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Trump and Texas Republicans plot changes in congressional districts to keep control of congress after 2026

By Lauren Burke

President Trump told Texas Republicans on a conference call on the morning of July 15 that the GOP will attempt to create five new Republican seats in a "mid-decade redistricting" in Texas.

Next week, the Texas legislature will consider the move. Republicans control the state legislature in Texas by a 20-11 margin in the Texas Senate and an 88-62 margin in the Texas House.

But Texas is a majority minority state. The congressional maps in Texas were last drawn in 2021. To redraw the maps now would be highly unusual. Republicans are expecting to have a great deal of difficulty keeping control of the U.S. House as the 2026 midterms loom in the future.

Proposed cuts to health care, tariff policy changes, inflation, a record number of farms going bankrupt, and cuts to federal jobs are all likely



Proposed cuts to health care, tariff policy changes, inflation, a record number of farms going bankrupt and cuts to federal jobs are all likely to be factors in whether or not voters will turn Republicans out of power in Congress. (Photo via NNPA)

to be factors in whether or not voters will turn Republicans out of power in Congress.

During a press conference on the morning of July 15 at Democratic National Committee headquarters, members of the Texas delegation

spoke about the threat of changes in congressional districts and the recent July 5 flood in Texas that has killed at least 134 people. Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett (D-TX) spoke

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Science in the wake of disaster

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Measles cases hit 33-year mark

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BLM marks 12 years, sets goals

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GMU President targeted by Trump

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Black author's home bought and preserved

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People In The News ...



Marilyn Mosby



Rev. William J. Barber, II

NDG Quote of the Week:

"Never be limited by other people's limited imaginations."

- Dr. Mae Jemison

Marilyn Mosby

A federal appeals court delivered a split decision in the high-profile case against Marilyn Mosby, the former Baltimore State's Attorney who rose to national prominence before facing criminal charges tied to her finances.

In a 2-1 ruling, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit vacated Mosby's mortgage fraud conviction, finding that the venue for prosecuting that charge in Maryland was improper.

The reversal also lifts the government's forfeiture of her Longboat Key, Florida, condominium, which had been valued at



over \$900,000.

However, the court upheld Mosby's perjury convictions stemming from her withdrawal of funds from her city retirement account during the COVID-19 pandemic. A federal jury previously determined Mosby falsely claimed to have suffered financial hard-

ship to access the money under the CARES Act.

Prosecutors said she later used those funds to help purchase two vacation properties in Florida.

Judge Stephanie Thacker, writing for the majority, concluded that evidence about how Mosby spent the withdrawn funds was admitted correctly because it helped establish whether she faced economic harm.

In a partial dissent, Judge Paul Niemeyer argued that the mortgage fraud charge should have remained intact, contending Mosby's actions—generating and transmitting false documents while living in

Maryland—meant the trial venue was appropriate.

Mosby, who served two terms as Baltimore's top prosecutor, has repeatedly insisted the case was politically motivated. She had also argued that seizing nearly all her Florida condo was excessive given the nature of her offenses.

She was sentenced in May to one year of home detention, three years of supervised release, and the forfeiture of 90 percent of her condominium.

Her home confinement concluded last month, and a judge has since ordered the return of her passport and waived additional monitoring fees.

Mosby, who once sought presidential pardon, has been allowed to keep her law license during her appeal.

Representatives for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Maryland declined to comment on the appeals ruling, and Mosby's attorneys did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Rev. William J. Barber, II

"Put a face on the deadliness of this big, bad, deadly, ugly bill."

That is what Reverend William Barber says as he conducts Moral Mondays in 11 Southern states today.

He is laser-focused on 11 local U.S. Senate offices in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia, and Tennessee.

In these states, Barbers says 1.5 million people are expected to lose their healthcare due to federal funding cuts to Medicaid. Barber lamented that only one U.S. Senator, Thom Tillis of North Carolina, voted against the "One Big Beautiful Bill."

On July 1st, Tillis broke ranks with most Senate Republicans on the healthcare cuts. Tillis understands that federal cuts to Medicaid funding would hurt his con-



stituents.

Three days later, on July 4th, President Donald Trump signed the bill into law, which cuts \$17 million from Medicaid in this country.

Barber, leading the protest in Memphis, Tennessee, says, "The highest number of people who will lose Medicaid are in the south." He emphasizes these massive cuts to Medicaid do not discriminate; however, "the highest percentage of Black people being kicked off of Medicaid is in the south."

Barber, who is also look-

ing at the economics of these cuts, says, "40% of the South are poor now and low wage," and that will further exacerbate the poverty numbers in this nation. These 11 marches will consist of a contingent of clergy and impacted people expected to march with caskets housing the number of people in that particular state who were negatively affected by the newly passed "One Big Beautiful" law.

The list of Medicaid losses according to Rev. Barber

Texas 300,000
Louisiana 291,000
Alabama 42,000
Arkansas 123,000
North Carolina 307,000

Moral Mondays will resume in the nation's capital in August, according to Reverend Barber, who also says there will be a continued focus on these healthcare cuts and cuts to SNAP in the South.

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Science in the Wake of Disaster: The 2025 Hill Country Flood and the future of early warning systems in Texas and beyond

By Dr. Ali Feres
Prairie View A&M
University

Between July 4 and 7, 2025, the Texas Hill Country experienced a sudden and destructive flood that rivaled the devastation of many hurricanes despite being triggered not by a landfalling storm, but by the remnants of Tropical Storm Barry. In hours, rainfall exceeding 11 inches fell over the region, causing the Guadalupe River to surge more than 26 feet in just 45 minutes. As of July 9, over 111 people were killed, including at least 27 children, 180 were missing, and entire communities were left devastated. For residents of towns like Hunt, Kerrville, and Comfort, the flood came not as a forecast but as a shock, many with no warning system in place and little time to act.

