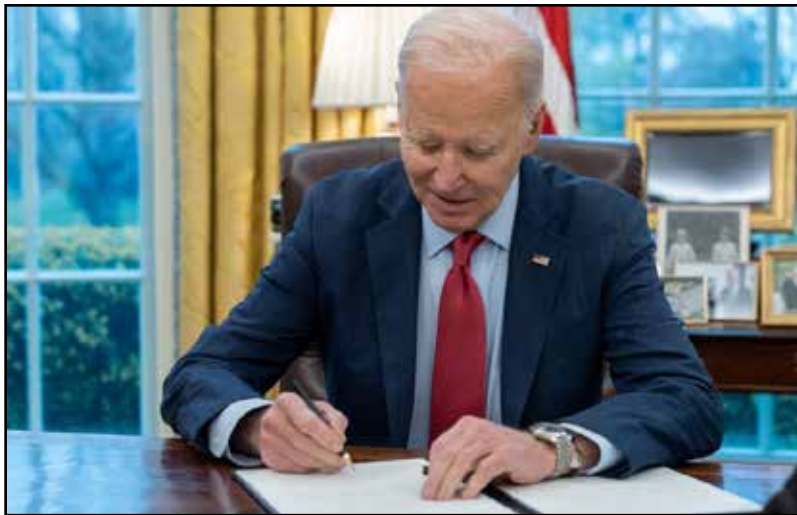
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## Lawmakers urge President Biden to finalize Equal Rights Amendment before transition

By Stacy M. Brown  
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

As President Joe Biden's tenure ends, a coalition of more than 100 House Democrats has urged the administration to ratify and publish the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as the 28th amendment to the United States Constitution. The lawmakers claim that Biden's actions will advance gender equality and defend constitutional rights, particularly as the country prepares for a new government that is openly hostile to reproductive freedom and LGBTQIA+ rights.

In a letter led by Representatives Cori Bush, Ayanna Pressley, and Jennifer McClellan, the lawmakers urged Biden to direct the Archivist of the United States to certify the ERA. "Solidifying your legacy on equal rights with a final action on the ERA would be a defining moment



In a letter led by Representatives Cori Bush, Ayanna Pressley, and Jennifer McClellan, the lawmakers urged Biden to direct the Archivist of the United States to certify the ERA.

for the historic Biden-Harris administration and your presidency," the letter stated.

The ERA, which guarantees that "equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state

on account of sex," was passed by Congress in 1972 with bipartisan support. The House approved it with a 354-24 vote, and the Senate approved it with an 84-8 vote. The

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#### People In The News ...



William 'Bam' Sparks



Jonathan Majors

NDG Quote of the Week: "It is easy to be brave from a safe distance."

- Aesop

## William ‘Bam’ Sparks

By Noah Washington  
The Atlanta Voice



“Why can’t we impact the infrastructure? Why can’t we own everything? Because at the end of the day, the moment we say something about it, that’s when it takes off,” said William “Bam” Sparks, 40, co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer of Culture Wireless, reflecting on Black culture’s innovation and potential.

In recent years, internet connectivity has become necessary and essential to education, professional advancement, and daily life.

However, certain communities, particularly those near Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), are often excluded from reliable, high-speed internet access. Sparks, Culture Wireless’s CMO, has been actively working to ad-

dress this issue. Based in Atlanta, Culture Wireless was founded during the COVID-19 pandemic to close the digital divide in underserved communities, particularly around Atlanta University Center and its surrounding areas.

Sparks attended Albany State University to study chemical engineering before transferring to Georgia Tech to complete his degree. Upon graduation, a different path unfolded. During his time at Georgia Tech, he was introduced to the entertainment world by his cousin, Douglas Peterson, a friend of Atlanta rapper T.I.

When T.I. sought to es-

tablish a sports agency called Grand Hustle Sports, Sparks became one of the first people contacted. He pivoted to sports management, putting his chemical engineering background on hold to pursue this new career. His networking skills and business acumen quickly earned him a reputation, leading to success in the entertainment and sports management sectors.

Sparks, a “Grady baby” from Collier Heights, first encountered the internet access issue at the AUC in 2020. There, he noticed a significant gap in connectivity between different Atlanta communities. “We went to the AUC to discuss

E-Sports,” Sparks recalls. To his surprise, he found that while the area had high bandwidth capabilities, affordable internet options were lacking due to high costs from providers like AT&T and other ISPs. This inspired Sparks to create Culture Wireless, recognizing that existing networks often overlooked underserved communities. He observed that fiber internet costs were unaffordable for many residents. Thus, the idea for Culture Wireless emerged, aimed at providing affordable internet access for all.

In collaboration with various providers and local organizations, Sparks

implemented a small data center and established a “mesh network” that connected nodes to provide internet access to the AUC area. This network proved essential after COVID-19, particularly as students struggled to complete assignments due to limited connectivity. The initial project served as a pilot for Culture Wireless’s broader mission to bridge the digital divide.

As a Black-owned Internet Service Provider (ISP), Culture Wireless faces the challenge of bringing affordable connectivity to underserved areas. Sparks

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## Jonathan Majors

By Lauren Victoria Burke  
NNPA Correspondent



After months of legal involvement many deem as racially biased and questionable, the ex-girlfriend of acclaimed actor Jonathan Majors has withdrawn her defamation claims against him. Her lawsuit for defamation was filed and the court accepted them “with prejudice.”

In legal terms, “with prejudice” means that a final judgment has been made and the case cannot be reopened. The news of the withdrawn civil lawsuit for alleged “defamation” comes three days after the actor announced he was engaged to be married to actress Meagan Good.

Majors, 35, was enjoying a meteoric rise as an actor in Marvel films. His acting ability and immersion into character win the attention of fans and critics. Majors is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama. He exploded onto the scene

in the film *The Last Black Man in San Francisco* in 2019.

Majors’ on-screen versatility and intense performances would lead to roles in *Lovecraft Country* (2020), *The Harder They Fall* (2021), *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania* (2023) and *Creed III* (2023) as Damian Anderson.

In March 2023, Majors was arrested in New York following allegations of assault by Jabbari — even though it was Majors himself who called police after finding her dazed and confused in his residence only hours after they broke up via text message.

Majors denied the assault allegations and claimed to have evidence supporting his innocence. But Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg pursued the case. In court, video was shown of Jabbari chasing Majors for blocks on end through the streets of lower Manhattan. Despite the widely seen video evidence, the case had professional consequences and damaged his reputation after Majors was cleared of two counts and convicted of two.

Majors was dropped by his talent agency and PR firm and lost roles in upcoming films and campaigns. But his career is currently turning around, and he has been cast in new roles over the past year.

Majors has continued to make headlines in his personal life despite the situation with his ex-girlfriend. Majors began dating actress Meagan Good in May 2023, and the couple announced their engagement in November 2024 at

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# What We Should Think and Do in This Era



**Dr. John E. Warren**  
Publisher,  
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Voice &  
Viewpoint

Now that the election is over, a number of people are experiencing high levels of uncertainty. We should not think that life as we know it has ended. This is a defeatist attitude. What we should remember, especially as Black people, is that if we survived slavery and past Republican presidents, we can survive four years of Donald Trump. What we must do is reset our thinking

as to what is important and what we must do as a collective people going forward.

Our first order of business during this time must be a return to prayer rather than party politics. We must remember that it was collective prayer by those who came before us that brought us this far. We must learn to act collectively "in spite of" and not "because of" the obstacles in front of us. While this is easier said than done, each of us must start at our own personal level of interaction with those around us, many of whom we may not like.

