



# North Dallas Gazette

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# Traffic stops, racial disparities, and the call for systemic reform

By Stacy M. Brown  
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

Traffic stops remain the most common reason for police-initiated contact across all racial groups, according to a new report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The report, part of a series examining police interactions with U.S. residents since 1996, reveals that racial disparities in these encounters persist. The Prison Policy Initiative responded to the report by noting a need to address inequities and rethink public safety strategies.

The BJS data show that Black drivers are more than twice as likely as drivers of other racial groups to be searched or arrested during a traffic stop. Black individuals are also over three times as likely as White individuals to experience the use of force in their most recent encounter with law enforcement. Although Black people accounted for only 12% of those whose most re-



The report, part of a series examining police interactions with U.S. residents since 1996, reveals that racial disparities in these encounters persist. (Photo via NNPA)

cent contact was initiated by police or related to a traffic accident, they represented one-third of those who reported being threatened or experiencing nonfatal use of force.

### Alarming Trends for Older Adults and Women

The report also laid bare troubling trends regarding the use of force

against older adults and women. In 2022, people aged 65 or older made up 5% of those who experienced the threat or use of force. While the figure may seem small, it represents a more than tenfold increase since 2015. The rise suggests that even

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## People In The News ...



Pharrell Williams



Michael Vick

NDG Quote of the Week: "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."  
- Nelson Mandela

## Pharrell Williams

Pharrell Williams, the multi-talented artist and humanist known for his global hits and philanthropic work, has officially joined the ranks of UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors. UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay announced the appointment and cited Williams' commitment to education, culture, and peace.

"A complete artist, Pharrell Williams is also a humanist who works to put culture at the service of peace and bringing people together," Azoulay said. "He believes in the power of creativity and education



to build a better future. His commitments resonate with UNESCO's mandate."

Williams said the new role aligns with his mission to support marginalized communities. "Words cannot describe how I feel

about being chosen by UNESCO as a Goodwill Ambassador," he said. "Thank you to Director-General Audrey Azoulay for this opportunity. I'm honored to continue our work in evening the odds for children and adults through education with YELLOW and Black Ambition."

The appointment ceremony took place at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, where Williams addressed an audience of 800 secondary school students and emerging creatives in fashion, music, and film. The event featured a screening of Piece by Piece, an animated LEGO biopic di-

rected by Morgan Neville that chronicles Williams' artistic journey.

Williams' influence spans music, fashion, and philanthropy. An Academy Award-nominated musician and filmmaker, he has earned 13 GRAMMY Awards and is celebrated for chart-topping hits like "Happy" and "Get Lucky." His leadership as Men's Creative Director at Louis Vuitton further showcases his versatility and global reach. In June 2024, Williams held his fourth Louis Vuitton fashion show at UNESCO's Paris Headquarters, titled "The World is Yours," celebrating diversity against 194 Mem-

ber State flags.

Williams' dedication to education is evident in his charitable initiatives, including "From One Hand to AnOTHER," "YELLOW," and "Black Ambition." All of Williams' charitable programs have a mission to uplift marginalized communities through entrepreneurship and education.

As part of his new role, Williams will represent UNESCO at major international cultural events and support the organization's educational and cultural programs worldwide. His mentorship will mainly focus on empowering young creators in Africa, where

UNESCO supports the development of cultural industries.

UNESCO, which promotes global cooperation in education, science, culture, and communication, sees Williams as a fitting advocate for its mission. With 194 member states and a presence in 54 countries, the organization works to foster peace and security through collaboration.

"I'm honored to continue our work in evening the odds for children and adults through education," Williams said. "Together, we can build a future where creativity and culture unite us all."

## Michael Vick

(Black PR Wire) Michael Vick, one of the most electrifying quarterbacks in NFL history, will become the next head coach at Norfolk State University, according to multiple reports recently.

He will take over for Dawson Odums, who was fired on Nov. 26 after a 15-31 record in four seasons. Vick, 44, who has no formal coaching experience, told The Virginian-Pilot newspaper this week, "I know how to lead and I know what it takes." He has been an NFL analyst for Fox Sports since 2017.

A Newport News, Virginia, native, Vick starred at Virginia Tech and led the Hokies to the BCS National Championship Game in 2000, losing to Florida State.

He finished sixth in voting for the Heisman Trophy that year and was drafted No. 1 overall in 2001 by the Atlanta Falcons.



Vick played 13 NFL seasons, including six with the Falcons and five with the Philadelphia Eagles. He was named a Pro Bowler four times and threw for 22,464 yards and 133 touchdowns in his career. But while he was a top-tier passer, he was most known for his ability to run.

His 6,109 yards is No. 1 in NFL history for quarterbacks, and he ranks No. 8 in touchdowns on the ground, with 36. In 2008 he became the first quarterback to rush for 1,000 yards in a single season.

Vick is recognized as having helped revolutionize

the position and has been cited numerous times for inspiring dual-threat quarterbacks in recent years.

Vick's stardom took a major hit in 2007 when he pleaded guilty to his involvement in a dog fighting ring.

He was released by the Falcons and spent 21 months in federal prison. After he served his sentence, the Eagles signed him in 2009. The next season he led Philadelphia to a division title and was named NFL Comeback Player of the Year.

He officially retired in 2016.

Vick will be the latest former NFL star to become a head coach at a historically Black college or university. Deion Sanders spent two years at Jackson State, compiling a 27-6 record, before he left for Colorado in 2022. Eddie George just completed his fourth season at Tennessee State and led the Tigers to the FCS postseason.

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# A Day Without Child Care

By Emma Biggs  
and Dee Dee Fields

As we end the year, we look back at some of the important viewpoints about early childhood education shared during 2024. Here's one from leaders in North Carolina that applies on a national level. On May 16, we will be closing our childcare centers for a day — signaling a crisis that could soon sweep across North Carolina, dismantling the very backbone of our economy: childcare. This one-day action, organized by a coalition of partners under Child Care for NC: United for Change, is not merely a protest; it's a stark preview of the devastating impact awaiting us as federal pandemic-era funding ends. Without decisive action, North Carolina risks losing over 1,500 child care programs, affecting nearly 92,000 children and their families. This isn't just about numbers; it's about our state's future and the lives of the working families who depend on these essential services.

We are not newcomers to this field. With over half a century of combined experience in childcare, we've dedicated our lives to the education and well-being of children. From operating small family childcare home centers to managing large facilities, our careers have been built on the belief that every child deserves a nurturing, stimulating environment to grow. Chronic underfunding threatens the very foundation of this be-

lief. I was thrust into the world of childcare out of necessity when I lost my childcare voucher as a single mother. This personal crisis not only led me into the field but has fueled my commitment ever since. At Pathway Preschool Center, we've used the latest round of federal funds to improve teacher salaries and enhance our facilities significantly. These changes aren't just numbers on a page — they mean that parents can go to work knowing their children are in safe, stimulating environments.