The storm system that followed Barry stalled over Central Texas, forming a mesoscale convective complex that dumped unprecedented rainfall into steep, runoff-prone watersheds. The National Weather Service issued flash flood emergencies, but many alerts arrived late. The U.S. Geological Survey reported record-setting river flows, and in some areas, stream gauges failed due to the sheer volume and speed of water. The economic toll surpassed \$18 billion, in-

cluding widespread damage to homes, infrastructure, agriculture, and small businesses. Schools and local governments faced weeks of closure and months of recovery. This disaster underscored the intensity of inland flooding and the vulnerability of areas often overlooked in hurricane-centered emergency planning. A striking U.S. Coast Guard aerial photo, taken during a rescue operation in Kerr County, captured the severity of the event: submerged roads, flooded rooftops, and families being hoisted to safety amid a vast, muddy expanse of water. The image has since become emblematic of the devastation and the heroism witnessed during the flood response.

As a scientist and educator, I see the 2025 Hill Country Flood not as an anomaly but as part of a troubling trend: the intensification of extreme rainfall events in non-coastal regions, exacerbated by climate extremes, urban expansion, and inadequate preparedness. The flood was a tragedy, but also a clarion call to action.

Texas has taken a critical step forward by releasing the Texas Flood Plan, a statewide blueprint for improving flood preparedness and resilience. What distinguishes this plan is its focus on localized risk mapping, targeted funding for rural

and small communities, and non-structural, affordable mitigation strategies. It promotes regional collaboration and provides the tools for counties like Kerr and Comal to finally install the early warning systems they've lacked for decades. The plan represents a vision for stronger infrastructure and smarter, more inclusive science-based decision-making.

Our research at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU) reflects this mission. I've had the privilege of working with Dr. Samuel Brody, Director of the Institute for a Disaster Resilient Texas at Texas A&M University at Galveston, on a project focused on flood trends in the Navasota River Basin. Dr. Brody was Principal Investigator for the Navasota River Flooding Project, funded by the Texas A&M University System. Our analysis of the basin's long-term precipitation and streamflow records revealed an unmistakable trend: increasing rainfall intensities and rising peak flows compounded by urbanization, land-use change, debris blockages, and straightening of the river over time.

These patterns make flash floods more frequent, severe, and unpredictable. We are thankful for the scientific contribution of Dr. Marouane Temimi to this analysis, whose expertise

in hydrometeorology and rainfall modeling provided valuable insight into the spatial and temporal characteristics of precipitation trends influencing flood risk in the region. A manuscript reporting on these findings will be published soon.

But while long-term trend analysis is critical, it's not enough. To prevent tragedies like the 2025 flood, we need tools that extend warning time from minutes to life-saving action. That's why my team and I have also been exploring ultra-short-term rainfall forecasting, or nowcasting, in collaboration with experts like Dr. Temimi of the Stevens Institute of Technology. His team recently deployed a radar system that overlooks the Hudson River and covers the Manhattan, NY district. It can predict rainfall with 2-3-minute lead times, a breakthrough in flash flood response. If such a system were installed at PVAMU's elevated site, The Hill, it could be the backbone of an early warning network for the Greater Houston Area, a region increasingly vulnerable to sudden, high-impact storms.

This approach bridges the gap between research and response, technology, and trust. We must develop systems that forecast accurately and reach the people

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Keep up with the news

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Measles cases hit 33-year record as CORI deploys outbreak response tools

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

The United States has recorded its highest number of annual measles cases in 33 years, with at least 1,277 confirmed infections spanning 38 states and the District of Columbia. According to information published by the Center for Outbreak Response Innovation (CORI), the country has already exceeded the number of infections reported in 2019.

The current total represents the largest outbreak



since 1992, when more than 2,100 cases were documented nationwide.

Officials link the rising case counts to declining vaccination rates in multiple communities, combined with travel-related

exposures that have seeded outbreaks across state lines. The surge has placed significant strain on local and state public health agencies working to contain transmission.

CORI, which operates

within the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, has developed a set of specialized tools and resources intended to help jurisdictions prepare for and respond to outbreaks. These resources include tailored analytic platforms, structured risk assessments, and real-time decision-support products.

“These tools are designed, tested, and refined to ensure they are practical and useful in real-world public health settings,” CORI states on its website.

In addition to analytic software, CORI provides

modeling outputs, situation reports, and guidance documents to support containment strategies.

The organization also manages a national Community of Practice that connects state, tribal, local, and territorial health departments to share experiences and strengthen outbreak response capabilities.

“Our Community of Practice is a network of health departments committed to integrating modeling and analytics into their outbreak response capabilities,” CORI states. “Together, we are working to strengthen

our nation’s readiness to respond to infectious disease emergencies.”

The program is structured to build capacity that can be activated rapidly as outbreaks evolve. According to CORI, “Our goal is to equip health departments with decision-support tools, training, and analytic capacity that can be activated rapidly during an outbreak.” “Our work focuses on helping health departments improve preparedness and response to measles outbreaks through real-time modeling and collaboration,” CORI states.

Study: Bio detection dogs successfully detect Parkinson’s disease by odor

(Newsweek) — People with Parkinson’s disease (PD) have an odour that can be reliably detected from skin swabs by trained dogs, a new study shows.

The research, in collaboration with Medical Detection Dogs and the Universities of Bristol and Manchester, is published in The Journal of Parkinson’s Disease today [15 July].

Two dogs were trained by the charity, Medical Detection Dogs, to distinguish between sebum swabs from people with and without Parkinson’s disease.

In a double blind trial, they showed sensitivity of up to 80% and specificity of up to 98%.

Not only that, they detected it in samples from patients who also had other health conditions.

The dogs were trained over a number of weeks on over 200 odour samples from individuals that had tested positive for PD and control samples from people who did not have the disease. Samples were presented to the dogs on a stand system and the dogs

were rewarded for correctly indicating a positive sample and for correctly ignoring a negative sample.