Next, we must adopt an

attitude of "no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, just permanent interest." This means that we must re-educate ourselves to how the government works. We have two years to prepare to take back the House of Representatives which the Republican Party has won by a very small number of seats, perhaps less than five.

While we are looking at retaking national parts of government in terms of what's in our own best interest, we must not ignore local and state issues that will be influenced by the Trump Administration. His-

tory has taught us that local attitudes are influenced by national attitudes and the national attitudes have shifted to the extreme right based on Trump's election.

This is not a time for fear, but a time for planning and faith in the fact that we can win even under adverse circumstances.

We must restart our local discussion groups. The Black Press, our most trusted messenger, should play a key role in providing such forums but in conjunction with other organizations and groups in our communities.

What do you think?

## A Final Note from your Congressman

By U.S. Rep. Colin Allred  
D-TX32



It's been the honor of a lifetime to serve as your representative in Congress. Before I go, I want to thank you and all the amazing folks in Texas's 32nd District for trusting me to serve my home of North Texas in Congress for the past six years.

I delivered my farewell speech on the House floor this week.

I came to Washington ready to roll up my sleeves, reach across the aisle, and pass commonsense legislation to deliver for North Texans. I'm proud of all of our accomplishments. Together, we've done big things: established the Garland VA Medical Center, capped the cost of insulin for seniors, and brought thousands of high-tech

manufacturing jobs to Texas.

During the pandemic, we passed lifesaving legislation and helped revive the economy. We also passed historic legislation that will impact Texans for years to come, such as the CHIPS Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the PACT Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act.

I know I served during a

time of great uncertainty— a pandemic, an insurrection, deep political divides— but my focus always remained the same: serving North Texans. I am so proud of our team's work helping constituents resolve issues they faced with federal agencies. My team closed more than 4,300 cases for North Texans and saved our community more than \$57 million.

Growing up, this community gave me everything. It's why I fought for legislation that expands access and opportunities so that all Texans can live their version of the American dream and get into the middle class.

American democracy is great because it doesn't begin or end with one elected official. It is not about one person. Our democracy works best when everyone actively participates.

I look forward to making a difference in our community beyond this office and am optimistic about the future. I know Representative-elect Julie Johnson will serve Texas's 32nd District with honor.

I'll be forever grateful for the support, engagement and encouragement over the years.

Keep up with the news

O N L I N E

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# Loneliness and Isolation: Back to pre-pandemic levels, but still high, for older adults

(Newswise) — Loneliness and isolation among older Americans have mostly returned to pre-pandemic rates, but that still means more than one third of people age 50 to 80 feel lonely, and nearly as many feel isolated, a new national study shows.

And some older adults — especially those dealing with major physical health or mental health issues — still have much higher rates of loneliness and social isolation than others.

The new findings, from a review of six years of data from the National Poll on Healthy Aging, are published in JAMA by a team from the University of Michigan Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation.

Starting in 2018, and most recently earlier this year, the poll asked older adults nationwide how often they'd felt they lacked companionship (the subjective feeling of being alone, or loneliness), and felt isolated from others (the experience of social isolation). The poll is



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supported by AARP and Michigan Medicine, U-M's academic medical center.

The latest data show that in 2024, 33% of older adults felt lonely some of the time or often in the past year, about the same as the rate in 2018 (34%). During the years in between, as many as 42% of older adults had this level of loneliness.

Similarly, 29% of older adults said they felt isolated some of the time or often in 2024, just above the rate of 27% seen in 2018. During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic,

56% of older adults said they had experienced this level of isolation, but the rate has declined each year since.

"At the surface, this might seem like great news, that we're back to where we were before COVID-19 struck. But that baseline was not good, and it was especially bad for some groups of older adults, who continue to have very high rates of loneliness and social isolation," said Preeti Malani, M.D., MSJ, the study's lead author and a professor of internal medicine at the U-M Medical School.

"One of the biggest differences now is that we have greater recognition of the impact of loneliness and isolation on health especially as we age." Malani serves as senior advisor to the poll, which she directed from 2017 to 2022.

The groups of older adults with the highest rates of loneliness in 2024 were:

- Those who said their mental health is fair or poor: 75% (in 2018, it was 74%)

- Those who said their physical health is fair or poor: 53% (up from 50% in 2018)

- Those who were not working or received disability income (does not include retirees): 52% (up from 38% in 2018)

The groups with the highest rates of social isolation in 2024 were:

- Those who said their mental health is fair or poor: 77% (up slightly from 79% in 2018)

- Those who said their physical health is fair or poor: 52% (up from 43% in 2018)

- Those who were not working or received disability income (does not include retirees): 50% (up from 36% in 2018)

These rates for 2024 are double, or even more, the rates of loneliness and isolation seen among older adults who said their physical health or mental health were excellent, very good or good, or those who were working or retired.

"These trends make it clear: clinicians should see loneliness and isolation as a key factor in their patients' lives, especially those with serious physical or mental health conditions," says poll director Jeffrey Kullgren, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., an associate professor of internal medicine at U-M and primary care clinician at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System.

"We should consider screening our patients for these issues and connecting them with resources in their communities, whether that's a senior center, Veterans' groups, volunteering opportuni-

ties, or services offered by an Area Agency on Aging or other community organizations," he said.

Other key findings:

In general, adults age 50 to 64 were more likely than those age 65 to 80 to say they felt lonely or isolated across all poll years, and rates had not dropped back to pre-pandemic rates for those age 50 to 64 in 2024.

Similarly, those with household incomes below \$60,000, and those who live alone, were more likely to say they sometimes or often felt lonely or isolated than those with higher incomes or those living with others, a finding that was consistent across most years. However, rates in 2024 for those who live alone were lower than for those who live with others.

More about loneliness and isolation in older adults:

The new study builds upon the evidence collected by U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, M.D.,

**See ISOLATION, Page 14**

## Study: Toxic air present in numerous Texas high schools

(Newswise) — AUSTIN — Semivolatile organic compounds (SVOCs) are found in building materials and consumer products like carpeting, furniture and electronics. Gases released by these chemicals in homes, offices and schools pose potential human health risks such as cancers, reproductive disorders, and nervous system damage.

A recent study of the in-

door air in central Texas high schools revealed that two groups of SVOCs, phthalates and PBDEs, are prevalent in high school environments. The research will be presented in early December at the annual meeting of the Society for Risk Analysis in Austin, Texas.

High school students, in a critical period of growth and development such as

impacts on memory and behavior, may be vulnerable to the adverse health effects of SVOCs. Yet little research has been done to monitoring SVOCs in school environments.

Researchers from the University of Oklahoma collected and analyzed samples of settled dust, HVAC filter dust, and indoor air in seven high schools at four different time periods

from 2015 to 2017. They targeted 42 SVOCs — including phthalates, PBDEs, OPFRs, and pesticides — using gas chromatization and mass spectrometry to measure precise quantities. Their study examined correlations between SVOC concentrations in different media and assessed the influence of building characteristics, such as flooring type and classroom type

(permanent vs. portable), as well as seasonal variations.

OPFRs showed higher concentrations in carpeted classrooms, while PBDEs were more prevalent in computer classrooms. Portable classrooms exhibited higher SVOC levels than permanent ones. Seasonal variations were significant, with higher SVOC concentrations in settled dust during colder seasons.