This May 16th, we are not only closing our center; we are taking our cause to Raleigh, where we will join hands with many to demand sustained support. Without the necessary funding or resources, I will have to continue raising fees for families and reducing our hours to manage costs; something we just cannot afford to do. I am stepping out because I know my center is not alone in this battle. On May 16th, I'm bringing a busload of staff from my center and the families we serve to share our personal stories, handwrite letters to legislators and speak out about what these cuts mean for not only our community and state but the rest of the country. My question to legislators is this: "Who stands to lose care if you don't act now?" We will not fail the marginalized Black and brown children who will be the most impacted by your inaction, and until you recognize the value of what early childhood edu-

cators do every day, we will not rest.

Like Emma, I started my career in childcare to make a safe space for my daughter and give her the quality experience I envisioned for her. I did not know at the time that there were so many aspects of the profession that were detrimental to childcare providers and that I would face many costly lessons over the years. Even though I still love what I do and hold early childhood education close to me, I am completely drained mentally, physically, and emotionally. As the director of Landeeding-dam Daycare Inc., I see every day how crucial adequate funding is to maintain quality care. Thanks to the recent grants, the additional assistance I could afford was a game-changer for our children's daily educational experiences. Without continued funding, not only might I lose this help, but we may also be forced to cut services or close, decisions that would reverberate throughout our community. On May 16th, I will stand with Emma and other childcare providers at Halifax Mall to share my story and those of the families we serve.

Financial instability is a standard to many in our field, forcing numerous providers and childcare workers to take on second jobs just to make ends meet. Despite our designation as 'essential' during the pandemic, this status was short-lived, and the support that once seemed

like a breakthrough is now a failed promise. The recent stabilization grants briefly expanded our capabilities and allowed for critical hires that profoundly impacted our children's daily experiences. Yet, as this funding expires, the risk of reducing services or even closing our centers remains heavy, a decision that would devastate our communities. It's not just about keeping the doors open; it's about maintaining a quality of care that includes providing our staff with necessary benefits like paid time off, health insurance, and other essentials that help retain them, ensure their well-being, and ensure a safe and pleasant environment for our children.

The childcare crisis demands more than temporary solutions; it requires a fundamental reevaluation of how our society supports those tasked with caring for its youth. Our firsthand experiences underscore the critical role of childcare as more than just a service — it is an economic driver and a pillar of stability within our communities. The end of federal funding threatens an essential service that is already difficult for many families to obtain. For many centers, particularly those serving low-income families, the end of these funds will mean drastic cuts in services or straight-up closures. We've already begun to see the strain on our centers in Charlotte and Durham, where opera-

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Keep up with the news

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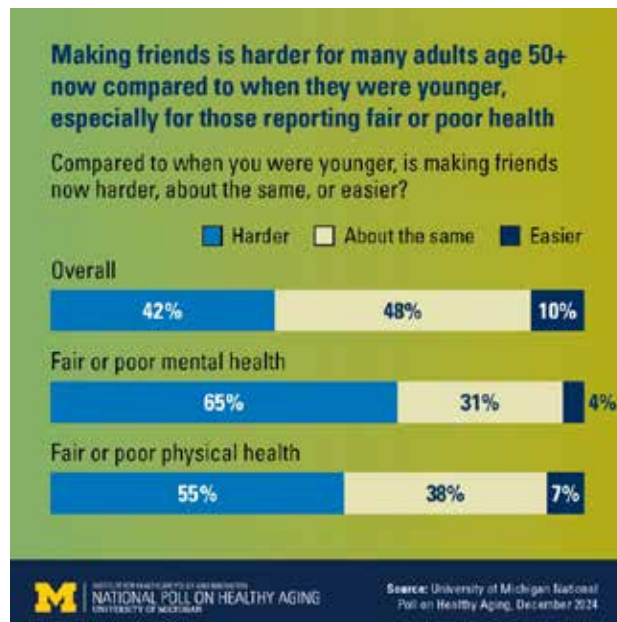
# With a Little Help From Their Friends: Poll shows role of close friendships in older adults' health

(Newswise) — Whether they're lifelong buddies or recently connected, close to home or miles away, a new poll shows the key role that friends play in the lives and wellbeing of adults aged 50 and older.

But it also reveals some challenges for those who have physical health or mental health issues – suggesting it may be important for them connect with existing friends or make new friends.

In all, 90% of people aged 50 and older say they have at least one close friend, and 75% say they have enough close friends, according to findings from the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging. What's more, 70% of those with a close friend say they can definitely count on them to provide support in discussing their health.

But the percentage who said they don't have any close friends was twice as high among people with worse health, with 20% of those who call their men-



tal health fair or poor saying so, along with 18% of those who call their physical health fair or poor.

In addition, 47% of those with fair or poor mental health said they don't have enough close friends. Older adults in fair or poor physical or mental health were also much more likely to say it's harder to make friends now than earlier in life.

The poll is based at the U-M Institute for Health-

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

"With growing understanding of the importance of social connection for older adults, it's important to explore the relationship between friendship and health, and identify those who might benefit most from efforts to support more interaction," said Sarah Patterson, Ph.D., the

U-M demographer who worked with the poll team on the new survey. Patterson is a research assistant professor at the U-M Institute for Social Research, in the Survey Research Center, and a member of IHPI.

In addition to looking at differences by health status, Patterson and the poll team also asked older adults about interactions with close friends for support on their health and well-being.

They found that 79% of those with at least one close friend said that they can turn to them for emotional support, and that 50% had a friend who had encouraged them to make healthier choices like eating better and getting more exercise in the past year.

In addition, 35% said a close friend had encouraged them to get a symptom checked out by a health professional, and 32% had a friend who had helped them when they were sick or injured.

"When health care providers see older adults, we

should also ask about their social support network, including close friends, especially for those with more serious health conditions," said poll director Jeffrey Kullgren, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., a primary care physician at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System and associate professor of internal medicine at U-M. "In some cases, we may even see friends accompanying older adults to health care appointments, which 15% of those with close friends said a friend had done for them. We also need to be attuned to the mental health of those who have experienced the loss of a close friend."

In addition to the national poll report, the team compiled data for Michigan adults age 50 and older compared with those in other states; a summary is available here and an interactive data visualization is available at [michmed.org/4eGeJ](http://michmed.org/4eGeJ).

"This poll underscores the vital role friendships play in the health and well-

being of older adults," said Indira Venkat, Senior Vice President of Research at AARP. "Strong social connections can encourage healthier choices, provide emotional support, and help older adults navigate health challenges, particularly for those at greater risk of isolation."

Other findings about friendships and health:

- Men were more likely than women to report having no close friends, as were people age 50 to 64 compared with those age 65 and older

- Older adults who felt isolated or a lack of companionship at least some of the time in the past year were more likely to say they don't have any close friends compared with those who hardly ever felt isolated or lonely

- Among older adults with at least one close friend, 46% said they have a close friend(s) from a different generation (at least 15 years older or younger

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## CDC reports South Carolina Legionella outbreak linked to industrial water jet cutters and floor scrubbers

By Stacy M. Brown  
NNPA Senior National  
Correspondent

A recent investigation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control has linked an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease to a manufacturing facility's water jet cutters and floor scrubbers. The

outbreak, which occurred between August and November 2022, resulted in 34 cases of legionellosis, 15 hospitalizations, and two deaths.