In the double-blind testing, meaning that only a computer knew where the correct samples were, each line was also presented in reverse order so that samples for which no decision was made were re-presented. Then any unsearched samples were collected together in new lines, until a decision had been made for all samples.

A definitive diagnostic test for Parkinson’s Disease (PD) remains elusive, so identification of potential biomarkers could help diagnosis and timely intervention.

Claire Guest, Medical Detection Dogs CEO and Chief Scientific Officer, says: “We are extremely proud to say that once again, dogs can very accurately detect disease.”

“There is currently no early test for Parkinson’s disease and symptoms may start up to 20 years before they become visible and persistent leading to a con-

firmed diagnosis.

“Timely diagnosis is key as subsequent treatment could slow down the progression of the disease and reduce the intensity of symptoms.”

Nicola Rooney, Associate Professor at Bristol Veterinary School at the University of Bristol and lead author, says: “Identifying diagnostic biomarkers of PD, particularly those that may predict development or help diagnose disease earlier is the subject of much ongoing research. The dogs in this study achieved high sensitivity and specificity and showed there is an olfactory signature distinct to patients with the disease. Sensitivity levels of 70% and 80% are well above chance and I believe that dogs could help us to develop a quick non-invasive and cost-effective method to identify patients with Parkinson’s disease.”

Perdita Barran, Professor of Mass Spectrometry at The University of Manchester, said: “It’s wonderful to be part of this

research inspired by Joy Milne and our Nose2Diagnose programme. This study adds to the growing body of evidence showing

that simple, non-invasive skin swabs can be used to diagnose Parkinson’s disease, offering a faster and more accessible method for

early detection.”

The two dogs in the study were Golden Retriever, Bumper and Black Labrador, Peanut.

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Black Lives Matter marks 12 years with global expansion and renewed calls for accountability

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Black Lives Matter has reached its 12th anniversary, and the organization's co-founder and prominent scholar-activist, Dr. Melina Abdullah, says the movement is not only growing internationally but also confronting what she described as an unprecedented wave of "fascism and unmasked racism." During an appearance on Black Press USA's Let It Be Known News, Dr. Abdullah detailed the recent sum-



Image via NNPA

mit in Los Angeles, where organizers from 51 chapters—including the newly established Black Lives Matter Stockholm—gathered for workshops, tours, an action, and a celebration at the Center for Black Power on Crenshaw Bou-

levard. "This is the largest that Black Lives Matter has ever been," Abdullah said. "We are now 51 chapters in 2025 and thousands of boots-on-the-ground organizers."

The summit, which lasted several days, included

discussions on the group's principles and strategy. Abdullah noted that the movement's work has taken on new urgency as attacks on Black communities intensify. "I think the world hasn't seen this level of fascism and unmasked racism," she said. "I haven't witnessed a world where African American men from Texas, born and raised, the child descendants of enslaved people, can be deported." Abdullah also described personal moments of fear, including seeing an unknown truck

parked in front of her home after delivering groceries to elders in the community. "I was going, should I get out my car? Because I don't know who these two men sitting in this truck are," she recalled. "And will somebody see me if they snatch me up?"

The BLM Grassroots leader announced the release of the organization's annual action report, detailing initiatives ranging from mutual aid to political advocacy. Among the work highlighted was the successful campaign to free

Brittany Martin, who was sentenced to prison for remarks made to police during a 2020 protest in South Carolina. "This pregnant mother of six, now of seven, was arrested for simply speaking words," Abdullah said. "She wound up being ripped away from her family, forced to have her seventh child inside the prison. But we kept fighting, and at the end of 2024, we were able to free Brittany Martin." In addition to campaigns for policy reforms

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pointedly on the issue of Texas redistricting and the political state of play.

"I want you all to understand the makeup of my state. The state is a majority minority state, and what this legislature historically has done is what they plan to do again — is to dilute the voices of people of color in order to make sure that they can get to where they're trying to go," Rep. Crockett said.

She stood alongside a large group of members that included Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), DCCC Chair Suzan DelBene, and a number of members of the Texas del-

egation.

"We only have four seats that are represented by Black folk, where the vast majority of the people that get to decide who they have represent them are Black. They decided to attack three of the four seats that we have in the state. They decided to go after a Latina. They are specifically deciding to splinter the communities of common interest, as well as just blatantly say we are going to dilute minority voices. So we know that the courts, ever since we've had a Voting Rights Act, have always found this state to be intentionally discriminatory.

"That is what they are going to do. I need people of color to understand that the scheme of the Republicans has consistently been to make sure that they mute our voices so that they can go ahead and have an oversized say in this. I fully anticipate that's exactly where they're going with this map. It's the only way to do it. We didn't understand how we got to the map that they gave us last time because that state was grown by 95% people of color. They went out of their way to make sure that we got zero new seats for people of color. That's exactly what they're going to do this time," Rep. Crockett added.

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George Mason University president targeted by Trump as Department of Education launches investigation

By Lauren Burke

Less than three weeks after pressuring the President of the University of Virginia, James Ryan, to resign, the Trump Administration is back again. This time, they are targeting the Black President of George Mason University, Greg Washington.

The former American University professor became the 8th president of George Mason University on July 1, 2020. After the Trump Administration made it clear that they are looking to control academic institutions that receive funding from the federal government, Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Virginia were the focus of investigations and ques-



John M. Chase via NNPA

tions on accreditation by the Trump Department of Education.

The investigations were alleging violations of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by failing to protect Jewish students from harassment and discrimination. The investigation was announced by the Department of Education on July 10.

One of the particulars that the Trump Department of Education found problematic is "the creation of a Task Force on Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence (ARIE) to make university policies which will 'advance systemic and cultural anti-racism' at GMU." The Trump Administration appears to be joined by various conservative

groups on the issue, such as the Jefferson Council. Washington found support from professors at George Mason University.

On July 11, 2025, ProPublica reported that, "a group of conservative University of Virginia alumni, the Jefferson Council, published blog entries and newspaper ads decrying the president — in part for focusing too heavily on diversity efforts," and demanded Washington resign.