"These findings highlight the presence of potentially harmful chemicals in spaces where students and staff spend substantial time, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to reduce exposure in school environments," says lead author Hongwan (Melody) Li, assistant professor in the Hudson College of Public Health at the University of Oklahoma.

# Trump has nominated only one Black American to a top admin position

By Lauren Victoria Burke  
NNPA Correspondent

Florida Congressman Byron Donalds has been seen on cable news for months defending Donald Trump. There have even been times when Rep. Donalds has been called out for misrepresenting or glossing over many of Trump's assertions that "crime is on the rise in the United States and increasing because of illegal immigration.

"You're lying. You're lying Congressman," exclaimed CNN political analyst Keith Boykin during an episode of Abby Phillip's show News Night on Oct. 1, on the question of crime.

"It's true, I'm not lying," Donald shot back. The moment was just one of many times the top Trump surrogate defended the President.



(Pictured from Left to right:) Rep. Byron Donalds official photo, 117th Congress / Photo: United States Congress. Official portrait of U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) / Photo: U.S. Senate Photographic Studio-Renee Bouchard. Former Executive Director of the White House Opportunity & Revitalization Council Scott Turner delivers remarks at the 2019 National Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Conference Tuesday, Sep. 10, 2019/ Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead. Official portrait of US Senator Marco Rubio of Florida/ Photo: US Senate.

But surprisingly, Donalds has yet to be chosen for a position, cabinet level or otherwise in Trump's Administration.

Another dedicated Black

surrogate, U.S. Senator Tim Scott, has also yet to be selected by Trump to join the Administration.

It is possible that both Donalds and Scott are look-

ing at other positions. Rep. Donalds is said to be weighing the possibility of running for Governor of Florida as current Governor Ron DeSantis is term limited.

Senator Scott would have to resign from the U.S. Senate to serve in Trump's Administration. If his history is a guide, Scott would likely be aware that the level of turn-

over during Trump's first four year term from 2017 to 2021 was filled with cabinet departures and short stints marked by controversy and at times, chaos.

"Guess y'all were on the campaign trail betraying your people for NOTHING...Not even an opportunity Byron Donalds and Tim Scott. Y'all are the WEAKEST LINKS in the Black community," wrote Nikki Barnes on the situation.

But it's not just that Donalds and Scott have been so far passed over. Trump has only chosen three Black or Hispanic nominees for his cabinet or senior staff: Former Texas state lawmaker and motivational speaker Scott Turner, who is Black, for Housing and Urban Development, Rep. Lori

See TRUMP, Page 11

## Black D.C. residents troubled by city vacant property law

By James Wright Jr.  
The Washington Informer

For years, Howard University students, faculty, and staff, as well as residents of the Parkview and Columbia Heights neighborhoods have stopped by Morgan's Seafood located on the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Kenyon Streets in Northwest, to grab a fish sandwich, dinner or other treats that the carryout offers.

Romeo Morgan has managed Morgan's Seafood for a few decades. However, several years ago, a developer demanded Morgan sell his property for \$1.3 million.

"My property is worth five times that much," Morgan, 59, told *The Informer*. "The developer refused that amount and then he told me

he will force me to sell the property."

Soon after, Morgan said he received a notice from the District government that his property was designated as "blighted" because it had graffiti on the north side of the building. Morgan said he had no idea who put the graffiti there, but strongly believes it came from someone associated with the developer.

Morgan closed the eatery temporarily due to the coronavirus pandemic and serious health problems but is working to revive the establishment. However, since his initial tussle with the developer, he has been assessed back taxes, accused of rat infestation, charges of litter and other complaints by District agencies.

He said the D.C. govern-

ment's actions were baseless.

"I was told that during the pandemic, my taxes would be in abeyance," he said. "But I received a \$70,000 tax bill and had my property sold at a tax sale. How can that be? I thought tax sales were suspended during the pandemic."

Morgan fought the District government and won but noticed that other Black property owners were similarly harassed with false vacancy notices and unfounded complaints.

He said the District government is harassing Black businesses on Georgia Avenue and the immediate area to sell their properties to developers at a cheaper rate than the market would demand. Then, Morgan said, developers would either sell it at a higher price

to make a healthy profit or build an upscale establishment on the property designed to make it profitable.

"This is happening throughout the whole corridor, but it is especially happening in lower Geor-

gia Avenue," Morgan explained. "Properties that are not owned by Black people are left alone and are okay."

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## Wrapping up the school year



**Joyce Foreman**  
Dallas ISD  
District 6

District 6, we've made it to the end of the first semester of the 2024-2025 school year!

It seems just like yesterday that we were welcoming students back to the classroom. Soon, students will wrap up the semester by taking their final exams, putting the final touches on their college applications, participating in school plays, and attending their

end-of-semester class parties.

With the holiday season upon us, I want to extend my warmest wishes to each and every one of you.

As you enjoy this time with your family and friends, please remember that Dallas ISD will be closed for winter break starting Dec. 23. Classes will resume for the second semester on Jan. 7, 2025.

The Importance of family-school Relationships at Ronald Erwin McNair Elementary School: Ronald McNair understands the foundation for student success is built not just in the

classroom, but also through strong and meaningful partnerships between families and schools. This is why events like Donuts with Dads and Muffins with Moms are so important. In September, Ronald McNair had the privilege of welcoming 92 fathers. And, in October, over 200 mothers were on campus to engage with our school community. The turnout was a powerful reminder of the vital role families play in shaping the educational experience of our students.

These events are more than just opportunities to share breakfast together,

they are moments to connect, collaborate, and foster an environment where students feel supported, encouraged, and understood both at school and at home. Research shows that when families are involved in their child's education, students perform better academically, develop stronger social skills, and are more motivated to succeed.

Ronald McNair takes great pride in extending our partnership with families. By working together, we create a unified support system that helps our students thrive. Whether through regular events,

open communication, or active involvement in school activities, leadership is committed to building a bridge between home and school that benefits every child.

Discover Dallas ISD virtual events: Thank you to all who virtually attended Discover Dallas ISD on Dec. 7. For those who could not make it, there is one more online event from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Jan. 18, 2025. These events are important because they highlight the programs and resources our neighborhood and specialty schools have to offer, and I invite everyone to take ad-

vantage of this opportunity. For more information, visit the Dallas ISD website.

Application deadline for specialty schools: Students who want to attend specialty and neighborhood schools, or want to request a school transfer, have until Jan. 31, 2025 to apply. These schools include P-TECH, magnet, STEAM/STEM, Montessori, personalized learning, project-based learning, transformation, visual and performing arts, dual language schools and neighborhood school transfers. For more information, visit the Dallas ISD website.

## IntelliChoice program awards scholarships at annual awards banquet

With the rise of tech in the market, tomorrow's workforce is increasingly dependent on a foundation of mathematics. While the youth is increasingly familiar with the use of internet technology, there is a big push among educators to prepare students for the development skills used to create it.

IntelliChoice was founded in 1993 here in Dallas by Professor Gil Lee, and operates to provide math tutoring to students to build up that foundation of math literacy. The organization puts special emphasis on making tutoring available to economically-disadvantaged communities.

With 31 chapters across DFW and beyond, thousands of students have benefitted from time spent with IntelliChoice tutors. The organization held a special



IntelliChoice scholarship recipients celebrate following the annual awards banquet held on the campus of UT-Dallas. (Photo: David Wilfong / NDG)

banquet on Sunday at the campus of the University of Texas at Dallas to recognize its volunteers and award scholarships to outstanding students.

IntelliChoice began dis-

tributing the annual scholarships in 2013.