The investigation found that Legionella pneumophila sequence type 36, a particularly virulent strain, was isolated from two water jet cutters and a floor scrubber used at the facility. These machines, which aerosol-

ize water, were identified as the likely sources of infection after multiple employees across different shifts reported symptoms of Legionnaires' disease and Pontiac fever.

The outbreak came to light in September 2022 when three employees tested positive for Legionella through urinary antigen tests. Following these reports, the health department

issued a statewide advisory and worked with facility management to notify employees and encourage testing.

Health officials identified 10 confirmed cases of Legionnaires' disease, 20 probable cases, and four probable cases of Pontiac fever. The affected employees ranged in age from 18 to 65, with a median age of 40 years younger than

the typical demographic for Legionnaires' disease. Men accounted for nearly 68 percent of the cases.

The outbreak predominantly affected employees working on the third shift, with the highest attack rate at 3.8 percent. Prolonged and overnight exposure may have contributed to the higher rate, investigators surmised.

A comprehensive envi-

ronmental investigation involved testing 316 water samples from various sources within the facility. Legionella bacteria were detected in samples from two water jet cutters, which operated with water temperatures ideal for bacterial growth, and one-floor scrubber used to clean water overspray from the jet cutters. The ma-

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# Ethics Committee finds 'substantial evidence' of misconduct by former Congressman Matt Gaetz

By Stacy M. Brown  
NNPA Senior National  
Correspondent

The House Ethics Committee released a detailed report on Monday, revealing extensive evidence that former Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz engaged in criminal and unethical behavior during his time in Congress. The bipartisan 42-page report, adopted on December 10, outlined multiple violations, including statutory rape, payment for sex, illegal drug use, and acceptance of impermissible gifts.

The report follows Gaetz's resignation from Congress in November after President-elect Donald Trump nominated him as U.S. Attorney General. Gaetz eventually withdrew his name after Senate Republicans and others widely criticized him and publicly opposed his nomination.

## Allegations and



Ike Hayman / Wikimedia

## Committee Findings

The committee found "substantial evidence" that Gaetz had sex with a 17-year-old girl in 2017, paid her \$400, and engaged in similar transactions with other women. The report spelled out that Gaetz had sex with the underaged girl twice during a party, including at least once in front of witnesses. The panel concluded that the actions constituted statu-

tory rape under Florida law, violating both state statutes and House ethics rules.

Between 2017 and 2020, Gaetz reportedly paid tens of thousands of dollars to women for sexual activity, often using electronic payment platforms like Venmo and CashApp. The transactions were linked to events involving illegal drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy.

The report also documented that Gaetz accepted

impermissible gifts, including a 2018 luxury trip to the Bahamas, and misused his position to provide favors. One instance involved arranging for his Chief of Staff to falsely identify a woman as a constituent to expedite her passport application.

The findings stated that Gaetz violated House Rules, federal and state laws, and ethical standards prohibiting prostitution, drug use, and improper acceptance of gifts.

## Justice Department and Ethics Committee Investigations

The Department of Justice previously investigated Gaetz on allegations of sex trafficking but declined to press charges. After the DOJ concluded its probe, the Ethics Committee resumed its review in May

2023. Over the course of the investigation, the committee issued 29 subpoenas, reviewed nearly 14,000 documents, and interviewed more than two dozen witnesses.

Gaetz did not cooperate with the investigation, ignoring subpoenas and refusing to provide requested documents. The report noted that he obstructed the investigation by withholding information and refusing to answer questions about his conduct.

## Controversial Nomination and Withdrawal

Gaetz resigned just days after Trump nominated him for U.S. Attorney General. Critics claimed Gaetz lacked the credibility to serve particularly as the Justice Department had previously launched an

investigation into the congressman.

The report also pointed to Republican divisions surrounding Gaetz's nomination. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene allegedly threatened to expose misconduct by other Republicans if they unsealed the Ethics Committee's findings or blocked Gaetz's confirmation. Gaetz ultimately withdrew his nomination, stating he did not want to distract from the incoming administration's transition efforts.

## Final Notes from the Report

The Ethics Committee ultimately determined that Gaetz's actions discredited his position in the House. The House committee cited accountability in releasing the report. Gaetz maintains that he did nothing wrong.

## OUTBREAK, from Page 4

chines' ability to aerosolize water made them effective vectors for spreading Legionella bacteria throughout the facility.

Upon confirmation of the contamination, facility management took immediate action. Both water jet cutters and all floor scrubbers were taken out of service on September 18, 2022. Water jet cutters were decontaminated using mechanical maintenance and biocide treatments and resumed operation on No-

vember 16, 2022. Although recommendations for safe use were provided, management opted to replace the contaminated scrubbers with backup equipment. Post-remediation testing confirmed the elimination of Legionella from the machines.

This outbreak underscores the growing risk of Legionella in industrial settings where water-aerosolizing devices are used. The CDC recommends that manufacturing facilities

implement and regularly update water management programs to mitigate these risks.

Urbanization, climate change, and aging infrastructure are contributing to the rise in Legionnaires' disease cases. In the U.S., cases have increased significantly among those over 34 years old.

"Our investigation highlights the need for public health authorities to consider nontypical sources of Legionella exposure in industrial environments," the report states.

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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.

## Dallas College receives unprecedented \$30 million private gift

The Dallas County Promise, powered by Dallas College and the Commit Partnership, is pleased to announce a series of new investments, including an unprecedented \$60 million multi-year investment from the O'Donnell Foundation to dramatically

expand student supports to substantially increase economic mobility across Dallas County. The investment is rooted in the proven impact that the Dallas County Promise has created, setting a national example of how to support low-income students in achieving a liv-

ing wage through educational attainment.

The O'Donnell Foundation investment, one of the largest education investments supporting economically disadvantaged students in North Texas history, will provide more students the opportunity

to benefit from enhanced college and workforce programs as well as numerous other supports promoting student success. Of the \$60 million investment, \$30 million is directed to Commit to comprehensively support stronger middle school and high school

advising across multiple school districts as well as data and other backbone supports, including coordination with employers, to enhance the overall Promise effort.

The remaining \$30 million investment from the O'Donnell Foundation rep-

resents a direct gift to Dallas College Foundation, the largest private gift in Dallas College's history. These funds will be dedicated to a variety of student supports to aid them in their journey to thriving wage

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### CHILD CARE, from Page 3

tional adjustments — from reducing hours to increasing fees — are Band-Aid solutions to a bleeding financial wound. The potential closure of childcare centers carries broader implications beyond the immediate disruption to family routines. The economic impact is significant, hampering North Carolina's recovery and growth when many are still dealing with the pandemic's lingering

effects. The end of stabilization grants threatens the livelihood of thousands of care workers, with nearly three in ten programs facing closure. This is not just a disruption; it is a devastation to the community and economic threads that hold our state together.