"George Mason University (GMU) received a new Department of Education letter of investigation this morning, as it was simultaneously released to news outlets, which is unprecedented in our experience. As always, we will work in

good faith to give a full and prompt response. George Mason University again affirms its commitment to comply with all federal and state mandates. The university consistently reviews its policies and practices to ensure compliance with federal laws, updated executive orders, and ongoing agency directives," responded GMU on July 14.

The university added that "George Mason does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic national origin (including shared ancestry and/or ethnic characteristics), sex, disability, military status (including veteran status), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, pregnancy status, genetic

information, or any other characteristic protected by law."

The Virginia NAACP responded to the Trump Department of Education's focus on Washington.

"This latest witch hunt against President Washington is a blatant attempt to intimidate those who champion diversity. We will not allow the progress we have achieved to be dismantled by political opportunism. Our universities must remain bastions of inclusion, not retreat from it. President Washington should not be targeted for his commitment to fostering an inclusive academic environment," Virginia NAACP President Rev. Cozy Bailey said in a statement.

Summer Cool Camp blends learning and adventure

By Alfred Peterson
Dallas ISD

At Chapel Hill Preparatory School, students traded in their usual textbooks for compasses, multipurpose vests, canteens, and binoculars to embark on an educational journey.

In June, these students participated in Summer Cool, a month-long program that helps develop the skills they need to navigate



Dallas ISD

the next school year. For the first half of the day, students attended math and reading classes, which consisted of teacher-led instruction and discussion,

group work, and independent practice, followed by online math and reading games to end the class.

The second half of the day was for enrichment activities centered around children expressing their creativity. Students were able to make friendship bracelets, draw lizards, lions, and recreate their favorite artists' album covers, and give fun facts.

One student's love for

Michael Jackson led him to share his video tribute with his classmates to honor the late legendary artist. He also made them aware that June 25 was the day that Jackson passed away, which explained his intense focus on completing his drawing of Jackson in his legendary outfit for the song "Thriller."

Throughout the day, instructors found ways to keep campers motivated by

creating a class "playlist" instead of an agenda, which encouraged them to plan their own activities once they completed their lessons. This gave students the autonomy to choose their preferred method of learning, finding themselves in an environment where they learned to become more self-reliant.

"They know what they

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Zora Neale Hurston's final home purchased The Conservation Fund

The Zora Neale Hurston Florida Education Foundation will establish a visitor and education center on the property.

FORT PIERCE, Florida – More than 60 years after acclaimed author Zora Neale Hurston resided in a modest home on a quiet street in Fort Pierce, Florida, that property has been protected.

But more help is needed to ensure it permanently honors Hurston's legacy. The Conservation Fund (TCF) purchased the home when it was about to be placed on the open market, putting it at risk of demolition or development. TCF will transfer the property to the Zora Neale Hurston Florida Education Foundation (ZNHFEF), which will turn it into a visitor and education center.

The home is in the Historic Lincoln Park community, a formerly segregated African American section of town. Hurston is the only person to ever live in the building, and her grave site is a few blocks away.

"It's an honor to be a part of protecting the final place where Zora Neale Hurston resided," said Lauren Day, Florida Director for The Conservation Fund. "Despite its designation as a National Historic Landmark in 1991, this home was at risk of being forgotten, developed, or falling further into disrepair – something that threatens hundreds of African American sites around the country. We are thrilled to help ensure Zora's important legacy alongside our partners."

Zora Neale Hurston is one of the most acclaimed authors of the 20th century. She is closely associated with the Harlem Renais-

sance, a period of creativity and rebirth for African American authors, artists, and musicians.

Her most famous work, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is taught in high schools and colleges across the country.

During the time she lived in the Fort Pierce house, Hurston wrote for the *Fort Pierce Chronicle*, a newspaper written by and for Black people.

"Zora Neale Hurston's final home deserves to be part of her enduring legacy," said Marvin Hobson, president of the Zora Neale Hurston Florida Education Foundation. "A home is a place of safety and refuge. As a writer in a male-dominated industry who worked during Jim Crow America, it's easy to imagine the peace and comfort that Zora would have sought at her Fort Pierce home. We're honored to partner with The Conservation Fund to ensure this property honors one of the greatest American writers of the 20th century."

The property is part of the Dust Tracks Heritage Trail honoring Hurston's life and contributions to American history and literature.

Locations across Fort Pierce include Hurston's gravesite, the *Chronicle* newspaper where she worked, the former St. Lucie Welfare Home where she convalesced, and Lincoln Park Academy, the formerly segregated school where Hurston taught English.

The Conservation Fund and ZNHFEF are actively

fundraising to replenish the funds used to purchase the property and make critical improvements to the home. ZNHFEF plans to open the visitor and education center to the public shortly.

The Zora Neale Hurston home is the latest African American heritage site protected by The Conservation Fund and partners. Other projects include the Chat-

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Photo via NNPA



Paige Bueckers' leadership and loyalty take center stage

By Jamal Baker
NDG Contributing Writer

The Dallas Wings fell 102-83 to the Indiana Fever on Sunday in a highly anticipated matchup featuring the league's two most recent No. 1 picks—WNBA superstars Paige Bueckers and Caitlin Clark.

Wings guard Arike Ogunbowale made her return from a left thumb injury that previously had her sidelined for three games and scored just two points, which came at the charity stripe.

After the game, an awkward moment unfolded during the press conference when Wings head coach Chris Koclanes and Bueckers offered differing opinions of Ogunbowale's performance.

"You could tell she hadn't played in a bit. Wish some would have fell early for her," Koclanes said. "It's a balance. She's going to get people's best. They're going to be really physical with her. They're



John Mac / Wikimedia (CC BY SA 2.0)

not going to allow her to move, so she's got to continue to find that balance of really working hard to get up the floor and get to spots and get off actions, and I've got to continue to help her."