The keynote speaker for the event was T.J. Gilmore, mayor of Lewisville. Gilmore encouraged students to look outside their occupa-

tions for ways to make a difference in their adult life.

"People will tell you your job is your passion. It's not mine," Gilmore said. "My job pays for my passion which is giving

back to the community. And I will tell you that being mayor brings a tremendous amount of wealth to me because we have two official meetings a month, and they pay us \$50 per meeting ... I

don't do it for the money as you can tell. I do it because it's important to do *something*."

Professor Lee recounted

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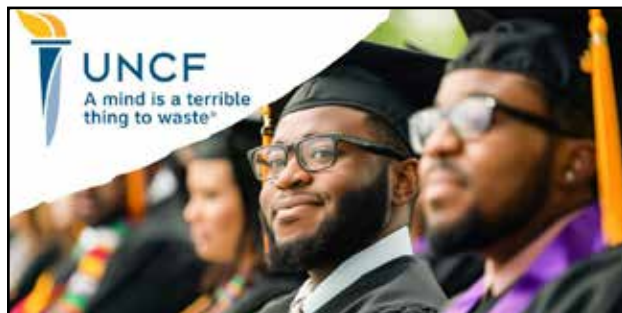
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# UNCF economic impact report highlights unmatched contributions and urgent funding needs of HBCUs

By Roy Betts  
UNCF Communications



HBCUs have long been pillars of educational excellence and economic engines, driving prosperity in their communities and across the nation. Despite these contributions, chronic underfunding threatens their ability to sustain this impact. Transforming Futures: The Economic Engines of HBCUs, underscores the urgent need for

equitable and sustainable funding to ensure HBCUs can continue their vital role in promoting social mobility and economic growth and calls on the public to

advocate for these essential institutions.

“As UNCF observes its 80th anniversary, one of the highlights of our yearlong celebration is the release of

the sequel to our groundbreaking 2017 report. This report reaffirms what we have always known about the resilience of HBCUs: despite a deadly pandemic, social unrest caused by the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and the economic uncertainties of the past seven years, HBCUs continue to do more with less—not only in preparing the next generation of leaders but also in contributing to our na-

tion’s economic impact,” said Dr. Michael L. Lomax, president and CEO, UNCF.

“At this critical moment, with a crucial election on the horizon, we all must immediately actualize our commitment to these cornerstone institutions.”

Key findings in the 2024 HBCU Economic Impact Report include:

- HBCUs generate \$16.5 billion in direct economic impact nationally.

- If they were a company,

the nation’s HBCUs would place in the top 50 of the nation’s Fortune500 companies in job creation.

- Collectively, 136,048 jobs exist because of HBCUs.

- On average, for each job created on campus, 1.5 off-campus jobs exist because of spending related to the institution.

- HBCUs are far more accessible to students and

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## BIDEN, from Page 1

amendment met its ratification threshold in 2020 when Virginia became the 38th state to approve it, fulfilling the requirement for three-fourths of state legislatures to ratify it.

Despite meeting the requirements outlined in Article V of the Constitution, the ERA still needs to be certified. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), tasked with certifying and publishing amendments once ratified, has yet to take action due to a 2020 opinion issued by the Trump administration’s Office of Legal Counsel (OLC). The opinion argued that because the ERA did not meet Congress’s 1982 deadline, it “expired and is no longer pending before the states.”

Federal law (1 U.S.C. § 106b) mandates the Archivist to certify an amendment once three-fourths of states have ratified it. Lawmakers contend that the Trump-era opinion should not obstruct the certification process and called on Biden to issue a proclamation recognizing the ERA.

“While there are federal laws that protect against sex discrimination, these protections are not explicitly enshrined in the Constitution,” the letter noted. “Adding the ERA to the Constitution would establish an unambiguous guarantee that sex-based discrimination is unconstitutional.”

Bush added, “We were hoping to be progressing forward on gender equality and women’s rights, but we are going backward. At this point, we have an avalanche of destruction coming our way.”

The Biden administration has previously expressed support for the ERA. In his August 23, 2024, proclamation on Women’s Equality Day, Biden called Congress to recognize the amendment’s ratification. ERA supporters insist that no further action from Congress is needed, as the amendment has already met the constitutional requirements.

Polling indicates broad public support for the ERA.

A 2020 Pew Research Center poll found that 78% of Americans believe the amendment should be part of the Constitution. Recent state-level votes further demonstrate this support, with Nevada and New York enshrining state-level ERAs into their constitutions by significant margins.

“With a hostile administration on its way to strip us of our freedoms, we must do everything to address this injustice and enshrine the ERA,” Pressley said.

By certifying the ERA, lawmakers believe that legal safeguards against sex discrimination would strengthen. They said that would help address concerns that include salary discrepancies, employment injustices, and reproductive rights. The legislators believe that the move is essential to preserving advancements in gender equality and shielding weaker rights from political changes and court interpretations.

“By directing the Archivist to publish the ERA, you will leave an indelible mark on the history of this nation, demonstrating once

again that your legacy is one of expanding rights,

protecting freedoms, and securing a more inclusive

future for all Americans,” the letter concluded.

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# Who has the strongest case for the NFL's MVP Award?

By Jamal Baker  
NDG Contributing Writer

DraftKings Sportsbook currently has Josh Allen favored to win the regular season MVP with Lamar Jackson and Saquon Barkley rounding out the top three candidates. Each of these NFL superstars present a strong and unique argument to claim the MVP throne. The MVP has been judged on three consistent criteria over the past decade—stats, team success, and whether the player is a quarterback (sorry, Saquon).

Allen is coming off a 48-42 Week 15 victory over the Detroit Lions, in which he passed for 362 yards and two touchdowns while adding 68 yards on the ground and two rushing touchdowns. The Buffalo Bills currently sit second in the



NDG Composite Image

AFC standings with an 11-3 record.

“The MVP race is over, folks. In 2024, No. 17 is running away with this and that’s saying a lot because Saquon Barkley and Lamar Jackson are having tremendous seasons. What this dude is doing right now is absolutely unbelievable,” ESPN football analyst Dan Orlovsky said.

Over the past two weeks Allen has posted 854 total yards and 10 total touchdowns. He truly defines

what it means to be a dual-threat quarterback as he is equally special with his arm and legs. With three games to go in the regular season, Allen has 3,395 passing yards, 25 passing touchdowns, 484 rushing yards, and 11 rushing touchdowns. If he continues playing football at such a high level for the last three weeks of the season, one can argue we are witnessing the greatest season a quarterback has ever put together.

Allen led the Balti-

Bluff, and Clayton County, Sparks reflected, “After COVID, I saw that our kids didn’t have internet access. And I’m like, wow, this is crazy. Kids are literally going to the library to do their homework, but the fiber is right here. So why can’t I help provide it?”

Sparks is steadfast in his belief that internet access is a fundamental right. As he and his team press on, their mission centers on ensuring underserved populations are connected. “We, Black people—we are the culture, but we don’t own any of the infrastructure,” Sparks stated. Culture Wireless’s long-term goal is to equip the culture with the tools to keep innovating and pushing forward. “Why don’t we continue to change the narrative?”

## ← SPARKS, from Page 2

highlights the Biden Administration’s Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which initially subsidized internet costs but was exhausted by early 2024. According to Sparks, his vision extends beyond Atlanta. “80% of HBCUs are in internet deserts,” he explained, referring to the limited infrastructure at many of these institutions. Culture Wireless aims to provide broadband access to HBCUs across the country, creating a foundation of connectivity that fosters educational and economic opportunities.

