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'Free America Weekend' ignites 50-state wave of protests against Trump on July 4

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

A sprawling coalition of activists plans to transform July 4 into a day of protest and civic action, as demonstrators in all 50 states rally against President Donald Trump's second-term agenda. Billed as "Free America Weekend," the effort is the latest in a string of large-scale demonstrations, following June's "No Kings Day" protests that drew crowds nationwide to reject what organizers described as Trump's push toward authoritarian rule.

The nationwide protests are part of the 50501 Movement—named for the goal of holding 50 protests in 50 states on the same day. The movement emerged in late 2024 through grassroots organizing and quickly gained momentum across social media platforms such as Instagram and Reddit. Organizers say the Fourth of July is a fitting moment to highlight what they see as threats to American



Organizers say the Fourth of July is a fitting moment to highlight what they see as threats to American democracy, pointing to Trump's executive orders targeting immigrants, efforts to dismantle federal agencies, and the broader influence of Project 2025. (Photo via NNPA)

democracy, pointing to Trump's executive orders targeting immigrants, efforts to dismantle federal agencies, and the broader influence of Project 2025, a conservative policy blueprint criticized for seeking to consolidate power in the executive branch.

"There is no real independence to celebrate under this administration,"

the Women's March declared in its call to action for July 4. "This is our chance to stand together and reclaim the meaning of freedom." More than 170 events are planned across the country, ranging from rallies at state capitals to block parties, dance

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Democracy at a pivotal moment

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People In The News ...



Sen. Thom Tillis



Dr. Madeline Burillo-Hopkins

NDG Quote of the Week:

"The time is always right to do what is right."

- Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sen. Thom Tillis

By Lauren Burke

North Carolina Republican Thom Tillis Admits “Money Isn’t There” for Medicaid Will “Betray a Promise” Trump Made on the Senate floor on June 30.

North Carolina Republican Sen. Thom Tillis spoke against President Trump’s budget bill that will kill health care coverage for 17 million Americans.

“What do I tell 663,000 people in two years, three years, when President Trump breaks his promise by pushing them off of Medicaid because the funding’s not there anymore, guys?” Sen. Tillis asked the cham-



ber.

“It is inescapable. This bill will betray the promise Donald Trump made,” Tillis said, referring to the fact that Trump claimed the bill would not make certain cuts to health care.

“I’m telling the president that you have been misinformed. Supporting the Sen-

ate mark will hurt people who are eligible and qualified for Medicaid,” Tillis said firmly on the Senate floor.

Though the bill is likely to pass, a few Republicans who have a majority in Congress are beginning to confront the reality of the numbers and how many people in their districts and states will lose their health care coverage.

The budget bill is likely to be voted on this week. North Carolina is among several states, along with Kentucky, Louisiana, and Arkansas that will be impacted by the cuts.

Over the last 48 hours, President Trump attacked Tillis after the North Carolina Republican announced

he would vote against the package.

The next day, June 29, Sen. Tillis announced he would not seek re-election. The announcement sets up an opportunity to pick up a seat in the U.S. Senate.

Sen. Tillis spoke on how he conducted his analysis using a group from the left and a group from the right and government data.

Sen. Tillis’ words represented a rare rebuke by a

Republican member of the Senate. Only Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) has remained consistent in his opposition to Trump’s budget bill. The legislation will balloon the debt by trillions.

Tillis’ involvement in public service began by serving as the PTA president of his daughter’s high school and as a member of the Town of Cornelius Board of Commissioners.

In 2006, he was elected to

the North Carolina House of Representatives and was selected by his peers to serve as Speaker of the House from 2011 to 2014.

He was elected as U.S. Senator in 2014.

Tillis notes that he was unable to afford college after high school and took a minimum wage job as a warehouse records clerk. After working his way up the ladder he earned his degree at the age of 36.

Dr. Madeline Burillo-Hopkins

(Dallas College) — Dallas College is proud to announce that Dr. Madeline Burillo-Hopkins was unanimously elected to serve on the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Those elected will serve three-year terms starting July 1, 2025.

CHEA has been around since 1996 and serves its members, students and society through advocacy for the value and independence of accreditation, recognition of accrediting organizations and commitment to quality in higher education.

“It is truly an honor and a privilege to be able to represent Dallas College within CHEA and help advocate for higher education accreditation,” said Burillo-Hopkins. “I look forward to serving the members and public with the various responsibilities and programs CHEA has undertaken since 1996.”

Burillo-Hopkins joined Dallas College in 2024 as



president of Brookhaven Campus. She previously was vice chancellor workforce instruction for Houston Community College (HCC) and president at Houston Community College Southwest College.

She served on the board for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Commission on Economic and Workforce Development and currently serves on the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC). Burillo-Hopkins has been awarded the HCC Chancellor’s Medallion and Eagle Award and was rec-

ognized as one of Houston Woman Magazine’s 50 Most Influential Houston Women.

In May 2023, she was recognized by the Texas Women’s Foundation with the Maura Women Helping Women and Young Leader Awards. In 2025, Dallas Innovates, in partnership with the Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce, recognized her as one of the most innovative leaders in AI in Dallas-Fort Worth.

Celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2025, Dallas College consists of seven campuses — Brookhaven, Cedar Valley, Eastfield, El Centro, Mountain View, North Lake and Richland — plus a dozen centers located throughout Dallas County. As one of the largest community colleges in the U.S., Dallas College offers online and in-person learning, serving more than 127,000 credit, workforce and continuing education students annually.

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American democracy is at a pivotal moment and none of us should be silent

By Ben Jealous

None of us should be silent about the recent use of federal agents by this administration to bully, arrest, and investigate political opponents. Just as none of us should accept as normal or okay its use of the military against Americans exercising their First Amendment rights.

Donald Trump's gleeful embrace of fascist tactics is on display almost daily. As he tries to run roughshod over the courts and sics federal agents on members of Congress and other public officials, we need to sound every alarm we can about the threats to checks and balance and American democracy itself.

The violent treatment of US Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) earlier this month at a press conference being held in Los Angeles by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem is just one recent example.

Sen. Padilla spoke up, identified himself, and tried to ask a question. For that, he was physically forced out of the room, pushed to the ground, and handcuffed.

Noem and others in the Trump administration have said Sen. Padilla forced his way into the press conference, "charged" Noem at

the podium, and failed to identify himself. Video and witness accounts of the event seem to expose that as a pack of lies.

Attempting to provide cover for the administration, cries of "political theater!" from the Far Right predictably filled the airwaves and online feeds. But it couldn't be clearer that Sen. Padilla did everything right. He was escorted by a National Guardsman and an FBI agent into the building and then into Sec. Noem's press briefing. He had even asked permission first to make sure it was okay for him to go in. According to the senator:

"They opened the door for me, they walked in and were standing near me as I was listening for several minutes during the press conference. And then when I felt compelled to start asking questions, before I could get two or three words out, there were hands on me, and you saw what happened next. So this was not theatrics. This was not me crashing an event. You can't get more secure than being in an FBI office in the second-largest city in America."