Bueckers scored a game-high 21 points and added four assists and four rebounds. The rookie phenom also responded to the question to support her veteran teammate after Koclanes gave his response.

"It might not have been her night shooting the ball, but the way she continued to stay in the game, not let

it affect her effort on both ends of the floor, her being a leader of this team. That was huge for me to be able to see that," Bueckers said.

"We've talked about it as individuals, just having one on one conversations, how we want to stay unaffected through the refs, through the missed calls, through missed defensive possessions. I just want to give a shout out to her."

Despite the lopsided loss, Bueckers' show of support for Ogunbowale highlighted the leadership and resilience the Wings will need

as they look to regroup and find their rhythm in the second half of the season.

Bueckers has not only lived up to the hype, she's exceeded it.

The former UConn superstar has taken the WNBA by storm in her rookie season, earning a starting spot in the 2025

WNBA All-Star Game. In doing so, she became the first rookie in Wings history to be named an All-Star starter.

Bueckers is tasked with shouldering a heavy load for a Wings team clearly in rebuild mode. The Wings currently sit at the bottom of the Western Conference with a 6-16 record.

"Credit to Paige," Wings head coach Chris Koclanes said. "Her mindset and her intention into the mental side of the game, she's resilient. She's not discouraged at all. She's in there, she's positive. She knows there is a larger vision here and that you've got to go through some of this tough stuff early to ultimately get to where you want to go."

Although the Wings are struggling, Bueckers ap-

pears well on her way to winning Rookie of the Year, averaging 18.3 points, 5.4 assists, and 1.7 steals per game—leading all WNBA rookies.

"Just staying disciplined in your habits and not changing who you are based on the results, but sticking to your process and how you do things," Bueckers said. "Regardless of the winning and losing, just enjoy coming to work every single day. It's been fun to enjoy the process. You never want to get used to losing, but you also don't want to be used to being result-oriented."

If her rookie season is any indication, Bueckers is not just the future of the Wings—she's quickly becoming one of the brightest stars in the WNBA.

HURSTON, from Page 7

tahoochee Brick Company Memorial Park in Georgia, the Harriett Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument and formerly segregated beaches in Maryland, and the Freedom Riders National Monument in Alabama. "These locations represent a small fraction of African American sites around the country that must be protected and honored," said Tony Richardson, director of The Conservation Fund's Legacy Places Initiative. "We're working with partners to safeguard these important

cultural sites before they are lost, ensuring these vital places and stories live on for all Americans, for generations to come."

The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities, and sustainable economies. We apply effective strategies, efficient financing approaches, and enduring government, community,

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The Zora Neale Hurston Florida Education Foundation, also known as the Zora Neale Hurston Dust Track Museum and Humanities Center, is committed to promoting and preserving the local legacy of the world-renowned author and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston. www.zorafoundationmuseum.com



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Film Review: Superman's quirky little reboot is entertaining

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

It's a bird. It's a plane. It's a broken man. A broken Kryptonian who's trying to find his place on this earth. Just like the rest of us.

The themes of finding oneself, especially after others have tried to redefine and demonize you, is an all-too-common occurrence. And it's just one of the many ambitious, topical and relatable themes in this modern, soul-searching take on a superhero legend that dates back to 1938. That's when Superman was introduced by DC Comics. He appeared in film in 1948, on TV in 1959 and in numerous films since then. The pioneers, and those that came later, played it safe. This 2025 movie is more of a daredevil. Unafraid to wade knee deep into today's social/cultural issues and unrest. Immigration, invasions, corporate greed, fake news, gaslighting, shallow influencers—all the inhumane people who dehumanize, demonize and victimize others.

Credit the offbeat and principled writer/director James Gunn for having the audacity to venture into the fray with a comic book movie, no less. He's most known for the extremely rebellious and irreverent Guardians of the Galaxy franchise. So, expect cheeky, outlandish humor and oddball characters in this good guys vs. bad guys saga. A legacy dating back to the 30s is getting a James Gunn baptism. In the process he chooses sides in our chaotic world, adds a sense of absurdity to the good fight against evil and co-



Image via NNPA

ordinates the action scenes well—but not extraordinarily so. E.g., the slow-motion gimmick of Superman saving someone is nice, but it gets stale. And, when a movie ends with a rush to save the world, that's normal and not exceptional. Even if he does it in a fairly riveting way.

Something plummets from the sky onto a frozen, arctic-looking tundra. It's Superman (David Corenswet, *Twisters*). He's face-planted onto a bed of hardened snow. It looks like someone just kicked his ass. He's bruised and motionless. Barely able to whistle but puts his lips together and blows. Something heads towards him, going across the ground faster than the speed of sound, leaving a trail off snow dust behind. It starts licking him and playing around. What the f—? It's his white dog, Krypto. An adult dog with a puppy personality. Or as some would say, a crazy canine with no impulse control.

Fast forward and the man of steel is back on his job, trying to protect the citizens of Metropolis. Crime isn't the only issue. The devious machinations of a jealous and evil billionaire named Lex Luther (Nicholas Hoult, *Nosferatu*) cause more harm. He's so ambitious, he'd destroy the city for a silver dollar and setup and kill Superman for the fun of it. He's backed by a team of techies, manning surveillance machines, and bolstered by deadly metahuman thugs. Like the fighter Ultraman and The Engineer (Maria Gabriela de Faria), whose body can morph, granulate into nanites and strangle adversaries. Though her buzzsaw-blade fists are a favorite weapon.

Is Superman up to the challenge? In some ways yes. In some ways no. His insecurity is most obvious when his alter ego Clark Kent, a reporter at the *Daily Planet* newspaper, has a long heart-to-heart conversation with his colleague and lover Lois Lane (Rachel Brosnahan, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*). As they ponder their relationship, she eggs him on to do an interview as Superman. That's when he reveals his life mantra: "To serve others and make the world a better place." His altruistic nature gets tested again and again as he fights the enemies and schemers and becomes the center of negative attention himself. This isn't your

granny's Superman, a pillar of strength and confidence. He's searching for both.