Despite their progress, Culture Wireless has faced obstacles. As venture capital (VC) funding for Black businesses reportedly de-

clined by 60% in 2024, Culture Wireless felt the impact. “It’s a struggle. I feel like our issue has been finding people who invest in what we do,” Sparks said, referring to investors’ focus on trendy industries over internet equity. Nevertheless, Sparks believes that his team at Culture Wireless has the expertise and dedication to effect real change.

Together with his team—CEO Al Adjahoe, COO and co-founder Jerome Howard, Chief Brand Officer Marcus Stevens, and Chief Strategy Officer Pete Johnson—Sparks is confident in Culture Wireless’s potential to scale. Currently serving the AUC area and surrounding neighborhoods, including Vine City, The

more Ravens to a 35-14 victory over the New York Giants to improve to a 9-5 record on the season. Jackson threw for 290 yards and five touchdowns while adding 65 yards on the ground. His MVP odds have steadily risen over the last week going from +1000 to +550. The reigning league MVP is also having a special season—tallying 3,580 passing yards, 34 passing touchdowns, three interceptions, 743 rushing yards, and three rushing touchdowns. Although Jackson’s team record is worse than Allen, Jackson has put up num-

bers that measure up to the stats Allen has produced. Jackson has a chance to separate himself in the race if he manages to eclipse 1,000 yards rushing while also passing for over 4,000 yards—a feat that has never been done by an NFL quarterback.

Barkley broke the Philadelphia Eagles’ single-season rushing record this year, which was previously held by LeSean McCoy. The Eagles are one of the hottest teams in football—currently on a 10-game winning streak. Barkley’s impact has been immeasurable dur-

ing his first year with the team, amassing 1,964 yards from scrimmage and 13 total touchdowns so far this season.

The final three weeks of the season will be the determining factor for who will walk away with the prestigious award. Heisman hopefuls have a chance to display “Heisman Moments” at the end of the collegiate season to give voters something to remember when casting their ballots. Jackson, Allen, and Barkley all have a chance to perform MVP moments to walk away with the award.

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# Dwight's Picks: The Best Films of 2024

By Dwight Brown  
NNPA Film Critic

These 10 films rose to the top of 2024's mountain of excellent movies. Many will vie for Oscars. Join the fun, view these movies in theaters or on streaming services and watch great cinema.

## The Brutalist (\*\*\*\*)

Hard to believe this entrancing bio/drama, which exhibits an artistry and craftsmanship usually rendered by foreign directors, was created by Arizona-born filmmaker Brady Corbet. Hard to believe what's on view is complete fiction! László Toth, a Jewish Hungarian architect, flees post-WWII Europe in 1947. He finds refuge in Pennsylvania, where he tries to rebuild his life and career. Exquisitely shot (Lol Crawley), produced and directed. Adrien Brody melts into the soul-torn lead character. Actors Felicity Jones, Guy Pearce and Isaac De Bankolé are stellar. A brilliant work of art.

## Conclave (\*\*\*\*)

This riveting film adaptation by director Edward Berger (All Quiet on the Western Front) and Oscar-nominated screenwriter Peter Straughan is an extraordinary drama/thriller. An incisive religious parable about those who connive in the Vatican. No one, not even a detective or mystery film aficionado, could ever guess where the storyline is going. Evidently, choosing a new pope can be a fiendish and deliciously political process. Ralph Fiennes, Stanley Tucci, Lucian Msamati, Carlos Diez and Isabella Rossellini embody the meaning of ensemble



acting. The final reveal is a shocker. A jolt

## Daughters (\*\*\*\*)

Start with a humanizing premise and there's nowhere to go but up. When a little girl shares her feelings, "My dad can't come to the father/daughter dance because he's in jail," that becomes a catalyst. It initiates a conscious effort to bring little girls together with their incarcerated dads for a prom that could change their lives for the better. First-time documentary director Angela Patton, the CEO of Girls for Change, and video music director Natalie Rae (Leon Bridges: Bad Bad News) bring this bit of misty-eyed redemption and heaven to film fans with love. When a father says, "The streets don't love us. Our kids love us," you know this film bears witness to a wonderful metamorphosis.

## Emilia Pérez (\*\*\*1/2)

Gender ID transformations, crime, thrills and romance get mixed into a surprising cocktail of emotions in this musical/thriller. A successful defense lawyer Rita (Zoe Saldana) is pressured into heading the transition team for a Mexican drug cartel kingpin (Karla Sofia Gascón). Audiences,

along with Rita, won't be prepared for the transition that ensues. Director Jacques Audiard (A Prophet) and his co-screenwriters Thomas Bidegain and Nicolas Livecchi fathomed a crime story that thwarts any predictability. Stunning reveals, awkward upheavals and violent reactions snowball. Genre categories are defied. As intense as a shot of Tequila.

## Monkey Man (\*\*\*1/2)

"Every day, I've prayed for a way to protect the weak," says the lead character Kid (Dev Patel, Slumdog Millionaire). And thus, his quest to stamp out corrupt leaders in his region of India. Patel, as the writer and director, crafts a revenge allegory that plunges audiences into India's social issues and politics. They get a feel for the country's mysticism and are introduced to Hanuman, the Monkey God. An ancient Hindu deity whose powers include strength, intelligence and compassion for the less fortunate. A crazed John Wick style of direction delivers a steady flow of fight-or-flight incidents in a very frenetic art film.

## No Other Land (\*\*\*\*)

It's a calling. Risking

your life to document human tragedy is an assignment the heavens would only give the stalwart. Palestinian writer/director Basel Adra, Israeli journalist and co-writer/director Yuval Abraham, Israeli cinematographer/editor/

director Rachel Szor and Palestinian photographer/filmmaker Hamdan Ballal are game. They, especially Basel and Yuval, chronicle the largest forced land transfer ever carried out in the occupied West Bank. A deadly years-long

encroachment that allows Israeli soldiers to bulldoze Palestinian homes and schools. The community of Masafer Yatta is being forced into a nomadic life. It's all in the cinéma vérité

See FILM, Page 14

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# Kendrick Lamar and SZA on tour; other LA 'Tasty Clips'

By Bill Vaughan  
Entertainment Writer  
Los Angeles WAVE

Hot upon the surprise release of his excellent album "GNX" catapulting to the top of the sales charts last week (along with hit singles "Squabble Up," "tv off," "luther" and "wacced out murals"), Compton superstar rapper Kendrick Lamar will follow his Super Bowl halftime show appearance by going on the road.

The "Grand National Tour," with his frequent star collaborator SZA, is set for 19 stadiums nationwide with it arriving at SoFi Sta-



dium for shows May 21 and 23.

Tickets go on sale to the public Dec. 6 at 10 a.m. For further details, visit [grandnationaltour.com](http://grandnationaltour.com).

**RED CARPET WALK:** Walt Disney's "Mufasa: The Lion King" is having its Hollywood premiere on Dec. 9 at the El Capi-

tan Theatre. Voice actors for the film including the hot Aaron Pierre ("Ruby Ridge"), Kelvin Harrison Jr. ("Chevalier"), Thandiwe Newton, Keith David, Donald Glover, Anika Noni Rose, Seth Rogan and perhaps Blue Ivy Carter and mom Beyonce could arrive between 5 and 6:30 p.m.