Last month, members of Congress joined the mayor of Newark, NJ to visit a controversial ICE deten-

tion facility in the city. US Representative LaMonica McIver (D-NJ) was arrested when an altercation arose between security and the delegation of elected officials.

It is worth noting that a cloud of lies from the administration surrounded that incident as it did for the incident with Sen. Padilla. The dishonesty of the administration's story about what happened at the detention center is exposed in how it keeps shifting.

At first, the Trump administration said the officials "stormed the gate and broke into the detention facility." But an indictment against Rep. McIver issued this month states the lawmakers peacefully entered through an open security gate and then proceeded to an interior reception area.

Rep. McIver stated, "the facts of this case will prove I was simply doing my job," and called her arrest and subsequent indictment "a brazen attempt at political intimidation." She is right. And the condemnation of her treatment and the charges filed against her have been bipartisan – even if Trump's enablers in this current Congress have not yet found the backbone to speak out as some former Republican members have.

It is well within the reasonable duties of a member of Congress to show up and ask questions at press conferences or sites of concern. Members of Congress serve as representatives of their constituents and are expected to advocate for their views and needs.

Congressional authority to investigate and exercise oversight is not limited to formal committee hearings. Attending press conferences and visiting sites like the New Jersey ICE facility allow members to gather information, speak on behalf of their constituents, and communicate with the public.

For years, Trump mischaracterized any attempts to hold him accountable for his egregious lawbreaking as the "weaponization" of law enforcement against him and his followers. Now we see it was all a precursor to his actual attempts to weaponize law enforcement against those who he deems his political opponents.

Speak out. Spread the word and keep telling the truth. Show your elected officials who are standing up to the MAGA assault on democracy your support. And if your elected officials are echoing this administration's lies or whitewashing its authoritarian lawless-

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Keep up with the news

O N L I N E

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Metals found in disposable E-cigarette vapor could pose health risks

(Newsweek) — Brightly colored inexpensive and disposable electronic cigarettes and vapes continue to gain popularity. These devices turn flavored nicotine-containing liquid into a vapor that people inhale over hundreds or thousands of puffs — commonly called vaping. Researchers report in ACS Central Science that after a few hundred puffs, some disposable vaping devices released higher amounts of metals and metalloids than older refillable e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes, thereby raising a user's risk of health problems.

"Our study highlights the hidden risk of these new and popular disposable electronic cigarettes — with hazardous levels of neurotoxic lead and car-



Elsa Olofsson / Unsplash

cinogenic nickel and antimony — which stresses the need for urgency in enforcement," says Brett Poulin, the corresponding author of the study from the University of California, Davis.

Studies on early genera-

tions of refillable e-cigarettes (e.g., refillable pens, box mods and pods) found that their heating components could release metals such as chromium and nickel ions into the internal liquid that then becomes the vapor people breathe.

Inhaling certain metals and metalloids is potentially harmful, increasing a person's risk of cancer, respiratory disease and nerve damage.

Although marketing of most disposable e-cigarettes is not authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the devices remain widely available. In the past few years, disposable e-cigarette sales have overtaken sales of older refillable vapes, but little is known about the elemental composition of vapors from the newer devices. So, Poulin and colleagues assessed popular disposable e-cigarette brands to evaluate the potential health risks they could pose to a user.

The researchers first identified the metal and metalloids inside seven dis-

posable devices from three brands, comparing liquids with light and heavy levels of flavoring. The original unused liquids had low levels of ionic metals and metalloids, though some devices had surprisingly high levels of lead and antimony. The team traced the source of lead to leaded copper alloys used for non-heating components, which leach into the e-liquid. Antimony did not have a definable source.

Then they activated the disposable e-cigarettes, which heated the internal liquid and created between 500 and 1,500 puffs for each device. Analyses of the vapors determined that:

- The levels of ionic metals and metalloids including chromium, nickel, and antimony increased as the

number of puffs increased, whereas concentrations of ionic zinc, copper, and lead were elevated at the start, and each device had different emissions.

- Compared with previous studies, most of the tested disposable e-cigarettes released higher amounts of metals and metalloids into vapors than older refillable vapes.

- One of the disposable e-cigarettes studied released more lead during a day's use than nearly 20 packs of traditional cigarettes.

The researchers next assessed the health risk faced by a daily user of these devices. For two of the disposable vapes, the team collected toxicity information for chromium and anti-

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Researchers identify pathways of problematic drinking during adolescence

(Newsweek) — Heavy drinking during adolescence is known to be a major risk factor for developing an alcohol use disorder later in adulthood. New research has used artificial intelligence modeling to find that personality traits — such as extroversion or introversion — can also play a role in creating distinct pathways towards problematic drinking during adolescence.

"Traditionally, alcohol research identifies predictors of drinking by separately investigating only a few pre-selected measurements for group differences, for example, low versus heavy drinkers," explained Kilian M. Pohl, professor of psychiatry at Stanford University. "However, drinking behavior is likely

influenced by complex interactions among numerous factors that can vary significantly across individuals. Deep learning algorithms offer the capability to model this complexity by searching across an entire dataset for constellations of predictors on an individual level."

Pohl together with postdoctoral scholar Camila Gonzales and colleagues developed a deep-learning algorithm to analyze data collected annually from 285 participants in the National Consortium on Alcohol and Neurodevelopment in Adolescence (NCANDA) study during a period of seven years — from approximately 15 to 21 years of age. At each annual visit, lasting roughly four and a half hours, 240 measurements

were recorded regarding demography, personality, perceptions about drinking, peers, mental health, substance use, environment, neuropsychological performance, and brain imaging.

"The algorithm charted each individual's visits and collected data onto a two-dimensional map as a unique track," explained Pohl. "Tracks evolving in a similar fashion were clustered together into groups, identifying distinct pathways of abstaining from and transitioning towards problematic drinking. The predictors of heavy drinking pathways were dependent on personality traits and modifiable risk factors related to peer behaviors

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GOP controlled U.S. Senate passes largest cut to food assistance in history

By Lauren Burke

After a record number of consecutive votes over two consecutive nights, the Republican controlled U.S. Senate passed President Trump’s budget bill that includes the largest cut to food assistance in history. The bill also threatens health care coverage for over 15 million Americans.

“This is a reversal of so much progress we’ve had. Under Biden-Harris, we reduced childhood poverty in half, this rolls that back,” said Jotaka Eaddy, the founder of Win With Black Women.

“This bill takes health



Image via NNPA

care away from 16 million Americans,” State of the People founder Angela Rye pointed out.

The two were on a marathon State of the People broadcast that featured Black religious, political,

and community leaders. The Senate passed Trump’s budget bill with the assistance of a tie-breaking vote from Vice President J.D. Vance. The legislation now goes to the U.S. House.

President Trump is fo-

cused on undoing the work of President Biden.