Every cut in childcare funding is a cut to a child's future, a family's stability, and our state's economic vitality. Behind the num-

bers are stories of real people making painful choices: educators like us who love our work but face financial instability and parents who may no longer have access to affordable care. These are not just policy failures; they are personal crises affecting thousands. It is time for North Carolina's legislators to step forward and recognize childcare for what it is: an essential infrastructure critical to economic stability and deserving of sustained investment. We need

a reinvestment in our state's future through robust support of childcare. This means not only preserving but increasing state funding to ensure that childcare centers across North Carolina can continue to serve their communities without sacrificing quality or accessibility. To our fellow North Carolinians, we ask you to join us, whether in person on the steps of the General Assembly, in spirit or by contacting your representatives. Support us in

demanding that our legislators act now to preserve and enhance this vital sector. Our actions today will define the future of our state and the legacy we leave for our children.

We are closing our centers on May 16 to stand up for this cause, but more importantly, to ignite a movement that echoes through every legislative hall and into every corner of our state. This is not just about childcare. It's about the kind of North Carolina we

want to live in. We refuse to step back into a past where childcare is undervalued and underfunded. Instead, we demand a future where our children and families flourish.

*Emma Biggs is a member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and the director of Pathway Preschool Center in Charlotte. Dee Dee Fields is a National Domestic Workers Alliance member and director of Landeedingdam Daycare Inc. in Durham.*



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# Biden commutes sentences of 37 federal death row inmates

By Stacy M. Brown  
NNPA Senior National  
Correspondent

The American Civil Liberties Union celebrated President Joe Biden's historic action in commuting 37 federal death sentences. The group proclaimed that Biden has taken an "unequivocal stand against one of the most flawed and inhumane mechanisms of the U.S. criminal legal system."

"President Biden took a historic and courageous step in addressing the failed death penalty in the United States – bringing us much closer to outlawing the barbaric practice once again," said Anthony D. Romero, executive director of the ACLU. "President Biden has reaffirmed the power of redemption over retribution and reminds us that state-sanctioned killing does not make us safer. The ACLU has long advocated against the death penalty and shed light on its fundamental flaws – it is error prone, racially biased, and a drain on public resources. And although we had hoped President Biden would commute all federal death sentences for those reasons, today's milestone brings us much closer to our goal of



The White House said the latest decision aligns with the administration's ongoing efforts to curtail the federal death penalty, leaving only three individuals still sentenced to death at the federal level. (Photo via NNPA)

outlawing the death penalty once and for all."

By commuting the sentences of 37 individuals on death row, Biden has taken the most consequential step of any president in our history to address the immoral and unconstitutional harms of capital punishment, the ACLU said in a release. "With a stroke of his pen, the President locks in his legacy as a leader who stands for racial justice, humanity, and morality. This will undoubtedly be one of the seminal achievements of the Biden presidency," Romero asserted.

On Monday, December 23, Biden commuted the sentences of 37 individuals on federal death row, changing their punishment from execution to life without the possibility of parole. The White House said the latest decision aligns

with the administration's ongoing efforts to curtail the federal death penalty, leaving only three individuals still sentenced to death at the federal level.

The commutations exclude cases involving terrorism or hate-motivated mass murder. Among those who remain on death row are Robert Bowers, responsible for killing 11 people at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018; Dylann Roof, who murdered nine Black worshippers at a Charleston church in 2015; and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, one of the Boston Marathon bombers in 2013.

"Make no mistake: I condemn these murderers, grieve for the victims of their despicable acts, and ache for all the families who have suffered unimaginable and irreparable loss," Biden said. "But

benefitted nearly 27,000 Dallas College students, and program enrollment has surged by 42% since 2023. This effort has the potential to materially transform the lifetime earnings of students being educated in Dallas County, potentially adding billions of dollars in incremental lifetime earnings to the regional North Texas economy.

guided by my conscience and my experience... I am more convinced than ever that we must stop the use of the death penalty at the federal level."

## Federal Executions Halted

Shortly after taking office, Biden's administration implemented a moratorium on federal executions through Attorney General Merrick Garland. Since then, no federal inmate has been executed.

The decision reflects Biden's long-standing opposition to capital punishment, dating back to his time as a senator and reiter-

ated during his 2019 presidential campaign when he called for eliminating the death penalty.

## Clemency Milestones

Biden's decision follows his announcement of clemency for approximately 1,500 individuals earlier this month, the most significant such action by any president in a single day. Those granted clemency included individuals in home confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic who successfully reintegrated into their communities.

The president has also granted categorical pardons for non-violent marijuana

possession and to former LGBTQI+ service members prosecuted for private conduct related to their sexual orientation.

## Broader Implications

The use of capital punishment remains legal in about half of U.S. states, where more than two dozen executions have occurred this year, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Nationwide, over 2,200 individuals remain on death row.

Billie Allen, one of the 37 whose sentences were commuted, has long main-

See INMATES, Page 13

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## GIFT, from Page 6

careers. Specifically, the gift features a \$6.25 million challenge grant to help Dallas College continue to expand its Promise scholarship program, which, similar to programs recently announced by other higher education partners across Texas, offers last-dollar tuition-free scholarships to

high-need students coming out of high school. The gift will also expand tuition and other forms of support to additional groups of students, including returning adult students, parents of Promise students and students engaging in workforce training programs.

Since 2018, Promise has

# Permanent standard time? Trump's plan could change how D.C., nation, experiences daylight

President-elect Donald Trump's announcement to eliminate daylight saving time (DST) has raised questions about its impact on daily life in Washington, D.C., and the country at large. The plan could lead to noticeable changes in how Americans experience daylight, particularly during the spring and summer.

Daylight saving time shifts daylight to later hours, offering extended evenings during warmer months. On the other hand, standard time prioritizes morning light, which is especially valued in the winter when children head to school. Trump's proposal aligns with calls from health experts who have



Trump's proposal aligns with calls from health experts who have long warned about the negative impact of ending daylight saving time. (Photo via NNPA)

long warned about the negative impact of ending daylight saving time.

## The Argument for Standard Time

Health professionals and

researchers typically have advocated for permanent standard time largely because of how it aligns with the biological clock.

Studies link the twice-

## Cultivating hope in uncertain times

By Michael R. Malone

(Newsweek) — Many sense that we are living in times of increasing uncertainty. Not only do we all experience personal loss and grief from time to time, but the individual heart cannot help but feel burdened under the collective weight of suffering—environmental disasters, polarization, and global upheaval—and the destabilizing presence of great uncertainty.

“Some people who are down or depressed experience a reduction in positive emotions and enjoyment of activities. It's a common component of depression when things that previously brought joy no longer do,” explained Jill Ehrenreich-May, professor and associate chair of the University of Miami College of Arts

and Sciences' Department of Psychology.

“When I think about hope, I think about a strategy to engage with those positive emotions that we're having trouble getting in touch with,” she added.