**REMEMBRANCE:** In honor of the late Tony Todd ("Candyman"), who sadly passed away recently, the world theatrical premiere of "The Activated Man," featuring his final starring film role, is scheduled for Dec. 12 at the Laemmle Fine Arts Theatre. Additionally, the movie will have a weeklong theatrical run in L.A. and other cities across the U.S. and Canada beginning Dec. 13 and on demand.

**CLIPPETTES:** iHeartRadio Jingle Ball with SZA, Kane Brown, T-Pain, Shaboozey and more comes Dec. 6 to Intuit Dome as

Martin Lawrence's "Y'all Know What It Is! Tour" with Ms. Pat, Desi Banks and Benji Brown is at Crypto.com Arena ...

Also, Roddy Richh is at the Palladium, Thee Sacred Souls at The Wiltern, and Jo Koy kicks off two nights of comedy at Long Beach's Terrace Theater ...

The Comedy Store In support of the WeHo LAFD, is gathering gift donations for local kids and teens this holiday season. Please bring a new, unwrapped toy for the taping of George Lopez' next special on Dec. 7 ...

Musically, Donell Jones,

Dave Hollister and J. Holiday are at the Saban Theatre, TV On The Radio at the El Rey Theatre, and Kenny G's "The Miracles Holiday and Hits Tour" lands at the Pechanga Resort ...

Two-time Academy Award-winning actor Mahershala Ali will be honored with the prestigious Muhammad Ali Voice of Humanity and Emmy Award winner Niecy Nash-Betts will receive the Voice Arts Icon Award at the Voice Arts Awards Gala 2024 on Dec. 8 at the Beverly Hilton International Ballroom ...

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## TRUMP, from Page 5

Chavez-DeRemer (R-Ore.), who is Hispanic, for Labor and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who is likely to be confirmed as the first-ever Hispanic secretary of State.

Several of the selections have been highly controversial. The resumes of

Trump's selection for Department of Defense and Attorney General, Fox News Host Pete Hegseth and Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz, have been questioned. And both men have reportedly been investigated with regard to sexual assault

related allegations.

The lack of qualifications has won the attention of many because many MAGA Republicans have railed against what they believe is a problem regarding diversity in hiring. But the recent hires of Fox News host Hegseth, who has no management experience,

and Gaetz, who has no experience as a Judge or a prosecutor cited as another reason why the Trump Administration is expected to be damaging to federal employees, democracy and the rule of law.

"When your Attorney General pick couldn't even pass an FBI background

check to be a field agent, you know you've completely sacrificed merit. I don't ever want to hear another word about "unqualified" Black people getting a damned thing. Not ever," wrote Tim Wise, an expert on racism in America, on Trump's recent appointees.

*Lauren Victoria Burke is*

*an independent investigative journalist and the publisher of Black Virginia News. She is a political analyst who appears regularly on #RolandMartinUnfiltered and speaks on Crisis Comms on YouTube. She can be contacted at LBurke007@gmail.com and on twitter at @LVBurke.*

## FILM, from Page 9

footage shot and compiled by a brave Palestinian/Israeli film collective.

### The Piano Lesson (\*\*\*/1/2)

This legacy of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson is alive and well. In 1936 Pittsburgh, a prized ancestral heirloom, a 137-year-old upright piano, is fought over by a brother (John David Washington)

and sister (Danielle Deadwyler, Till). Their divergent opinions of how it should be revered and used cause a firestorm. Malcolm Washington, in his feature film debut, directs the actors, story and production like a pro. His adaptation is cinematic, not just a filmed play. Emotions explode. The virtue of heritage is canonized. Actors Ray Fisher,

Corey Hawkins, Michael Potts, Skylar Aleece Smith and Sam Jackson shine bright. Eric horror elements add a haunting dimension. Malcolm is a griot. Wilson would be proud.

### Sugarcane (\*\*\*\*)

It's a day of reckoning. Time to hold people accountable. Graves are found around St. Josephs Mission, a residential school once run by priests from the Catholic Church

starting back in the 1930s. The facility in British Columbia, Canada had a killing field. This investigative doc, by co-directors Emily Kassie and Julian Brave Noisecat, digs deep. Noisecat has a special interest, as his dad went to St. Joseph's.

Interviews with ex-students, who are elders now, detail mindboggling emo-

tional, physical and sexual abuse. Reflections and accountability bring healing. America's Indigenous people expose crimes, testify and control their own narrative. Unlike Killers of the Flower Moon. Breaks your heart then lifts it up.

### Saturday Night (\*\*\*/1/2)

It's crazy! One hour and 40 minutes of controlled

chaos is displayed during the reenacted buildup to the first Saturday Night Live show on Oct. 11th, 1975. Wow. Mayhem starts and doesn't end until showtime. Some of America's most iconic comedians and comic actors are portrayed by a talented young cast who understands the assignment: Be funny.

## MAJORS, from Page 2

Ebony magazine's Power 100 event. Previously Majors received recognition for resilience at the Hollywood Unlocked Impact Awards in June 2024.

*Lauren Victoria Burke is an independent investigative journalist and the publisher of Black Virginia News. She is a political analyst who appears regu-*

*larly on #RolandMartinUnfiltered and speaks on Crisis Comms on YouTube @LaurenVictoriaBurke. She can be contacted at LBurke007@gmail.com and on twitter at @LV-Burke.*

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# Credit card swipe fees are financial inequities for Black America

By Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.  
President and CEO, NNPA

America's financial system is quietly reinforcing old inequities. Black American communities — historically denied access to wealth-building tools due to practices like redlining and restrictive banking — now face a new predatory financial hurdle: credit card swipe fees.

For Black Americans, swipe fees — which credit card companies use to fund luxury points programs — act as yet another layer of systemic discrimination, forcing many to pay more while receiving less in return.

Consider how credit card swipe fees work. Every time someone uses a credit card, the merchant is

charged a fee — usually between 2% and 4% — which is often passed on to consumers through higher prices. Wealthier cardholders benefit from this system, recouping costs through rewards like fancy hotel stays and airline miles. But a legacy of discrimination has left Black families with fewer wealth-building opportunities, resulting in lower homeownership rates, lower credit scores, and higher debt burdens — putting those premium credit card and their luxury rewards out of reach for many.

In simple terms, Black Americans and other communities of color are left to foot the bill for the flights and perks of those who are considerably more affluent.

Black Americans are less

likely to hold credit cards — 72% ownership compared to 88% for White Americans — and often face higher interest rates. 58% of Black Americans have more credit card debt than emergency savings, compared to 30% of White Americans. Black college graduates carry \$25,000 more in student loan debt than their White counterparts, which can further harm their credit scores and financial stability.

It's a painful irony: Black Americans, who are systematically excluded from wealth-building tools, end up paying more to access the same basic financial services. These financial pressures make it hard to escape revolving debt, and harder still to enjoy the rewards that banks offer. The prom-

ise of “free” rewards from swipe fees is an illusion for those who can barely afford to pay down their balance every month. While swipe fees aren't solely responsible for racial wealth disparities, they compound existing financial burdens, making it even harder for Black families to build savings and financial security.

Black Americans are far from the only group that would benefit from comprehensive swipe fees reform: Small business owners and advocates across the country have been sounding the alarm and leading the calls. For small merchants, swipe fees are often their second-highest monthly cost after labor. These businesses — which operate on razor-thin profit margins — are forced to raise prices to stay afloat.

The average American family pays more than \$1,100 a year in higher prices due to these fees.

The current swipe fee structure exists because the Visa-Mastercard duopoly controls 90% of the U.S. credit card processing market, allowing them to set and increase rates for merchants while blocking out competitors.