The legislation passed by the Senate repeals the Inflation Reduction Act and cuts the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIPs) that provides low-cost health coverage to children in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid but who cannot afford private insurance. President Trump is also focused on giving a tax cut to the wealthiest Americans in the country. “Republicans jammed through a partisan megabit that slashes Medicaid, nutrition assistance, and other critical programs,” wrote

Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) after the vote.

“Republicans have jammed through a cruel and callous bill that will rip health care and food assistance away from millions of Americans. All so Donald Trump can give massive tax breaks to his billionaire donors. It’s a gutting betrayal of working-class Americans,” stated Sen. Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD) after the bill passed.

The legislation extends the 2017 tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the rich, it overhauls who is eligible for Medicaid and food stamps, adds paperwork that is likely to reduce

program eligibility, and it phases out green energy tax credits. The bill also adds 4.5 trillion to the debt, according to most estimates.

Three Republican Senators voted against the bills: Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Senator Rand Paul (R-KY), and Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC). “My hope is that the House is gonna look at this and recognize that we’re not there yet,” Sen. Murkowski said after voting for the bill. Though there are members in the Republican House Freedom Caucus who don’t agree with aspects of the legislation, it is likely to pass.

LEGAL NOTICE

These Texas Lottery Commission scratch ticket games will be closing soon:

Game #	Game Name / Odds	\$	Official Close of Game	End Validations Date
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2629	\$50 Blowout Overall Odds are 1 in 4.00	\$5	8/20/25	2/16/26
2413	Ca\$h Blowout Overall Odds are 1 in 3.92	\$10	8/20/25	2/16/26
2570	Jackpot Millions Overall Odds are 1 in 3.88	\$20	8/20/25	2/16/26
2517	Millionaire Maker Overall Odds are 1 in 3.54	\$30	8/20/25	2/16/26
2455	\$5,000,000 Ultimate Overall Odds are 1 in 3.64	\$50	8/20/25	2/16/26

Texaslottery.com is the official source for all pertinent game information. Game closing procedures may be initiated for documented business reasons. These games may have prizes unclaimed, including top prizes. In addition, game closing procedures will be initiated when all top prizes have been claimed. During closing, games may be sold even after all top prizes have been claimed. Must be 18 or older to purchase a ticket. For help with a gambling problem, ncpgambling.org. © 2025 Texas Lottery Commission. PLAY RESPONSIBLY.

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Keep Up with the News Back Home!

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www.northdallasgazette.com

Music's role for infants, toddlers, and their families

By Head Start
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services

Hearing is one of the first senses to develop — babies are listening to and learning from their birth parents before they are born! Once children are born, music and singing have important impacts on their early development. It supports brain development and skills across multiple Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) domains.

What does research say?

Music is universal across



Photo via NNPA

languages and cultures.

Parents and other adults regularly sing to their ba-

bies. They sing for many reasons — to soothe their babies, entertain them, lull

them to sleep, and help them wait or transition to the next activity.

Singing engages infants more effectively than just speech.

When we sing to babies, we often use facial expressions, exaggerate words and sounds, and use playful movements and gestures. This special combination of communication methods provides babies with rich social-communicative information. The rhythmic patterns and predictability help give infants important communication cues.

Singing with babies promotes bonding and reduces stress.

When singing with babies, parents and other adults pay close attention to the baby's cues and adjust their singing to match the baby's needs. These interactions provide a powerful opportunity for bonding between the baby and the adult. Singing to infants reduces the infant's distress and increases their emotional regulation more than just speech. Singing also benefits the adult by reducing stress and anxiety, increasing feelings of

See MUSIC, Page 8

Applications now open for Collin College's new Software Development bachelor's program

Collin College is accepting applications for its new Bachelor of Applied Technology (BAT) in Software Development, launching this fall.

The program, which will be housed at Collin College's Frisco Campus, builds on the college's current Associate of Applied Science degree in Software Development. It will offer hands-on experience with real-world software development practices, including Agile teamwork, collaborative tools, and modern programming frameworks. Students will develop critical skills in project man-



Collin College

agement and team collaboration that are common in the software development industry today.

Applications for the fall

semester will remain open until Aug. 8. Those interested in beginning the program next spring will be able to apply for admission

starting Aug. 9.

Acceptance into the BAT in Software Development program requires admission to Collin College,

completion of an Associate of Applied Science degree in Software Development or a closely related degree from an accredited educational institution, and completion of an application to the BAT in Software Development.

For more information about the Software Development bachelor's program, visit www.collin.edu/departments/software-development.

Collin College serves more than 60,000 credit and continuing education students annually and offers more than 200 degrees and certificates, including

a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), a Bachelor of Applied Technology (BAT) in Cybersecurity, a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Construction Management, a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in Clinical Operations Management, and a new Bachelor of Applied Technology (BAT) in Software Development. The only public college based in Collin County, Collin College is a partner to business, government, and industry, providing customized training and workforce development. For more information, visit www.collin.edu.



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Dallas CASA seeks more bilingual volunteers to help children

Dallas CASA is actively seeking more bilingual Spanish-speaking volunteers to serve children who have been victims of abuse or neglect and are living in foster care.

For children and families who speak only Spanish, the child welfare system can be especially frightening. For a child who speaks only Spanish, foster care can be a lonely and confusing place when there is a language barrier. For families who speak only Spanish, the challenges include understanding the steps to reunification with their children.



DWG Studio

A Dallas CASA volunteer who speaks Spanish can foster better and more timely communication with all parties involved in the case, leading to improved outcomes for children and their families.

Dallas CASA will be hosting a volunteer information session on Wednesday, July 16, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. for anyone interested

in stepping up for this valuable role. A reception will start things off at 6 p.m. with the informational program beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Guest speakers will include Spanish-speaking Dallas CASA volunteers who can share about their experiences supporting children in the child welfare system.

The event will be held at Dallas CASA (2757 Swiss Avenue in Dallas).

Dallas CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)

seeks to protect children, restore childhood and help child victims of abuse or neglect achieve their full potential.

The agency's trained and supervised community volunteers are assigned by judges to advocate for the best interests of children who have experienced abuse or neglect and are living in the protective care of the state.

For many children in foster care, their Dallas CASA volunteer is the only consistent, caring adult in their

lives during a frightening, uncertain time.

Dallas CASA envisions a day when all children experience safe childhoods and grow into resourceful, healthy adults.

Now in its 45th year, Dallas CASA serves more children than any of the more than 900 CASA programs nationwide. In 2024, 1,009 Dallas CASA volunteers were assigned to advocate for 2,042 children in protective care.

To learn more, visit dallascasa.org.

PIVOTAL, from Page 3

ness, let them hear your anger.

Democracy is worth fighting for. Our rights are worth fighting for. When we organize, when we stand together, We the People are more powerful than democracy's foes. America

can survive and the truth can still win. We just cannot shy away from the fight. And that fight is here.

Ben Jealous is the executive director of the Sierra Club and a professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania.