Ehrenreich-May highlighted growing neuroscience research into the practice of “savoring.” Putting people in contact with those things that make them feel hopeful or that bring a greater level of engagement and enjoyment, such as being with others or being in nature, has proved beneficial in shifting depression and anxiety.

“Contact alone with those situations or things may not be enough,” she noted. “We may have to engage in a deliberate process to pay attention, encode, and en-

gage with those things that bring us joy, that bring us hope, in a way that may not feel intuitive when you feel down.”

She recognized that there will be times when life feels especially stressful and highlighted that grief and loss cannot simply be transcended.

“You may not intrinsically feel all that motivated to savor the positive things because there's some grieving or loss that the body may need to do,” said Ehrenreich-May, whose research focuses on generating novel treatment approaches for emotional disorders in youth and adolescents.

“If you're like just 'look over there' to distract yourself, it will feel ingenuine and inorganic when stress-

See HOPE, Page 13

yearly time changes to increased risks of health problems, such as mood disorders, heart issues, and car accidents.

Dr. Nathaniel Watson of the University of Washington Medicine Sleep Center said that ending clock changes doesn't mean adopting permanent daylight-saving time. “The better option is standard time,” Watson told reporters.

Dr. Karin Johnson, a neurologist at Baystate Medical Center, explained

how daylight-saving time disrupts natural sleep patterns. “Forcing people to wake up earlier than their bodies are ready for makes mornings even harder,” she said. “Permanent daylight-saving time would only worsen that issue.”

## Potential Impact on D.C.

If the proposal is implemented, D.C. residents would see notable changes, particularly in the summer. June mornings would start with sunrises as early as 4:30 a.m., while evenings

would see sunsets before 8 p.m., compared to the current 8:30 p.m. Early risers might welcome the brighter mornings, but those who enjoy outdoor evening activities could find the earlier sunsets limiting.

Winter months would remain largely unaffected, as standard time is already used. Sunrises and sunsets would continue to follow familiar patterns, with darker mornings and earlier

See SLEEP, Page 9

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# Film Review: 'All We Imagine as Light' from the 2024 New York Film Festival

By Dwight Brown  
NNPA Film Critic

(\*\*\*) Two women. Two stories. Both being pulled in different directions. Away from traditional roles. Into the new India.

The younger and single Anu (Divya Prabha) is trying to break with tradition: "My parents are looking for someone for me to marry. But I don't want to." Her older, wiser and married roommate Prabha (Kani Kusruti) responds, "You can't escape your fate." Yet neither should expect their lives to be predictable over the course of this every subtle, 1h 58 feminist tale. A voyage of self-discovery thoughtfully created by documentarian turned writer/feature film director Payal Kapadia (*A Night of Knowing Nothing*).

Both women are nurses working in a Mumbai hospital. Prabha feels secure with her life, though her husband lives abroad and she hasn't seen him in years. Anu is the more unsettled one. Questioning her destiny and having a steamy affair with the young man Shiaz (Hridu Haroon), which doesn't go unnoticed by her colleagues. When a fellow



Photo via NNPA

worker, Parvati (Chhaya Kadam), is evicted from her apartment and returns to her native coastal village, all three women make that journey.

Audiences looking for high-peaked emotions and traumatic drama, will be disappointed by what's to come. This character-study and slice-of-life fable shows simple people trying to make a life in a large city where they're just faces in a crowd. Within this personal framework, Kapadia delicately builds a story about lost souls looking for a foundation. Unbeknownst to them, the stability they seek rests with them.

Cinematographer Ranabir Das helps the director tell the story with engaging visuals. Low lighting. No fancy camerawork. Hospital rooms, apartments and shacks all look real be-

cause production designers Piyusha Chalke, Yashasvi Sabharwal and Shamim Khan downplay the sets and locations. The clothes the cast wears never intrude and exemplify working class life (costume designer Maxima Basu). The music is toned down too (original score Dhritiman Das), which helps create a natural atmosphere.

Kusruti as Prabha is the glue that binds. She's a mentor to her younger friend in the most stable ways. Yet she's going through changes too. Her big eyes, long black hair and beautifully toned skin steal every frame she's in. Prabha's Anu rebels by attempting to be promiscuous. She's tame by American standards, wild by Indian ones. A Doctor Manoj (Azeez Nedumangad) courts Prabha,

and that adds a grown-up romance to the mix. This may be a touching woman's allegory, but refreshingly the men are not demonized in the process.

The beautiful cinematography, gorgeous faces and delicate, sensitive sto-

rytelling are as powerful in hindsight as they are when watching the film on screen. There are no fireworks. Just a slow burning desire to find a new life.

That's what viewers will take away. Two life stories backdropped by the very

bustling city of Mumbai with its 21.6M people. Two disparate souls finding family among themselves. Told with a simplicity that's hypnotic.

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at [DwightBrownInk.com](http://DwightBrownInk.com).

## SLEEP, from Page 8

evenings.

### Historical Context and Public Debate

Daylight saving time was introduced during World War I to conserve energy and later became standard practice under the Uniform Time Act of 1966. It was widely promoted as a way to increase economic activity by extending daylight hours for businesses and

leisure. However, studies have questioned whether it achieves these goals.

Attempts to adopt permanent daylight-saving time in the 1970s faced backlash, particularly from parents concerned about children commuting to school in darkness. Still, some states have sought year-round DST.

### Ongoing Discussions

Whether Congress takes up Trump's initiative remains to be seen, but the conversation about ending daylight saving time will likely continue.

Dr. Watson pointed to the importance of aligning time with human biology. "Our bodies are not designed to adjust to artificial time changes," he said. "Standard time works better for overall health."

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# 'And That's the Tea Podcast' is a bold, transformative space for Black women

(Black PR Wire) Louisburg, NC – Lynn Graham, the visionary creator and producer behind the groundbreaking “And That’s the Tea Podcast,” is launching her latest project designed to empower and uplift Black women everywhere. With a mission rooted in authenticity, self-love, and unapologetic growth, this rebranded podcast brings forth reflections, life lessons, and bold stories that are as real as they are transformative.

This isn’t just another podcast. It’s a movement—a space for Black women and anyone searching for purpose, alignment, and



connection. “And That’s the Tea Podcast” invites listeners to take a deep dive into the complexities of life, relationships, and personal

growth with no filter and no apologies.

“We’re creating a space where stories are heard, truths are shared, and em-

powerment isn’t just encouraged—it’s demanded,” says Lynn Graham, creator and producer of the podcast.

While Lynn is the creator and mastermind behind the show, Imani, the powerful voice of the podcast, brings Lynn’s reflections and life lessons to life. Listeners will feel the depth of every story, every lesson, and every reflection, making this podcast a truly transformative experience.

### A New Vision

Previously known as Just Minding My Black-Owned Business, the podcast has evolved into something much bigger. The name change marks a transfor-

mation not just in title, but in purpose. The episodes, infused with powerful storytelling and insights, speak directly to the heart of what it means to navigate life’s challenges while staying true to yourself.