The rapport, between Superman and Lois is so new age. She's confident, brassy and not sure she needs him. He, as her man, questions his place in her life. It's a

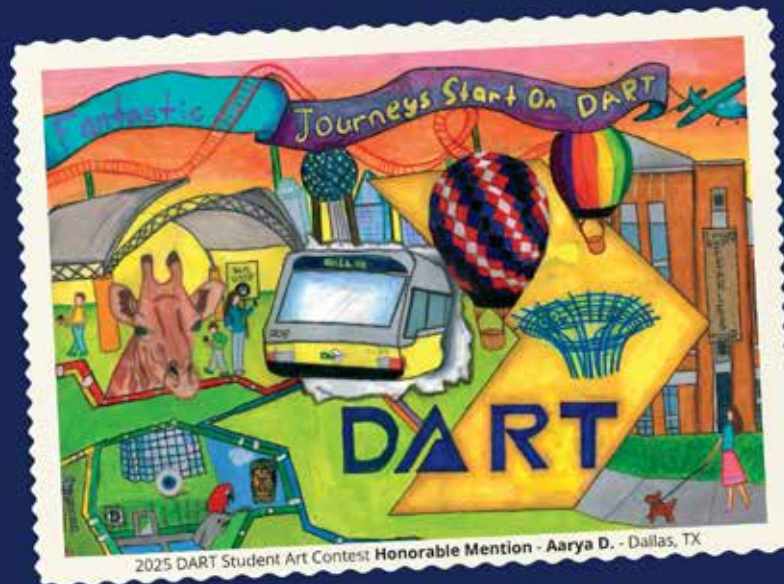
dance modern couples do in a world of everchanging mores. The lovers' frustrations and dilemma, as shown over several exposition-heavy scenes, may be admired by adults, who understand its implications. But less revered by genre

fans and kids who like their superhero movies fast, lean and mean and not bloated.

The Dark Knight set the bar high for visuals in a superhero movie. Images in this film don't reach that

See FILM, Page 13

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Michael Jackson estate files court petition alleging \$213 million extortion plot by Frank Cascio

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

The Estate of Michael Jackson has filed an explosive petition in Los Angeles Superior Court accusing Frank Cascio, a man once described as Jackson's "second family," of masterminding a \$213 million extortion plot to force payouts by threatening to flip decades of public support into salacious allegations about the King of Pop. The court action, exclusively obtained by Black Press USA, reveals in unprecedented detail how the estate contends that Cascio and unnamed associates used their proximity to Jackson—once proudly touted in books and interviews—to demand a fortune from the most successful celebrity estate in history. "For over 30 years, these individuals held themselves out as Michael Jackson's most passionate de-



Photo via NNPA

fenders," the petition states, quoting Cascio's repeated assertions—under oath and on national television—that Jackson never harmed him or any child. "It was a shakedown," the estate's lawyers charged.

A Decades-Long Public Defense

As recently as 2011, Cascio promoted his memoir *My Friend Michael*, describing a warm, fatherly relationship with Jackson. "I want to be precise and clear, on the record, so that everyone can read and understand," he wrote.

"Michael's love for children was innocent, and it was profoundly misunderstood." He doubled down in dozens of interviews. During a 2005 ABC Primetime Live broadcast, Cascio—then using the name Frank Tyson—declared: "If Michael ever laid a finger on me, I would not be in this chair right now." In a 2011 sit-down with Wendy Williams, he said with conviction, "Nothing at all. And that's what makes me so upset," when asked whether Jackson had ever acted inappropriately. Even years

later, one of the respondents continued to insist Jackson was a target of "liars," telling Oprah Winfrey during a televised interview: "Michael couldn't harm a fly. He's such a kind and gentle soul. Michael was a target." In 2019, when HBO's controversial *Leaving Neverland* documentary ignited a fresh wave of criticism and threatened multiple Jackson-related projects—including Cirque du Soleil's "Michael Jackson ONE"—estate co-executors John Branca and John McClain, along with the Michael Jackson Company, sought Cascio's support. Instead, they say, Cascio turned on them.

A Secret Settlement

Facing mounting public pressure and what they describe as repeated threats to invent new claims, the estate entered into a confidential settlement on January 10, 2020. Under the agreement, Cascio and his asso-

ciates would receive millions over five years—\$3 million each, according to sources familiar with the negotiations—in exchange for comprehensive waivers, a sweeping nondisclosure clause, and an ironclad promise to arbitrate any disputes. The estate said it acted reluctantly to protect Jackson's children and preserve projects that would cement the late artist's legacy. "We have a fiduciary responsibility to maximize the income of the estate," Branca said in an earlier interview. "Our counsel insisted we sign the agreement. They didn't want it disclosed either because Michael's fans would have gone after these people." The settlement contained an unusually strict provision barring even the disclosure of the agreement's existence.

The \$213

Million Demand

Despite having collected

payments under that deal, Cascio, through lawyers, allegedly re-emerged in July 2024 with a stunning ultimatum: Pay \$213 million more, or face a media spectacle. According to the court filing, Cascio's legal team—then led by attorney Howard King—threatened to "expand the circle of knowledge" and leak allegations to the buyer of Jackson's \$600 million music catalog if their demands were not met. In one email sent August 29, 2024, King wrote, "We expect a substantive response by the end of day tomorrow. Otherwise, we will be forced to expand the 'circle of knowledge.'"

The estate called this an extortionate threat designed to pressure them into paying for silence. The estate responded by initiating a confidential arbitration proceeding on September 17,

See JACKSON, Page 16

How January 6 became playtime in London and beyond

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

Flavor Flav once declared, "9-1-1 is a joke." He was calling out the deadly indifference to Black lives embedded in institutions sworn to protect. But as grotesque as systemic neglect is, perhaps nothing in recent memory has so vividly illustrated American democracy's fragility—and its capacity for collective delusion—as the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Now, nearly five years later, that real-life nightmare has metastasized

into a sprawling cultural industry of documentaries, books, board games, performance art, and even a participatory stage show where you can choose to "hang" the vice president.