VAPE, from Page 4

mony, substances that have non-toxic and carcinogenic forms.

Only the non-toxic form of chromium, Cr(III), was present, but a mixture was observed between the less toxic form of antimony, Sb(V), and the carcinogenic form, Sb(III), in the vapors. However, nickel levels in vapors from three devices and Sb(III) levels in vapors from two devices exceeded cancer risk limits. The vapors from four of the devices had nickel and lead emissions that surpassed health risk thresholds for diseases other than cancer.

The researchers tested

only three of the nearly 100 disposable e-cigarette brands available on store shelves. They say the results are concerning because of the current popularity and extensive use of disposable e-cigarette products, especially among adolescents and young adults.

The authors acknowledge support from the University of California Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences T32 training program, and the California Agricultural Experiment Station.



Juneteenth has twin success with Ancestral Echoes and tennis exhibition

What does tennis, African drums and cultural legacies have in common?

It's all about learning how to enjoy, remember and honor Juneteenth.

Youth activities are the main focus of the fourth annual Juneteenth Tennis Exhibition (JTE), held Saturday, June 21, at Kiest Tennis Center.

Players from high schools in southern Dallas aced and volleyed their way through their sets, as judges determined which top three would ultimately receive Tennis Summer Scholarships. Many of the players came from South Oak Cliff, Spruce, Sunset, Pinkston and Roosevelt.

iPlayTennis, a special JTE feature this year, allowed youth 5 to 12 years old to learn tennis funda-



Celeb Doubles Winners Zarin Gracey and Chad West; Scholarship Recipients Precious Azua, Genesis Mendoza and Nablut Moo; Celeb Runners-up Rev Edlen Cowley and Johnny Rogers; and in back, General Berry, JTE co-chair. (Courtesy photo)

mentals. The free lesson was a first for many of the 12 or so participants. "I had fun learning how to play. I wanna play again," said nine-year-old first-time player Jason Berry.

Celebrity Doubles Match, the exhibition's main fundraising event, also stirred plenty of excitement. Dal-

las City Councilmen Chad West and Zarin Gracey outlasted Rev. Edlen Cowley, of the Horizon Texas Conference United Methodist Church (UMC), and Johnny Rogers, president of Trinity Review Services.

Gracey joined West to congratulate Camp Wisdom UMC, aka, The Camp,



The iPlayTennis players. Second row: DISD's AAD Aaron Wallace, Kiest Tennis Center Coach Jandiya and Coach Sara, and Co-chair Berry. (Courtesy photo)

on creating an active community event, encouraging youth to broadening their sports interest.

JTE's largest donor, Rogers added that he was skeptical about his performance, yet "had fun just hanging in there."

Rev. James Minor and General Berry truly survived in their Old vs. New

School doubles match against the much younger scholarship winners. "...grueling is the word," said Rev. Minor. "I'm just glad I'm still able to stand."

"This tennis event can bring greater interest to our young people," said Aaron Wallace, assistant athletic director over tennis in Dallas Independent School

District, saying he'll support it.

"... a great turnout by our area high school players and our young beginners," JTE co-chair Jonathan Thomas, said, adding that with fantastic support from the community, DISD and our sponsors, it'll continue to grow,

"Ancestral Echoes" Connects Our Past to the Present

African drums, dancers and storytelling rounded out Camp Wisdom's Juneteenth celebration titled "Ancestral Echoes: Sacred Sounds and Movements."

Performances included Bandan Koro African Drum and Dance Ensemble, Oba the African Story Teller and a panel on hymn lining.

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MUSIC, from Page 6

well-being and self-esteem, and promoting feelings of closeness with their baby.

Singing with infants supports learning across many developmental areas.

Research shows that singing increases emotional regulation, social skills like prosocial behavior, and language learning. Using instruments like shakers and bells helps young children build fine and gross motor skills as they move and make music along to the beat. Listening to music and moving to the beat helps young babies learn to recognize patterns in music and language. Singing songs with rhymes, numbers, and patterns supports older infants' and toddlers' cognitive development, including memory, sequencing, and storytelling.

Connecting at Home

Singing with your young child can improve their focus, communication, emotional regulation, social, cognitive, and physical skills. It can also help you feel calmer and more connected to your infant.

Word Swap

If you aren't sure what to sing to your baby, try using a song you and your baby already enjoy, and change the words to adapt to different situations. Like singing, "Ba ba bottle, it's time to eat" to the tune of "Baa Baa Black Sheep."

Bounce to the Beat

When singing or listening to music together, bounce your baby in your lap or pat them to the rhythm of the music. This helps young infants become familiar with

musical rhythms before they are able to move their bodies independently.

Follow the Leader

When singing your young child's favorite song, pause, wait, and look for them to fill in the next word or movement. These back-and-forth interactions support social connections, language, memory, and sequencing skills.

Hear Me Out

Learn songs that include feelings and emotional words along with matching facial expressions and body language. Combining singing with language and emotional expression helps young children understand their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Even if they're not talking about feelings yet, singing is a great way to calm them when upset.



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Public Enemy drops surprise album 'Black Sky Over the Projects'

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Public Enemy has returned with a blistering new surprise album, "Black Sky Over the Projects: Apartment 2025," a defiant 12-track collection that fuses the group's signature social commentary with a fresh dose of old-school fire. Released without advance notice, the record is available on a "pay-what-you-want" basis for 72 hours, giving fans unprecedented access to the group's most urgent work in years.

"These new tracks are for you to get down to at home," said Flavor Flav, who joins Chuck D at the forefront of the release. "Pay whatcha want for the next 72 hours."

From the opening bars of "C'mon Get Down," the album showcases the enduring power of hip-hop to challenge injustice and unify generations.

Chuck D, credited under his real name Carlton Ridenhour, and Flavor Flav deliver scathing verses over production by Carl Ryder, C-Doc, JP Hesser, and Sam Farrar.



Image via NNPA

Cuts like "Evil Way" call out performative gangsterism— "You got to change your evil way / What goes up comes back down"—while "Sexagenarian Vape" explores the tension between youth culture and ageism, a recurring theme throughout the record.

Public Enemy also revisits their longtime critique of the American political system. On "March Madness," the group takes aim at lawmakers' inaction over gun violence in schools: "Grade One to Twelve / Even kindergarten / Need security from this sick trend started."

Elsewhere, "Fools Fool Fools (Dirty Drums Mixx)" rails against climate denial, political corruption, and what the group calls "the masquerade parade spinning in webs of cha-

rades." The album doesn't shy away from humor and swagger.

"Messy Hens" finds Flavor Flav taunting gossipers: "Ain't worried bout another sucker / Talkin' 'bout Messy Hens on Hennessy."

"Public Enemy Comin Throoooo," meanwhile, celebrates the group's longevity and their place in hip hop's pantheon, referencing the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Lollapalooza, and decades of tours.