Listeners can expect a mix of life coaching, self-reflection, and soul-stirring conversations that touch on topics ranging from personal growth to reclaiming the life you deserve. Every episode promises to be more than just a discussion; it’s a journey—one that encourages you to pause, reflect, and make space for your true self.

Episode 1: “The Soil and

the Seed: Where Are You Planting?”

The first episode, “The Soil and the Seed: Where Are You Planting?” drops on January 7th, setting the tone for the season ahead. Lynn Graham digs into the concept of alignment, asking listeners the essential question: Where are you putting your energy, your time, and your love?

“We often focus on what we’re doing, but we don’t look at where we’re doing it. Are you pouring into places that nurture you, or are you wasting your energy in spaces that drain you?” Lynn shares in the opening of Episode 1.

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# Climate-driven insurance crisis sweeps the nation as non-renewals and premiums skyrocket

By Stacy M. Brown  
NNPA Senior National  
Correspondent



*Rising premiums and insurer withdrawals are creating a financial disaster that threatens national property values and economic stability. (Photo via NNPA)*

Homeowners across the United States face an escalating crisis as insurance companies abandon high-risk areas driven by climate change. A newly released Senate Budget Committee report reveals that non-renewal rates for home insurance have surged in coastal regions, wildfire-prone communities, and even inland counties. Rising premiums and insurer withdrawals are creating a financial disaster that threatens national property values and economic stability.

## The Scope of the Crisis

The report, which analyzed data from 23 major insurance companies representing 65% of the homeowners' insurance market, highlights the widespread

nature of the problem. While states such as Florida, Louisiana, California, and Texas often serve as focal points for insurance instability, the crisis is also spreading to less traditionally vulnerable regions. In 2023, states such as North Carolina, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Hawaii ranked among the highest for non-renewal rates.

Florida recorded the highest average statewide

non-renewal rate, but Texas did not break the top ten. The data shows that severe convective storms, wildfires, and hurricanes drive insurers out of markets, leaving millions of homeowners without coverage.

## Counties Hit the Hardest

Among the 100 counties with the highest non-renewal rates in 2023, 82 were coastal or wildfire-prone. Counties in North

Carolina, New Mexico, the Northern Rockies, and Southern New England are experiencing sharp non-renewal increases. The report also identifies several inland counties, including those in Oklahoma and Montana, where non-renewal rates are rising due to the growing threat of wildfires and severe storms.

In North Carolina, 13 inland counties, including Cumberland, Mecklenburg, and Guilford, were among the top 100 for non-renewal rates in 2023. Despite being

away from the coast, the report revealed that these areas continue to suffer from hurricanes and other extreme weather events.

## The Economic Fallout

The Senate report warns that the rising wave of non-renewals and premium increases could lead to a nationwide collapse in property values. Home insurance is critical for securing mortgages; without it, homeowners are left stranded financially, officials stated in the report, which parallels the 2008

financial crisis.

The report notes that "insured losses from natural disasters in the U.S. now routinely approach \$100 billion a year, compared to \$4.6 billion in 2000." As insurers retreat from high-risk areas, premiums for those with coverage are climbing rapidly. In counties with the highest climate risks, premiums increased by 22% between 2020 and 2023. Nationally, homeowners have seen

**See CRISIS, Page 12**

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## DATA responds to DART workshop on member city requests and demands

On Dec. 18, the DART Board of Directors held a workshop to discuss several key requests and demands raised by its member cities, primarily Plano. The discussion focused on four primary topics:

- Provide a sum of dollars equal to 25% of both Plano's 2024 and 2025 sales tax through a Interlocal Agreement (ILA)
- Provide a city-wide, single-zone GoLink service
- Provide a circulator service connecting the com-

mercial and business centers at Legacy

- Delay the upcoming bus replacement purchase

Some of the member cities' proposals offer promising opportunities for improvement. For instance, increased communication between DART and its member cities is a constructive step forward. Additionally, initiatives to streamline the development process on DART-owned land, without additional spending, align well with regional transit

goals.

However, not all requests are reasonable. Plano's demand to reclaim 25% of its sales tax contributions is fundamentally flawed. DART is not a financial reserve for cities to withdraw funds for non-transit-related projects. Using transit-dedicated funds for road projects undermines the agency's core mission and would significantly impact bus and rail services.

Plano's proposal for a citywide GoLink service is

equally problematic. Such a program would divert funds from fixed-route services, making it more challenging to maintain the comprehensive transit network. GoLink services are also expensive, difficult to scale, and exclude those who lack access to necessary technology. For a city council that emphasizes fiscal conservatism, prioritizing the most expensive option seems contradictory.

Moreover, Plano's request to alter DART's recently

passed bus procurement plan contradicts the will of the majority of the member cities. The procurement plan, approved by the DART Board, ensures timely replacement of aging buses to maintain service reliability. Changing course now would delay bus replacements, disrupt transit service across the region, and compromise the system's health—including in Plano. Unlike typical purchases, procuring buses takes 18 months to two years, making any delay

a major setback.

Regarding governance, several proposed changes warrant further exploration. However, a sales-tax-based board representation model or weighted voting system raises concerns about transparency and equity.

The Dallas Area Transit Alliance (DATA) urges the DART Board to carefully evaluate these proposals with a focus on equity, sustainability, and the agency's mission to serve transit riders across the region.

## CRISIS, from Page 11

their premiums rise by 21% since 2015, outpacing inflation by 40%.

### A Growing Threat Beyond Coastal States

The data reveals that the crisis is spreading. Rhode

Island, for example, saw a 280% increase in non-renewal rates between 2018 and 2023. Oklahoma, known more for tornadoes than coastal threats, ranked seventh in 2023 for non-

renewals, driven by severe convective storms and wildfires.

Even traditionally stable markets are at risk. Counties in New Jersey, New York, and Montana are also seeing rapid non-renewal increases. As insurers pull

back, officials said the ripple effects could destabilize housing markets in once-considered safe areas.

### The Warning Signs

The report clearly depicts an insurance market in danger. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell testified ear-

lier this year that "insurance of various different kinds—housing insurance, but also automobile insurance—has been a significant source of inflation over the last few years." Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen echoed the concerns, stating that

climate-driven losses are causing insurers to raise rates or exit markets entirely.

"Climate change is no longer just an environmental problem. It is a looming economic threat," the report concluded.

## REFORM, from Page 1

older populations are not spared from escalating police aggression.

Women also face an increasing risk of police force. In 1999, women comprised only 13% of those subjected to police force. By 2022, that figure had doubled to 28%. Among those who experienced force, women were more likely than men to perceive it as excessive, with 51% of women reporting excessive force compared to 44% of men.

### Persistent Disparities Across Age Groups

Young adults aged 18-24 were the most likely age group to experience police contact, with 25% reporting interactions in 2022. They were also the most likely to experience police-initiated contact (15%) and traffic accident-related contact (4%). Alarming, more than 1 in 5 individu-

als who reported the threat or use of force in their most recent police encounter were between 16 and 24 years old. The Prison Policy Initiative noted that these kinds of interactions can have life-threatening consequences, as over 70% of police killings in 2023 began with non-violent incidents or situations where no crime had been reported.