From *Four Hours at the Capitol* on HBO to *American Insurrection* on PBS Frontline, media have exhaustively dissected every angle of that day: the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, the false prophets of "Stop the Steal," the elected officials who turned complicity into a career strategy.

Cassidy Hutchinson's memoir, enough, peeled back the layers of cowardice and calculation within

Trump's White House.

A speculative graphic novel, 1/6, imagines what might have happened if the attackers had succeeded in overturning the government. But perhaps the most provocative—and unsettling—manifestation of this new genre is playing out in London's West End. Inside the Stone Nest theater, *Fight for America! Dare audiences to reenact the insurrection themselves.*

In this genre-defying hybrid of tabletop wargame and interactive performance, attendees are sorted into "Team Blue," defending the Capitol, or "Team Red," storming it.

Each side is handed a script of grievances and given dice, action cards, and thousands of meticulously painted miniatures—some waving "Overturn Biden" banners, others decked in riot shields.

The re-creation includes a 14-foot-wide model of the Capitol and a costumed Uncle Sam gamemaster, who prowls the floor as a ringmaster of civic mayhem.

The show was conceived by American theater producers Christopher McElroen and Neal Wilkinson, who initially planned to debut it in the United States.

But after Trump's re-

election in 2024, they relocated the premiere to London, hoping that some 3,000 miles of ocean would create enough distance for reflection.

The show culminates in a decision point: the audience must vote whether to execute Vice President Mike Pence. According to organizers, out of 24 London performances, 18 audiences voted to "hang" him.

One participant, unnerved by the crowd's enthusiasm, managed to talk them out of it in the final minutes, an uncomfortable reminder that even in play, the mob can hunger for violence.

While the creators insist the experience is designed to "spark self-reflection" on polarization and mob mentality, it is hard to ignore the absurdity of paying for the privilege of pretending to kill elected officials.

In her review, London critic Mary Beer compared the experience to Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0*, in which audiences were allowed to inflict real harm on the artist. Except here, the harm—rhetorical and symbolic—echoes an actual event that killed police officers and traumatized an entire nation.

See LONDON, Page 13

Black Americans still face deep retirement gaps despite higher incomes

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National
Correspondent

A report from the Employee Benefit Research Institute shows that Black Americans continue to face serious challenges in saving for retirement, even as their incomes grow.

The 2025 Retirement Confidence Survey, which included a special oversample of Black workers and retirees, found that the wealth gap remains wide at every income level. Among households earning \$75,000 or more, only 33% of Black Americans reported having \$250,000



Photo via NNPA

or more in savings and investments, compared with 63% of non-Black Americans. Debt remains a significant barrier. 63% of higher-income Black households said debt is a problem, while just 45% of non-Black households at the same income level said the same. Nearly half

of upper-income Black respondents said debt affects their ability to save or live comfortably in retirement.

While many Black Americans expressed confidence managing day-to-day budgets, fewer felt prepared to invest or plan for the long term. The study showed that Black Americans with

higher incomes were less likely to have personally saved for retirement, 77%, compared with 87% of non-Black Americans. Retirement experiences also differed sharply. Forty-four percent of Black retirees said they retired earlier than planned because of a health problem or disability, compared with 32% of non-Black retirees. After leaving their main jobs, Black retirees were more likely to work for pay to make ends meet, and more often said their retirement lifestyle was worse than expected. Access to financial advice and planning re-

mains uneven. Just 31% of Black respondents reported currently working with a financial advisor, although nearly half expect to do so in the future. Black Americans were more likely to seek help with reducing debt, creating wills or estate plans, and arranging life insurance than simply determining if they had saved enough to retire.

Researchers Craig Copeland and Lisa Greenwald wrote, "Black Americans reported disproportionately lower financial resources, and how they feel about retirement and financial security is clearly impacted by

having less resources."

They continued, "In particular, Black retirees are struggling with higher likelihoods of their retirement lifestyle being worse than expected and having to retire earlier than planned because of a health problem or disability." "Still," the researchers concluded, "there are some modifications in the financial system that could help improve their prospects, such as increased assistance in balancing competing financial priorities like debt reduction, supporting family, and building long-term savings."

FILM, from Page 9

level. Not the cinematography (Henry Braham, Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3), as the lighting, composition and angles are decent but never spectacular. Nor the production design (Beth Mickle, Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3), which creates a cartoonish feel, but never in an astonishing way. The music (David Fleming, John Murphy) does its job, eccentrically. While the costume design (Judianna Makovsky) may be the production element that's the most noteworthy. In closeups, Superman's suit has a grainy look, almost like painted burlap. When the camera pans over the big red "S" on his chest, there's so much texture, no slickness. A nice change. Largely the sets look like sets. Falling buildings look like CGI magic. Even a wonderful scene of the S man trying to swim through what looks like a sea of lava, could be better.

Corenswet, built like a

rugby player, is photogenic and must have been waiting for this role his entire life. It fits him organically. His acting prowess and ability to build a character emotionally, from the inside, carries the most stagnant scenes. He's totally believable when he's loving, confused, nerdy, and circuspect: "I'm not what I thought I was." When he's feeling alienated, like a maligned immigrant. And especially when he's near death. He can bring this franchise forward. As can Brosnahan, whose interpretation of a career woman and challenging lover is animated, centered and a joy to watch. Charming when she wants, brave when she needs to be.

They're surrounded by a great cast: Wendell Pierce as editor Perry White; de Faria is a unique villainess and Edi Gathegi as "Mr. Terrific," a superhero in Superman's posse, which is called Justice Gang.