With production credits spanning California, Pennsylvania, and New York, "Black Sky Over the Projects: Apartment 2025" represents a cross-country statement of resilience. Veteran drummer Tré Cool (Green Day) contributes live percussion on "Fools Fool Fools," while C-Doc and JP Hesser's engineer-

ing brings a raw immediacy to the record.

On "Ageism," Chuck D delivers one of the album's most personal performances, confronting stereotypes about aging artists: "Been their age, they ain't never been mine... Ageism stuck

in the bittersverse."

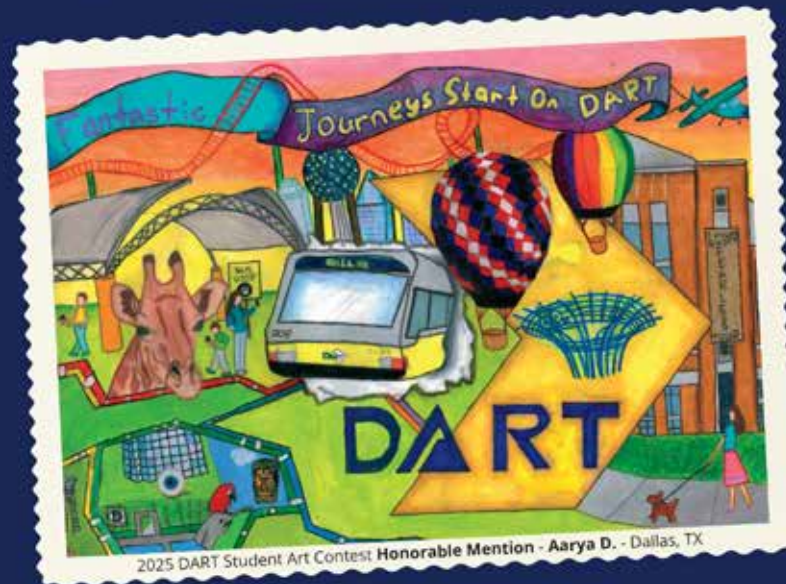
From the percussive stomp of "...The Hits Just Keep on Comin..." to the confrontational closer "March Madness,"

Public Enemy prove they remain as vital—and as unflinching—as ever. The

album is now available at www.publicenemy.com, where fans can name their price during a 72-hour window.

After decades of speaking truth to power, Chuck D and Flavor Flav are showing no signs of retreat.

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and expectations of alcohol use outcomes."

"By uncovering unique pathways of drinking behavior, this research highlights that the factors driving adolescents towards heavy drinking are not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon," said Pohl. "It reveals how distinct personality

traits, peer influences, and expectations of alcohol outcomes shape different drinking trajectories. For example, risk factors for extroverted personalities are sensation seeking and using cannabis. Introverted heavy drinkers tend to believe that alcohol enhances their social interaction as they

become older. In contrast, low-to-moderate drinkers were less focused on sensation-seeking and did not expect alcohol drinking to have a positive outcome."

Pohl believes that two factors that encourage heavy adolescent drinking — peer influence and positive expectations — can be changed through open dialogue.

Sean 'Diddy' Combs convicted on federal Mann Act counts, cleared of racketeering and sex trafficking

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Sean "Diddy" Combs was convicted Wednesday of transporting two women across state lines for sex but acquitted of running a criminal enterprise and two counts of sex trafficking. The split verdict capped a weeks-long federal trial that exposed the hip-hop mogul's private life to public scrutiny and left him facing prison time for felony convictions.

Jurors in U.S. District Court in Manhattan returned the following decisions after several days of deliberation:

- Count 1: Not guilty of racketeering conspiracy.
- Count 2: Not guilty of sex trafficking of former girlfriend Cassandra Ventura.
- Count 3: Guilty of Mann Act transportation of Ventura.
- Count 4: Not guilty of



Photo via NNPA

sex trafficking of another former girlfriend, identified as "Jane."

- Count 5: Guilty of Mann Act transportation of "Jane."

Combs, who had spent decades cultivating a brand defined by luxury and influence, sat impassively as the foreperson read the verdicts in a quiet courtroom.

His mother, several of his children, and other family members were present to hear the outcome. The

defense secured three acquittals, including the most serious charge of racketeering conspiracy, which carried the possibility of life in prison. Jurors also declined to convict Combs of sex trafficking either woman.

Prosecutors alleged that Combs used his businesses and employees to arrange hotels, flights, and drugs for what witnesses described as "freak-off" encounters. They argued that his staff helped maintain

single, coordinated show of resistance.

While organizers have emphasized nonviolence, some local groups have reported receiving threats and harassment online. In Illinois, protest leaders said they secured permits to rally at the Capitol grounds to help ensure participants' safety after threats from pro-Trump groups. "This movement is about more than just one day," organizers wrote online. "It's about standing firm in our beliefs and seeing it through, no matter the challenges we may face."

control over the women through manipulation and intimidation. Defense attorneys countered that while Combs' personal relationships were unconventional, they were consensual, and that the government had overreached by attempting to portray them as part of an organized criminal enterprise.

The two guilty verdicts on Mann Act violations are serious felony convictions, each punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Sentencing has not yet been scheduled. Combs' attorneys have now asked for bail because he's no longer charged with racketeering.

As Combs stood to leave, he turned to his family,

blew a kiss, and said quietly, "I love you all."

One of his lawyers told reporters outside court, "Mr. Combs appreciates that the jury looked closely at the evidence. While we are disappointed in the convictions, we are grateful for the acquittals and will continue to fight at sentencing."

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protests, banner drops, and community art projects. In New York, protests are scheduled both at the state Capitol in Albany and at New York City Hall. Other major gatherings will take place at the California and Texas State Capitols and in cities including Philadelphia, Tampa, and Tallahassee.

The Women's March website encouraged participants to host neighborhood events and create spaces where people "who aren't going to come to a pro-

test can still dream about freedom with hot dogs and veggie burgers." Organizers said the combination of celebration and dissent reflects their conviction that resisting Trump's policies and building community go hand in hand. In addition to "No Kings Day," activists have staged numerous demonstrations over the past year condemning what they describe as systemic attacks on civil liberties and democratic norms. Free America Weekend is intended to unify those efforts into a

Trustees warn of looming cuts to Social Security and Medicare as trust funds dwindle

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Social Security and Medicare are facing mounting financial challenges, with both programs projected to fall short of paying full benefits within the next decade unless Congress intervenes. According to the 2025 Trustees Report, the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) Trust Fund will only be able to pay full scheduled benefits until 2033. At that point, recipients would receive just 77 percent of their benefits. Medicare's Hospital Insurance (HI) Trust Fund is also projected to be depleted in 2033, three years earlier than last year's estimate, after which 89 percent of benefits could be paid.

If the OASI and Disability Insurance (DI) funds were combined, the Social



Image via NNPA

Security program would be depleted in 2034, paying only 81 percent of scheduled benefits. The DI fund on its own is projected to remain solvent through 2099. The report cites several causes for the worsening outlook: the repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset under the Social Security Fairness Act, slower recovery in fertility rates, and a smaller share of GDP going to labor compensation.