### Systemic Issues and Data Gaps

Officials at the Prison Policy Initiative published a "wish list" of 22 critical gaps in criminal legal system data. The list includes data on arrests for technical violations, the quality of healthcare in correctional facilities, and the outcomes of pretrial supervision. Officials said the absence of such data hampers efforts to understand and address the criminal legal system's

impact fully.

### The Case for Alternatives to Policing

Further, the available data suggest that many police encounters could be handled more effectively by alternative community resources. In 2022, nearly 30 million people initiated contact with police, but only half of those interactions involved reporting possible crimes. Many sought help for non-crime emergencies, such as medical issues, car accidents, or quality-of-life concerns. A 2022 analysis of 911 calls in major cities found that only 4% involved violent crimes. Officials said this indicates a need for investments in community-based services to reduce the risks associated with police intervention.

### The Path Forward

Some officials noted that the decline in police contact does reduce opportu-

nities for abuse. However, they said, the deep-seated racial disparities in policing remain unresolved.

"Just because the sheer number of police interac-

tions was lower than it has been in decades does not mean the problems with our nation's fraught system of policing are solved," the Prison Policy Initiative

stated in its release. "Racial disparities in police interactions, misconduct, and use of force remain pervasive and demand immediate attention."

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## HOPE, from Page 8

ors are bigger or more intense. You do not have to wallow in the loss or think about it every minute—allowing the sadness to just be until you're ready to engage with it in a way that feels more productive or more apt to be useful is the balance," she said.

While modern society provides for most of what we need to survive and thrive, some people sense that they're still not as happy as they might be. Others adhere to the belief that progress involves automat-

ic evolution to a better life and society. Yet inevitable advancement is not a given.

"So, it's not a relentlessly positive attitude that makes us feel better—it's being selective about the sort of engagement with things that truly are going to bring us joy at the moment," she said.

Ehrenreich-May noted that children and youth may have a harder time coping with uncertainty and stressful challenges.

"As we get older, we're able to visit history a bit

more and connect the present with the past. We know that everything does get better, or at least, for a period of time, will align with our values and beliefs and preferred experiences in the world," she said.

"That is a challenging notion for many people, particularly when they have not experienced as many challenging things happening to them in the past or who do not know the frequently iterative nature of the world. This is one

of those times where it's helpful to get the wisdom of the people who have experienced more challenging things," she added.

For Ehrenreich-May, that anchor was her grandparents, who were Holocaust survivors and often reminded her as a child growing up that you can't forget about history because it recurs when people forget about it.

"So, you can be hopeful about the future but also know that there are real impediments to getting to that

place. Perhaps being realistic and knowledgeable about what those impediments are gives you a more realistic chance at getting to that more hopeful place eventually," she said.

The truth language of poetry, mindfulness and meditative techniques, and a range of self-care techniques—even indulgence—can help the process.

## INMATES, from Page 7

tained his innocence. In a recent interview, Allen expressed hope that Biden would take action, saying, "As someone who's innocent, he should do the right thing sooner instead of later."

Allen described the grim atmosphere at Terre Haute federal prison, where most federal death row inmates are housed, during Donald Trump's presidency. Execution rehearsals reportedly increased following Trump's election, and some staff members taunted in-

mates in anticipation of resumed executions.

### A Step Toward Reform

Biden said his decision ensures that future administrations cannot easily reverse the moratorium or carry out executions based on outdated policies. "My administration remains committed to a fair and effective justice system, ensuring accountability while providing second chances where possible," Biden said. "This is a step toward that vision."



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# The Worst Christmas I Can Remember

By Dr. James L. Snyder

The best holiday for me is Christmas. I enjoy everything about Christmas except paying for many gifts. But looking back, it's all been worth it. I can't think of anything I would ever change.

It's the one time of the year that families get together who usually aren't together during the year because of work schedules and so forth.

I look forward to our great Christmas gatherings. There was a time in our family when the number of family members increased every year. I thought when we had children, that would be the end of it. But wouldn't you know all of our kids decided to have their own kids? And it's even come to the point where some of our grandkids are having their own kids.

Oh boy, when will this stop?

Actually, I hope it doesn't stop.

Everybody looks forward to the Christmas holiday and everything associated with it. It is very hard to have a bad Christmas, no matter what seems to happen.

After our Christmas holiday, I was sitting in my easy chair drinking coffee and reflecting on all the Christmases I had as a child. Those were fun times. I got to see relatives I haven't seen the rest of the year.

It was then I remembered something—the worst Christmas I ever had. I had forgotten about this, but all of a sudden, it came to mind.

When I was young, before I became a teenager, my parents would take me and my siblings downtown to meet Santa Claus. We would sit on his lap, take a candy cane from him, and tell him what we wanted for Christmas.

When we were done, he would say, "Ho, ho, ho," give us a Merry Christmas look, then send us back to our parents.

I vividly remember the first time I told him that I would love to have a pony for Christmas. He agreed to bring me a pony, and then he did his "ho, ho, ho" routine.

When I got up that Christmas, I noticed no pony under the Christmas tree. As I thought more about it, I realized that nothing was under the Christmas tree that I had asked Santa for.

I couldn't understand it. My parents told me Santa would bring me the Christmas presents I asked for. Of course, I believed them.

Several Christmases passed, and the same thing happened or didn't happen. And I was just a little bit confused about this guy called Santa Claus. Why wasn't he good to his word?

I remember the year I turned 13. I was now a teenager, and so I had graduated to that smart level of being a teenager.

At school, we were having some kind of Christmas party, and they were talking about Santa Claus coming down the chimney to put presents under the Christmas tree and in the stockings hung by the fireplace. I didn't think too much of it at the time.

That Christmas Eve, as we were getting our Christmas tree all "holidayed" up, I felt that something was missing with our Christmas decorations. Then, it hit me rather strongly.

"Dad," I cried in alarm. He looked at me and said, "What's wrong son?"

I looked at him angrily and asked, "Dad, where is the chimney?"

With a curious look, he responded, "What are you

talking about?"

"It's beginning to make sense," I seriously said to my father. "I now know what's wrong with our Christmas. I now know why I haven't got my pony."

My dad had no idea what I was talking about and asked me to explain.

"This week in school they were telling us all about Christmas and Santa Claus and Rudolph the red nose reindeer. One of the things they told us was that Santa Claus comes down the chimney to bring his gifts."

I paused for a moment and then continued, "So, that's why I've not got my pony for Christmas. Dad, where is our chimney?"

My dad was momentarily confused and had no idea how to respond to what I was saying.

"Well, son," my father said, "we don't have a chimney. We don't even have a fireplace so we don't need one."

"How then is Santa going to get me my Christmas presents under our Christmas tree I asked for while sitting on his lap?"

Thinking back over that now, I couldn't help but laugh. My father had a hard time explaining to me why we didn't need a chimney for Christmas time. Every year, just before Christmas, I ask, "Dad, will we have a chimney this year?"