Swipe fee reform isn't radical; it's about fair competition and a level playing field. The Credit Card Competition Act (CCCA) — a bipartisan bill being considered in Congress — aims to introduce competition into this marketplace by requiring at least two competing processing networks on each credit card. This could save American consumers and businesses

an estimated \$15 billion annually.

The CCCA won't end rewards programs — only the banks that offer them can decide that. In fact, a recent study found that the CCCA would have little to no impact on rewards. What the bill would do is end a broken system that preys on those with the least and benefits those with the most.

Reducing swipe fees through pro-competition reform won't undo generations of economic inequality, but it's a step toward dismantling one of the structures that reinforce it. A fairer financial landscape benefits everyone, not just those most impacted — and Black Americans have paid

**See SWIPE, Page 13**

## MATH, from Page 6

to the audience on how he once answered a question about the need of such programs with a slide showing the average starting salary for an engineering graduate at UTD was \$81,000, and the average starting salary for a computer science major was \$93,000. Laugingly, he recalled an immediate spike in enrollment. Numerous workforce studies concur that STEM-related skill sets are only expected to increase in demand in the coming years. If so, these starting salaries will only increase.

Following the dinner and remarks, scholarships for \$500 were distributed to students showing promise from across the network of tutoring branches.

Scholarship recipients announced on Sunday include: Nathan Abate, Hi-

wete Ayele, Thomas Ayele, Roderick Butler, Ananiya Demissie, Eyuel Desta, Sarah Dougherty, Amanu- ael Fisiha, Dahlia Fsehat- sion, Essey Fsehatson, Salama Gayem, Bezawit Getachew, Lamek Ghebrea- malck, Noel Ghile, Yehab

Girmay, Alazar Girmay, Arsema Girmay, Angie Graciano, Faven Habtamu, Saron Habtamu, Samuel Hagos, Jordan Hampton, Shakia Harper, Sarah Ji, Daniel Kang, Joseph Kifle, Hyunyoung Kim, Dylan LaRoche, Cano Loe, Kaden Lopez, Evan Mangrum, Natan Mehari, Iana Merritt,

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More information on In- telliChoice can be found at <https://intellichoice.org>.



Engineering student Kyungtae Park confers with a math student during an IntelliChoice tutoring session held at the UTD branch on Saturday afternoon. (Photo: David Wilfong / NDG)

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## UNCF, from Page 7

more successful at moving students from the bottom 40% of a country's income distribution to the top 60%, signaling social mobility.

• The 51,269 HBCU graduates in the class of 2021 can expect work-life earnings of \$146 billion, 57% (\$53 billion) more than the \$93 billion they could expect without their degrees or certificates.

The 2024 HBCU Economic Impact Report is a continuation of the landmark 2017 study, HBCUs Make America Strong: The Positive Economic Impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which showed that HBCUs' economic benefits extend beyond the students they educate. In addition to the comprehensive report, a website has been launched where users can explore

state-specific data and insights for individual HBCUs. This resource allows users to explore the localized impact, emphasizing the critical role HBCUs play in communities across the nation.

"Transforming Futures: The Economic Engines of HBCUs represents the latest chapter in a longitudinal research initiative by UNCF's Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute.

By leveraging robust methodology and extensive data, we highlight how HBCUs continue to be critical drivers of economic growth and social mobility," said Dr. Nadrea R. Njoku, assistant vice president, of Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, UNCF.

"This report not only underscores the substantial economic benefits gener-

ated by HBCUs but also contextualizes the broader challenges they have faced over the past three years, including the far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the threats of violence that have been levied against many of these institutions."

"Now more than ever, we must recognize the indispensable role HBCUs play in shaping not just the future of their students but the future of our nation. This report is not just a call to

awareness but a call to action," said Lodriguez Murray, senior vice president, of public policy and government affairs, at UNCF. "As we move forward, it is imperative that we leverage this data to galvanize our communities and demand the necessary support from our policymakers by voting for HBCUs. We urge every supporter to make their voices heard, to advocate for the equitable funding our HBCUs deserve, and to ensure that these institu-

tions can continue to thrive and contribute to America's future."

To view the brief and full report for Transforming Futures: The Economic Engines of HBCUs, visit:

UNCF.org/HBCUImpactReport.

For more information on how to actualize a commitment and be a voice for HBCUs, visit: UNCF.org/EquityPledge.

## SWIPE, from Page 12

more to receive less for too long. It's time for that to change. An inequality anywhere is a threat to equality everywhere.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is President and CEO of the National Newspa-

per Publishers Association (NNPA) representing the Black Press of America and Executive Producer of The Chavis Chronicles on PBS TV Network. Dr. Chavis can be reached at dr.bchavis@nnpa.org.



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## A Surprised Pre-Christmas Gift Special

By Dr. James L. Snyder

Like everyone, I enjoy the Christmas holiday from beginning to end. It's my favorite time of the year. The most important thing is the family gathering in the celebration.

I enjoy everything about Christmas except that I'm not so fond of Christmas shopping. That is not something I enjoy. Compared to The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, who is the Queen of cash registers, I am not qualified to do shopping.

Perhaps I got it from my very frugal father. He could squeeze a nickel so hard that the Buffalo would scream. I take after him a little bit. I don't want to buy anything that I don't need. So, Christmas shopping for presents is low on my list of things to do.

Buying gifts for people is a challenge for me. I don't even know what gift I like. If I want something, and if I can afford it, I buy it. However, I don't know how to get gifts for family members.

Mostly, I don't know how to get a present for The

Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage because she has everything she needs. And for me to find out one thing that she needs for Christmas would be a miracle in and of itself.

Something happened this week that encouraged me in this line. I got a pre-Christmas gift that I was not expecting.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was using a paper cutter for her Christmas card work in my office. All of a sudden, I heard her groan in agony. She doesn't do that unless something terrible happens.

She walked out carrying one of the paper cutting boards. I asked what was going on, and she told me that it broke while cutting some paper.

"I'm just going to throw it away and use another board."

"Wait a minute," I said, "maybe I can fix it for you?"

It took her a while to calm down from hilariously laughing at me. Then she said, "What, you fix something?" and continued laughing.

I thought that this was

a good time to catch her in something. She graciously handed me the cutting board and showed me where it was broken. But it wasn't actually broken. One of the levers popped out of its socket, and it was almost impossible to put it back in.

That's why the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage gave up and was ready to throw it away. She didn't have time to work on that project.

She handed it to me, walked away snickering, and I began looking at the little board, trying to figure out what I could do.

I have a stellar reputation for being unable to fix anything. Sure, I can fix some of my writing projects, but outside of that, I am no Mr. Fix-It Man.

I thought about this for a while, thinking it would be an excellent opportunity to challenge that image of me. What would happen if I could fix this little cutting board and hand it back to her?

Looking at that cutting board, I didn't know where to start. You have to know where to start in order to fix

something, and I needed to figure out how to begin this project.

Thinking to myself, I saw this as a great opportunity for me. So I struggled, looked at the board from front to back, and tried to understand how it worked. I came close to giving up.

I saw one of the levers that had popped out of the socket, so I needed to figure out how to pop it back in. I couldn't see anything broken on the board, so I didn't understand how it came out. According to The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, she let it fall; when it fell, one lever popped out.

After fiddling with it for several minutes, I suddenly saw how it could be fixed. I was surprised at myself. But with a little twisting and turning, I could pop that lever back in where it

belonged. When I did that, the board was back to normal. I'm not sure I was.