As of 2024, the OASI Trust Fund held \$2.54 trillion, a \$103 billion drop from the previous year. Meanwhile, the Social Security Administration is cutting about 12 percent of its workforce, leading to delays in service. "Today's report is a reminder that even as DOGE's cuts to the Social Security Administration are wrecking Social Security's customer service, they are doing nothing to improve its solvency," Nancy Altman of

Social Security Works told NPR.

House Speaker Mike Johnson recently indicated Republicans have a plan to rein in spending on entitlement programs.

"There are two categories of spending in the federal government. Mandatory spending is on the programs Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid ... it's 73, 74% of spending, which is on autopilot, which is frightening," Johnson said. "I am committing that we

will do that." A recent survey found most Americans oppose cuts. About half said Medicaid and food assistance are underfunded, and six in 10 said too little is spent on Social Security, Medicare, and education. "At this point, any member of Congress without a plan to fix Social Security is shirking their duty to preserve the nation's largest and most important government program," Maya MacGuineas of the Committee for a Responsible

Federal Budget said on NPR.

"Any politician who doesn't support increasing Social Security's revenue is, by default, supporting benefit cuts," Altman said. "America is the wealthiest country in the history of the world, at the wealthiest moment in our history," Altman said. "That money can remain concentrated in the hands of billionaires, or it can go towards Social Security, enriching all of our lives."

Fair Budget Coalition urges Senate to reject harmful budget reconciliation bill, protect essential programs

(Black PR Wire) WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Fair Budget Coalition, a broad alliance of civil rights organizations, policy experts, and advocates for under-resourced communities, expressed to Senate leadership their strong opposition to the House passed budget reconciliation bill and any similar proposals under the Senate's consideration.

The House bill and Senate cuts released to date would inflate the historic harm on working families,

deepen inequality, and undermine civil rights protections, the coalition warned.

"The cuts made in the House-passed budget bill and the Senate budget cuts released to date would cause millions of Americans to lose their health care coverage and food assistance and, therefore, deepen long standing inequities by targeting health care, nutrition, and tax relief programs that millions of Black, Latino, indigenous, and low-income families rely on

to survive," the coalition wrote in a letter to Senate Majority Leader John Thune and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer.

The letter is co-signed by National Urban League President Marc H. Morial, National Action Network President Rev. Al Sharpton, UnidosUS President and CEO Janet Murguía, NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson, (NAACP), Joint Center

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What is the current relationship between business and government?

(Newswise) — Government regulation remains pivotal in balancing competition and fairness in business. But how are these decisions made, and what factors define the relationship between business and government? In the following Q&A, Norm Bishara, professor of business law and ethics, shares his insights on the complexities of government regulation and ethical business practice.

Historically, what roles have public policy and corporate regulation played in shaping business practice?

From their earliest iterations, corporations were really creations of the monarch or the state, usually to spread financial risk and to accomplish some social good, like exploration and

trade. In exchange for the privileges and benefits of the corporate form, the company owed some duties to the state, like transferring value back in the form of taxes and services. Not surprisingly, that push and pull has become more complex as governance and business activity have become more sophisticated. Regulation, like it or not, is still a meaningful way to maintain everything from consumer protection, public health, workplace safety, environmental protection, and fair competition, alongside collecting taxes that support the infrastructure and stability in successful commercial systems like the United States.

As we see in the public debate right now, there are very different perspectives on how much regulation is

too much in terms of harming business activity, which might hamper innovation and even national security, among other concerns. The tenor of the business-regulator relationship can range from adversarial to collaborative. Either end of the spectrum is arguably a healthy part of our businesses and policy environment.

How has that relationship changed over time?

There are ebbs and flows in the strength of regulation and government oversight, with an increase in that oversight coming out of crises and after public outcry. These are things like new labor protection laws addressing the ills of the Industrial Revolution or antitrust rules after huge abuses of corporate power came to light in the United

States toward the end of the 19th century.

There is also a remarkable and long-lasting debate over the role of business and society and what responsibilities companies have to society beyond just following the law. This debate has recently come roaring back into the political realm, along with a feeling of policy whip-lash these days. Just a few years ago, companies were pushing ahead full steam with governance policies on diversity, for example. However, those efforts are now in a dramatic retreat in response to immense political pressure and even regulatory scrutiny.

Yet, some underlying things have not fundamentally changed. Businesses still very much prefer to have more predictability in

their relationships with policymakers and regulators so they can make long-term strategic investments. Businesses also generally want to be perceived as positive forces in society, at a minimum, to support aspects of their employee recruiting and retention, and to avoid negative attention. However, the trend right now is for them to stay in their lane and avoid any seemingly unsettled social or political issues.

Are there any major shifts on the horizon?

In terms of trends, the push to bring manufacturing back to the United States is also happening during an unprecedented rise in automation and artificial intelligence capabilities, as well as new energy usage demands. This is a recipe for an interesting

and uncertain time that will impact the type and nature of work that is done and the workforce skills needed for employees to stay relevant and successful. There will be new jobs we can't predict, but also some social upheaval and job loss. I'm particularly interested in how this future of work is going to play out for employees and what companies and governments can do together to ease this transition and make sure that there is some balance between business interests and innovation, and fairness for workers. It isn't good for anyone to have millions of displaced and disaffected workers. It is also a bit simplistic to have that burden fall on our outdated government support

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City of Dallas

2024 Drinking Water Quality Report

The City of Dallas' Drinking Water Quality Report is produced annually to provide information about the City's water system including source water, the levels of detected contaminants and compliance with drinking water rules. The report is also produced to answer your water quality questions.

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systems and hope for the best.

What role can public-private partnerships play in tackling major business and public policy challenges today? Are we seeing more or less collaboration than we have in the past?

The potential for these sorts of partnerships remains, and whether there are more of these is hard to say. The model we are seeing is essentially a Venn diagram showing the sector blur where public, private, and non-profit sectors are increasingly overlapping and evolving in ways that each arena is taking on elements of the others. Think of the calls for businesses to have a social impact or to enter the realm of government services, and government and non-profits being subjected to the rigors of business management techniques.

There is both wide acceptance of the notion that

government should be more efficient and can learn from the private sector, but also some growing awareness that sometimes the goals of government can't be judged by the yardstick of business efficiency. For example, privately run prisons have been controversial to some. However, I question whether most Americans will embrace the privatization of the U.S. Postal Service or cuts to Medicare when they personally experience the changes.

What role does transparency play in building trust between businesses and the local or federal government? What can businesses and business leaders do to improve some of these policies?