After a while, he got tired of hearing me ask that question and refused to come up with any more excuses.

I was confused about Santa Claus and Christmas, not knowing what to believe. It took me some time to sort out the Christmas

holiday.

As I reflected on this, I thought that many things in life need sorting out. We believe something and then find out it wasn't the truth.

Jesus addressed this in John 8:31-33, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The truth about Jesus and His birth sets us free, and that truth can only be found in the Word of God.

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## FRIENDS, from Page 4

than them)

- 28% of older adults with close friends would like more contact with their close friends, but this percentage was much higher among those in fair or poor mental health or physical health

- 42% of older adults say it's harder to make new friends now than when they were younger, but 65% of

those in fair or poor mental health and 55% of those in fair or poor physical health said this

- 34% of older adults said it's now harder to maintain friendships than when they were younger, but the percentage was much higher among those in fair or poor mental health (61%) or physical health (47%)

The poll findings come

from a nationally representative survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for IHPI and administered online and via phone in August 2024 among 3,486 adults ages 50 – and older across the U.S. The Michigan sample included 1,174 respondents ages 50 - 94. The samples were subsequently weighted to reflect the U.S. and Michigan populations.

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# Happy Birthday Jesus



**Sister Tarpley**  
NDG  
Religion  
Editor

December 25th is the official birth of Jesus, our Lord and Savior in the United States. Do you really know HIM?

HE is King of the Jews and Israel; King of the Heavens; King of Kings; King of Glory; King of all Ages; King of Righteousness; and Sovereign King. Jesus is a friend to all; HE is the Beginning and the End. He heals the sick; He is the key to knowledge; HE is strong and powerful; He defends the feeble.

HIS yoke is easy and HIS burdens are light. There is no fault in HIM. HE is the doorway to deliverance; the



Highway to Heaven. HIS mercy is everlasting. He is the Savior of all mankind; HE is the centerpiece of civilization and HE cares for you!

A Christmas Poem: Jesus is the Reason for the Season and He brought joy to the world. However, it seems that at this time of

the year that many people become stressed with the hustle and bustle of giving and receiving the right gift that the true meaning of Christmas "Celebrating Jesus' birth" is lost in the midst of other stuff.

The poem below and some stress-release things at the end of this column

should help put things in order of importance.

*T'was the weeks before Christmas and all through the town; not many signs of Jesus were anywhere to be found. The people were all busy with Christmas-time chores; like decorating, baking, and shopping in stores.*

*Not many sang, "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed . . ." Instead they sang of Santa dressed-up in bright red. Plenty watched T.V. and drank eggnog from a tap; as hour upon hour the presents they did wrap. When what from the T.V. did they suddenly hear? A loud commercial, which told of a BIG SALE that's near.*

*So away to the mall they*

*all flew like a flash; buying things on credit and others with cash! And as they came home from their trip to the mall, did they think about Jesus? Oh, no, not at all! Their lives were so busy with Christmas-time things, no time to remember Christ Jesus, the King.*

*There were more presents*

*to wrap and cookies to bake, how could they stop and remember who died for their sake? To pray to the Savior; they had no time to stop, they needed more time to, "Shop till they dropped." From the big stores downtown to the stores at the mall, they would dash away,*

**See TARPLEY, Page 16**

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"The time is always right to do what is right." — Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Dallas CASA needs more Black volunteers to serve our community's abused and neglected children living in foster care.**

PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN ONLINE INFORMATION SESSION:

Thursday, Jan 9 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.      Thursday, Jan 23 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.  
Friday, Jan 17 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.      Friday, Jan 31 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

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

**DALLAS CASA**  
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# NDG Book Review: 'Resist' is a captivating read for history lovers

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

Throughout history, when decisions were needed, the answer has often been “no.”

No, certain people don't get the same education as others. No, there is no such thing as equality. No, voting can be denied and no, the laws are different, depending on the color of one's skin. And in the new book, “Resist!” by Rita Omokha, no, those things have not been accepted meekly.

In 1995, after she and her brothers traveled from their native Nigeria to join their mother at her new home in the South Bronx, young Rita Omokha's eyes were opened. She quickly understood that the color of her skin – which was “synonymous with endless striving and a pursuit of excellence” in Nigeria – was “so problematic in America.”

That became a bigger matter to Omokha later, fifteen years after her brother was deported: she “saw” him in George Floyd, and it shook her. Troubled, she traveled America on a “pilgrimage for understanding [her] Blackness...”. She began to think about the “Black young people across America” who hadn't been or wouldn't be quiet about racism any longer.

She starts this collection of stories with Ella Josephine



Baker, whose parents and grandparents modeled activism and who, because of her own student activism, would be “crowned the mother of the Civil Rights Movement.” Baker, in fact, was the woman who formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or SNCC, in 1960.

Nine teenagers, known as the Scottsboro Nine were wrongly arrested for raping two white women in 1931 and were all released, thanks to the determination of white lawyer-allies who were affiliated with the International Labor Defense and the outrage of students on campuses around America. Students refused to let a “Gentleman's Agreement” pass when it came to sports and equality in 1940. Barbara Johns demanded equal

education under the law in Virginia in 1951. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in 1966. And after Trayvon Martin and George Floyd were killed, students used the internet as a new form of fighting for justice.

No doubt, by now, you've read a lot of books about activism. There are many of them out there, and they're pretty hard to miss. With that in mind, there are reasons not to miss “Resist!”

You'll find the main one by looking between the lines and in each chapter's opening.

There, author Rita Omokha weaves her personal story in with that of activists at different times through the decades, matching her experiences with history and making the whole timeline even more relevant. In doing so, the point of view she offers – that of a woman who wasn't totally raised in an atmosphere filled with racism, who wasn't immersed in it her whole life – lets these historical accounts land with more impact.

This book is for people who love history or a good, short biography, but it's also excellent reading for anyone who sees a need for protest or action and questions the status quo. If that's the case, then “Resist!” may be the answer.

and spending quality time with long-time friends and a friendly smile for everyone you see.

Angels exist, but they don't all have wings; many times we call them Christians. The love of God is like the ocean, you can see its beginning but not its end. Thanking God when you wake up in the morning. Also, knowing that you're doing things right in God's eyes.

*(Editor's Note: This column originally ran in December 2012.)*

## TARPLEY, from Page 15

*dash away and visit them all!*

*And up on the rooftop there arose such a clatter; as grandpa hung lights up on his brand new ladder; he hung lights that would flash; he hung lights that would twirl; yet, he never once prayed to Jesus—the Light of the World. Christ's eyes—how they twinkle! Christ's Spirit, how merry. Christ's love, how enormous. All our burdens -- He'll gladly carry.*

*So instead of being busy, overworked and uptight, let's put Christ back in Christmas and enjoy some good nights.*

--Author Unknown

Natural Highs for Stressful Times: Falling in love, especially with Jesus. A good shower or bath. Laughing a lot, mainly at yourself. Listening to a good song. Praying continually. Enjoying a wonderful conversation. Making new friends