I was so happy I didn't know what to do, and I certainly didn't want to sing. But I called The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and said, "Oh, my dear. Would you please come in here for a moment?"

She showed up quickly, and I handed the cutting board back to her and said, "I fixed it for you so now you can continue using it."

She looked at me, then at the board I had just handed her, and in a low tone, she said, "How in the world did you fix that?"

Getting an early Christmas present is a very wonderful thing. I could not have gotten a better one than this.

As I was musing over this great gift, I couldn't

help but think of the greatest gift in the world.

The verse that came to mind was John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Christmas is the celebration of God's greatest gift coming into the world. During this illustrious celebration, I do not want to forget what God's gift has done for me. The gift from God is "everlasting life" that comes to those who believe in Him.

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## ISOLATION, from Page 4

M.B.A. and his team and published in an official advisory in May 2023.

The AARP Foundation has created an initiative called Connect2Affect, offering resources to help older adults combat social isolation and loneliness for themselves and others: <https://connect2affect.org/>

Malani and colleagues published a Patient Page in JAMA on social isolation in May 2024; it's available for free at <https://jamanet->

[work.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2819153](https://work.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2819153) and is designed for clinicians to share with patients.

About the poll:

The data in the new JAMA paper come from six fieldings of the NPHA from 2018 to 2024, most of which asked older adults to report how often they felt a lack of companionship or felt isolated from others in the past year. The poll fielded in June 2020 asked participants

to reflect on the past three months. The poll is not longitudinal – each fielding's sample was unique. poll sample ranged in size from 2,033 to 2,563 and the organization that administers the poll changed once, beginning in 2022. More details about NPHA methodology are at <https://www.healthyagingpoll.org/survey-methods>.

Read NPHA reports on loneliness and isolation among older adults here: <https://www.healthyaging-poll.org/national-reports>.

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# The Watch Night Tradition



**Sister Tarpley**  
NDG  
Religion  
Editor

December 30th, is my first born birthday. I didn't know that I had so much love in me until my children were born.

But now that I have four grandchildren, Tyanna, David, Deven and Philip, I have discovered an even deeper love within me.

When Jarrell Edwin Tarpley was born and I held him in my arms, I thought about how much God loved His earthly children.

Until a few years ago I did not know how the tradition of "Watch Night Services" in churches got started. I only knew that my family



always celebrated them.

A tradition that this brings fond memories to my mind is when my family would visit our grandparents; Deacon David N. & Mother Ida Rutherford Demus in Mexia, Texas.

At the home of my grandparents, during the summer and the Christmas

Holidays; everybody in the home, gathered in the living room; got on their knees and prayed prior to starting the day.

This seemed to strengthen "family unity and love" within the household. My parents never did this in Dallas; I guess this is because we lived in the "Big

City" and not the "Country Town of Mexia."

One year a Short Story of Floyd Erving was the history of Watch Night Service. I learn something about a tradition that I had been doing with a lot of fond memories.

**WATCH NIGHT SERVICES** -- Many of you who now live, or grew up in Black communities have probably heard of "Watch Night Services," (the gathering of the faithful in church on New Year's Eve.)

The service usually begins anywhere around 10 pm, and ends at midnight with the entrance of the New Year. Some people go to church first, before going

out to celebrate.

For others, church is their only New Year's Eve celebration. I always assumed that Watch Night Service was a fairly standard Christian Religious Service – but, a bit more Afro centric.

Still, it seemed that predominantly White Christian churches did not include

Watch Night Services on their calendars, but focused instead on Christmas Eve Programs.

The Watch Night Services in Black communities can be traced back to gatherings on December 31, 1862, also known as "Free-

See **TARPLEY, Page 16**

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For more information or to register for this event, please visit [dallascasa.org](http://dallascasa.org)

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# NDG Book Review: 'In Slavery's Wake' is a difficult but intriguing read

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

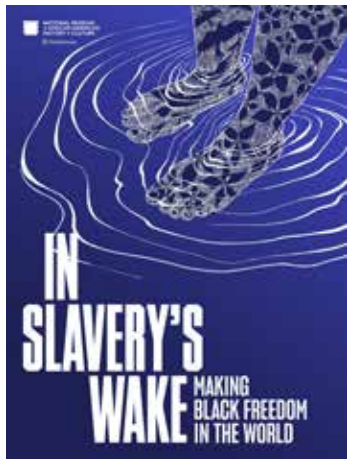
Ever since you learned how it happened, you couldn't get it out of your mind.

People, packed like pencils in a box, tightly next to each other, one by one by one, tier after tier. They couldn't sit up, couldn't roll over or scratch an itch or keep themselves clean on a ship that took them from one terrible thing to another. And in the new book "In Slavery's Wake," essays by various contributors, you'll see what trailed in waves behind those vessels.

You don't need to be told about the horrors of slavery. You've grown up knowing about it, reading about it, thinking about everything that's happened because of it in the past four hundred years. And so have others: in 2014, a committee made of "key staff from several world museums" gathered to discuss "telling the story of racial slavery and colonialism as a world system..." so that together, they could implement a "ten-year road map to expand... our practices of truth telling..."

Here, the effects of slavery are compared to the waves left by a moving ship, a wake the story of which some have tried over time to diminish.

It's a tale filled with irony: says one contributor, early American Colonists held en-



slaved people but believed that King George had "unjustly enslaved" the colonists.

It's the story of a British company that crafted shackles and cuffs and that still sells handcuffs "used worldwide by police and militaries" today.

It's a tale of heroes: the Maroons, who created communities in unwanted swampland, and welcomed escaped slaves into their midst; Sarah Baartman, the "Hottentot Venus"; Marème Diarra, who walked 200 miles from Sudan to Senegal with her children to escape slavery; enslaved farmers and horticulturists; and everyday people who still talk about slavery and what the institution left behind.

Today, discussions about cooperation and diversity remain essential.

Says one essayist, "... em-

bracing a view of history with a more expansive definition of archives in all their forms must be fostered in all societies."

Unless you've been completely unaware and haven't been paying attention for the past 150 years, a great deal of what you'll read inside "In Slavery's Wake" is information you already knew and images you've already seen.

Look again, though, because this comprehensive book isn't just about America and its history. It's about slavery, worldwide, yesterday and today.

Casual readers – non-historians especially – will, in fact, be surprised to learn, then, about slavery on other continents, how Africans left their legacies in places far from home, and how the "wake" they left changed the worlds of agriculture, music, and culture. Tales of individual people round out the narrative, in legends that melt into the stories of others and present new heroes, activists, resisters, allies, and tales that are inspirational and thrilling.

This book is sometimes a difficult read, and is probably best consumed in small bites that can be considered with great care to fully appreciate. Start "In Slavery's Wake," though, and you won't be able to get it out of your mind.

## TARPLEY, from Page 15

dom's Eve."

On that night, Black people came together in churches and private homes across the nation, anxiously awaiting the news that the Emancipation Proclamation had actually become law.

Then, at the stroke of midnight, this meant that all slaves in the Confederate States were

declared legally free.

When the news was received, there were prayers, shouts and songs of joy as people fell to their knees and thanked God.

Black folks have gathered in churches annually on New Year's Eve since; and there are praises to God for bringing Black people safely through an-

other year.

It's been 155 years (January 1, 1863) since that First Freedom's Eve and many of us were never taught the Black history of Watch Night, but tradition still brings us together at this time of the year to celebrate, "How we got over."

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

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