Transparency is key to trust across institutions and businesses, no doubt. At its core, the idea is that we need an accurate version of how government and business are operating, with the users of this

information being citizens, policymakers, businesses, investors, etc. Transparency is a prerequisite to good governance and decision making, but it is not the end of the effort. The immense pressure of government workers and agencies we are seeing at this moment can't change the reality that it takes time to identify the policy pain points and the best solutions, rather than rushing into changes that might have some negative impacts that are not appreciated at first. These changes are potentially going to hurt individuals and cause havoc that can't be easily reversed. Businesses can demand that the bureaucracy that we have in place already stays above politics and produces reliable data. For example, companies rely on apolitical research from all sorts of entities like the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Congressional Budget Office.

You serve as the faculty director of the Carson Scholars program. What

are some key insights students typically gain from their interactions with policymakers and business leaders in the program?

For nearly 20 years, the goal of the Carson Scholars program has been to educate students on how to navigate the public policy process effectively. If they understand the system and the levers that businesses have at their disposal, they can engage effectively and achieve a competitive advantage. The opposite is also true. If companies don't engage, they risk being subjected to policies that are bad for their business. This insight is part of the DNA of the program, which was designed by Ross School of Business alum David Carson, BBA '55, and founding faculty director George Siedel, and it holds true today. It is about understanding good policy and not getting bogged down in the politics of any given moment.

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for Political and Economic Studies President Dedrick Asante-Muhammad, PolicyLink President and CEO Dr. Michael McAfee, National Council of Negro Women President and CEO Rev. Shavon Arline-Bradley, Coalition on Human Needs Executive Director Deborah Weinstein, and Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg.

Some key concerns pinpointed by the coalition include:

Deep Cuts to Basic Needs Programs: The House passed legislation would make the deepest cuts to Medicaid and SNAP in his-

tory, causing about 16 million low- and moderate-income people to lose health care coverage and become uninsured. The Senate Finance text makes even deeper cuts to Medicaid. The original proposed Senate SNAP provisions would end SNAP for 2.9 million Americans, including 1.1 million who live where jobs are scarce, 900 thousand seniors, 600 thousand parents, and 270 thousand veterans, homeless, and former foster youth.

Exclusionary Tax Credit Provisions: Changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) would leave mil-

lions of children in families potentially unable to access the credit due to the new burdensome requirements. The Senate Child Tax Credit (CTC) provision that could help lower income working families is, like the House provision, written in such a way that 17 million children will be left out of the increased benefits the bill provides.

Civil Rights and AI Protections at Risk: The released text imposes a 10-year ban on state and local regulation of artificial intelligence, undermining protection against discrimination in credit, housing, employment, and voting, and tying critical broad-

band funding to acceptance of moratorium.

The coalition urged the Senators to invest in programs that support families and communities, expand refundable tax credits for families, and preserve civil rights protections in the digital era.

"The decisions made in this budget cycle will define the future of economic opportunity and social mobility in America," the leaders wrote. "Cuts to essential programs, weakened basic needs programs, and underfunded public investments would have devastating consequences for families and communities across the country."



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Heat Is Not Just a Number, It's an Attitude

Dr. James L. Snyder

Lately, the temperature in Florida has topped 100°. I saw on the news that the Northeast is also hitting 100°.

It's easy to see why everyone wants to come to Florida. If they can't, they wish for some of our heat. Well, good luck with that. We'll send you all you can handle.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I have lived in Florida for over thirty years. We've enjoyed every single day, and we have no plans to leave. At first the heat was more than we expected, but within a short time we got used to it. Now we enjoy it.

Records show this is the hottest June our country has seen. This heat has serious consequences. The human body can't handle such heat for long.

Just the other day, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage complained about how hot it was. "Oh, my," she said, "where does all this heat come from?"

For a moment, I almost answered. But after 54 years of blissful marriage, I've learned when to speak and when to stay quiet. Of course, I'm still learning when to speak. That's one of my biggest challenges.

I could have said, "It's summer, the sun is out, and the heat comes from the sun." But I knew that wasn't the answer she wanted, so I held back.

I remember my father saying that life isn't about

numbers but attitude. I'm starting to understand what he meant.

When I was young I had two female dogs at home, male dogs in the neighborhood would gather in our backyard when the females were "in heat." It was something beyond my control even though I tried.

But that's not the attitude I mean here.

At my stage in life, when I step out into the hot sun, I start sweating. That sweat drives me crazy. The sweat runs from the top of my head all the way to the bottom of my feet. Everything about me is soaked. Believe me, it's not my favorite attitude.

I walked into the house and The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage looked up and asked, "Did you take a shower with your clothes on?" Then she laughs. I did not respond.

My recliner is next to our big glass door. I can see the sun shining and feel the heat. I sigh deeply because I'm glad to be on the cool side. I enjoy the heat outside while I stay cool indoors.

One thing about this heat season that I have learned is, I avoid driving when it's this hot—not because my A/C doesn't work, but because other drivers have attitudes I can't relate to. The other day, I was driving across town. I saw cars go by with drivers shaking their fists out the window. It's like they thought that would fix anything!

If I shook my fist, it would only create more problems.

I don't think those drivers realized that shaking their fists out the window didn't make the heat go away.

I don't want to drive among those people. After all, I love living.

One great perk of being retired is that I can choose not to drive if I don't want to. I am increasingly appreciating that.

My body isn't as strong as it used to be, so I avoid the 100° heat whenever possible. I respect my body, even if I'm not sure it respects me. That's a different issue.

In the late afternoon, the sun had been blazing all day and showed no signs of letting up. I was in my recliner drinking some ice tea when The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage sat down in the rocking chair and asked, "When will this heat go away?"

I chuckled to myself, remembering about a month ago a cloudy day with rain. Back then, she looked out the window and asked, "Where in the world is the sun?"

I wanted to respond, "My dear, the sun is in the sky, just above the clouds."

You have no idea how much I wanted to say that, but being a seasoned and successful husband, I kept it to myself.

The heat is not about numbers; it's about attitude. Some people's attitudes make me uncomfortable. Shaking fists and yelling at the sky show an attitude not rooted in sanity.

One of the best things

about a hot, sunny afternoon is, I can sit down and enjoy it in a cool atmosphere. I remember those days far, far away when I lived up north and had to look out the window and see white fluffy stuff fill up our yard and driveway. Maybe if I would've stood there and shook my fist at the snow it would have gone away. If only I knew that back then.

Now that I have experienced both of these weathers, the hot and the cold, I have chosen the hot weather. And I am unanimous in that decision.

While contemplating on this I thought of some scripture.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect

work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4).

My attitude should not be based on what's going on around me. The heat and the cold comes and goes, but my relationship with God is firmly rooted in God's

Word.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamesnsnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamesnsnyderministries.com.

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The Plans of Tomorrow



Sister Tarpley
NDG Religion Editor

"You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." **James 4:14b**

The story is told of a group of believers who meets every week for fellowship, study, and prayer. It is said that one man attended the group for several years. The man was well liked and in good health. One Thursday he showed up as usual.

The next morning the

group received a call that said that the man had died, "He died in his easy chair last night!"

The group had no knowledge of the man's problems and there was no indication that he was about to go to be with the Lord. Naturally, it came as a shock to the group.

Whenever things like this happen close to home, it brings us face to face with our own mortality. As it did to me when my dear friend, Mr. Raymond (Ray) Beasley who passed on June 23, 2014, it came as a surprise to me when I received the call.

This brings to mind when a friend said that he was

challenged by someone to do an experiment. He was challenged to live his life for one year as if it were the last year he would live.

He responded to the challenge and did as proposed. It changed his life forever. He began to focus on different priorities and people when he viewed life in these terms. This man challenge should give us a perspective on viewing tomorrow.

It is often said, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city for vacation or spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why do we say that when we don't even know what will happen tomorrow?

What is your life? You

are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, *"If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."* **James 4:13-15.**

Life is fragile. Consider where you are investing

your time and energies. Someone once said they had never heard anyone on his deathbed say that he wished he had made more money in his lifetime or he wished he had made a certain deal. Usually it is


something like, "I wish I had spent more time with my kids." Ask God to give you His priorities for your life.

"I know, O Lord, that a

See TARPLEY, Page 16

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NDG Book Review: 'Madame Queen' is a fun journey back to the 1920s

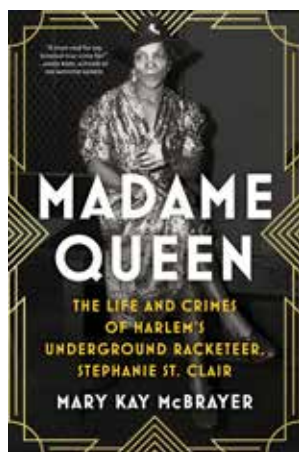
By Terri Schlichenmeyer

Keep your eyes on the prize.

If you want something enough, you'll never, ever lose sight of that goal. You'll do what it takes to achieve it, letting it linger in your dreams at night and dictate where you live, who you live with, where you work, and what you do. Never look away, keep your eyes on the prize. As you'll see in "Madame Queen" by Mary Kay McBrayer, it might be worth it.

It's likely that young Stephanie St. Clair learned to lie from her mother.

Ancelin, says McBrayer,



knew her daughter was "shrewd." She probably figured that sending Stephanie alone on a ship from Guadalupe to New York was a chance for the girl to "spin straw into gold," never

mind that Stephanie was just thirteen years old. Still, it soon became obvious that Ancelin was correct: Stephanie took the ruse further and told a ship's worker that she was twenty-three.

The year was 1911 and Stephanie arrived in New York, to a home for young female immigrants. McBrayer doesn't believe that Stephanie made many friends there, but she kept her eyes open to opportunity, discovering at the White Rose Home for Colored Working Girls that she was good with numbers. There, she was also taught to sew, clean, save money, and how to comport herself as a lady.

Just beyond the doors of the home, she learned to shoot dice.

She was with a man who was courting her when she learned to play the numbers.

Though it's a fact that she married George Gachette not long afterward, Stephanie never directly mentioned it anywhere, nor did she mention the child they had or the day she rented a room in Harlem and abruptly left them both. She took a job at a dress factory; later, she moonlighted at a bank, and began to plan.

From then on, says McBrayer, "She was investing in her own future..."

She was also building her own crime empire.

In her introduction, author Mary Kay McBrayer explains how this book came to be: she read something about Stephanie St. Clair and went in search for more but information was scarce. She admits that she inferred much and made up a lot to craft this story. She calls it "creative non-fiction," and in "Madame Queen," it works.

Such conjecture, in fact, actually works better because McBrayer serves as a kind of narrator in Stephanie's story, filling in the many, many blanks with plausible conversations and

likely facts that she backs up with sound reasoning. Indeed, the imaginary oozes between the truth to make this feel like a novel, but with occasional reminders that reality is somewhere, inside, outside, or nearby. It's a tale told with fine sleuthing, dogged journalism, a well-described backdrop, and a touch of obvious admiration for its subject.

Readers who love biographies and can accept some speculation will devour this book, as will fans of historical novels, 1920s history, and The Sopranos. Look for "Madame Queen," It's a good surprise for the eyes.

ECHOES, from Page 8

The program was awarded a grant from the City of Dallas' Office of Arts and Culture.

Bandan Koro's powerful performance celebrated life using the medium of Caribbean and West African cultural expressions. The ensemble was true to its name, which, in Malinke, means "under the tree," a community gathering place to connect knowledge with inspiration.

Hymn liners Ms. Ulanda Crivens, Rev. Jacoby Ervin and Rev. James I. Minor reminiscenced with poignant, spirit-filled renditions. Each lead the audience with traditional call and response songs, like "I Loved The Lord He Heard My Cry." They urged that hymn lining, or lined-hymn, be keep alive because of its strong healing power. It also relates to how we, like our ancestors, can rely on it



Bandan Koro African Drum and Dance Ensemble. (Courtesy photo)

in good times and bad.

Oba gave a finale that brought his audience high energy, enthusiasm and a

wealth of African tales.

"This event was truly a wonderful occasion," said Brenda Bright, lead man-



Hymn liners Rev. James I. Minor, Ulanda Crivens and Rev. Jacoby Ervin.. (Courtesy photo)

ager for the celebration. "Our performers were exciting and inspiring. I'd like

to see more cultural events. Our community can't get enough."

TARPLEY, from Page 15

man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps." **Jeremiah 10:23.**

In our society we hear a lot about planning. Every January people hear believers establishing their plans for the year. Corporations establish plans that cover anywhere from one to five years.

Individuals establish personal life plans. There is only one problem that can be wrong with planning

done by well-meaning believers. If God is not the originator and director of the plan, then that plan is doomed for failure.

Often, Christian set out to plan something that seems good in their minds. The merits of what is being planned can look great, and it can even be a worthy endeavor. However, that is not the point.

When Jesus said He came only to do the will of the Fa-

ther, He could not consider doing anything that was not what the Father wanted, no matter how good or righteous it might appear to be.

"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." **Proverbs 16:9.**

God must give us the vision for what He calls us to do. After we have the vision, we must ask Him if He wants us to take action on that vision and what the action steps entail.

The Lord wants to direct

each step of the planning process. David learned this lesson when he went to battle against his enemy, the Philistines. One day he inquired of God as to whether he was to go up against the Philistines, and the Lord said, "Yes, but only when you hear the marching in the balsam trees."

It is a mistake to reason and analyze in order to come to a decision on a matter. The Lord already knows the answer. It is our responsibility to seek Him

to find out His mind on the matter. Our planning must be established in Him.

Only when we remain so connected to the source can we be assured of putting God's plan into place. Also, getting that plan confirmed through others will assure that we are not following the deceit of our own heart.

When you begin to plan next time, ask God for His wisdom for establishing the vision and action steps. You will be surprised how

well He can plan.

"I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, and hear my speech. Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You, from those who rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings, From the wicked who oppress me, From my deadly enemies who surround me." **Psalms 17:6-9.**