Gathegi is confident as a tech wizard, blunt and cool as hell as the Man of Steel's buddy. Something seems a bit off with Hoult as the narcissistic, vindictive tech bro. The performance feels like a college kid playing a bad guy. That wasn't the case in the film The Order, when Hoult played a vicious white nationalist. He did that antagonist well. Possibly he's too emotional here, when maybe a better approach would have been being cold as ice. Like the bald-headed Feyd-Rautha Harkonnen in Dune: Part Two, as played by Austin Butler.

This is an entertaining reboot. A quirky refresh. An eccentric, humanizing and socially conscious interpretation of a classic story retold for this generation. This movie gets to where it needs to go. Eventually, it builds, gathers energy and blasts off. Soaring high into the sky.

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.



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BLM, from Page 5

like Wakiesha's Law—requiring 24-hour family notification when a loved one dies in custody—the report describes BLM Grassroots' youth scholarship programs, food distributions, and international solidarity work.

Dr. Abdullah also addressed internal conflict over financial stewardship within the broader BLM network.

She said that while BLM

Los Angeles purchased a community building used for mutual aid and youth programs, the Global Network Foundation bought what she called a "\$6 million mansion" in Studio City. "Families of those who have been killed by police and white supremacy have been blocked from being able to ever use or set foot inside that house," she said, adding that BLM Grassroots leaders recently

visited the property to demand accountability and the return of resources.

"We stood outside with at least six or seven family members and said, return the money, return the resources to the movement so that we can use it for the good of Black liberation."

Abdullah said that repeated attempts to speak directly with foundation leaders—including letters, calls, and legal filings—have been met with silence or legal counteractions.

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LONDON, from Page 10

Elsewhere, the commodification of January 6 has taken other shapes. A parody board game, Storm the Capitol, lets players choose to be “patriots” or law enforcement.

An interactive wargame and art installation called Fight for America! Invites participants to maneuver figurines around a to-scale model of the Capitol as

they reenact the breach. In London, the theater production includes real video footage of the attack—an eerie coda that pulls players back from their simulated conquest into the reality that this was no abstraction.

In a sign of just how thoroughly this day has been transformed into content, an 18-year-old’s decision to report his father to the FBI

became the basis for a stage play called Fatherland. And the flood of works shows no sign of slowing. A Washington, D.C., run of Fight for America! is slated for January 2026 to mark the fifth anniversary of the attack, landing at a moment when Trump has returned to power and granted clemency to all but 14 convicted January 6 defendants.

This explosion of entertainment products, from ta-

bletop spectacles to streaming exposés, raises an unsettling question: How should a society process an attempted coup that almost ended the American experiment?

Are we memorializing a civic tragedy—or trivializing it?

For many, the answer lies in whether these projects foster genuine reflection or simply feed the cultural appetite for spectacle.

CAMP, from Page 6

have to do first and then what their options are after their work is done,” said Suzanne Paiz, a fourth grade teacher. “When students completed the assignments that the instructors had listed on the playlists, they were given the autonomy to do online learning games or more engaging worksheets

that tied into the lesson.”

One camper, Jiayi X., appreciated the ability, structure, and concept of the playlist.

“They would make fun questions out of the subjects we were doing at the time. It was really fun. I sometimes got questions wrong, which was okay

because I was able to figure out my mistakes on my own,” she said.

As Summer Cool unfolded, students stayed focused on its true purpose—gaining the skills and confidence to thrive in the year ahead. What started as a journey of self-reliance and friendship led them to discover their true capabilities and confidence to maneuver through

the terrains of a new school year.

Xavier R., who is going into fourth grade, said he is ready for the next step in his education.

“I understand fractions way more,” he said, slightly pushing his glasses up onto his face. “Since I’m moving to fourth grade, I need to know these skills by heart.”

FLOOD, from Page 3

who need them in languages they understand and formats they can act upon. It’s not enough to build more innovative models; we must embed them into the real-world decisions of farmers, families, and first responders.

The 2025 Hill Country Flood should not be remembered solely as a disaster. It must be recognized as a turning point when science, policy, and the public align to reshape the future of flood resilience. Through collaboration within Texas and beyond, and by grounding our work in practical application and fairness, we can ensure that when the next storm comes, and it will, we are ready, not surprised.

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truly counts.

Dr. Ali Fares is a Regents Professor, Texas A&M University System, Endowed Professor of Water Security

and Water-Energy-Food Nexus, Prairie View A&M University, Editor, Extreme Events and Climate Change (Elsevier).

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This is your Last and Final Warning

By Dr. James L. Snyder

As a child, I remember my parents saying to me, "I'm not going to tell you this again." The only problem with that was they did tell me again. And again. And again.

It was hard for me to trust my parents along this line. They always gave me warnings, and then when I would do it again, they would give me another warning. I began to realize that they weren't taking these warnings seriously.

The only thing I can think of is that they may not have remembered telling me that in the first place. I can understand that.

Now that I'm an adult, I'm the one giving this last and final warning. And, of course, my children responded to it the same way I responded to my parents. I think it might be an inherited attitude.

However, I'm now in a different situation. I receive letters at least once a week, warning me that this is their last and final notice about my car or home warranty. If I had all the postage that accumulated over the years from these letters, I could retire in style.

Usually, I ignore these letters, except when they contain a prepaid postage envelope. I usually take those envelopes, put a track in them, seal the envelope, and then put it in the mailbox.

I never know if these tracks work because I never

hear back from them.

Over the last several years, a new level of inquiry has emerged. It is a wonderful invention by Alexander Graham Bell called the telephone. Every day, I receive a phone call warning me that this is their last and final warning concerning my expiring car warranty.

If only that were true.

The trouble with these "stupid" phone calls is that there's no real person on the other end. I don't mean me; I mean their end. It's all recorded, and how they do that is above my pay scale.

I can't do anything with these recorded messages, so I hang up. After all, what else can I do? Indeed, I would like the opportunity to give them a piece of my mind and tell them to stop calling me. But that is not on the agenda.

Then, beginning in December with the annual Medicare renewal time, I have some actual people call me.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage refuses to answer these calls, and often, will take the phone off the hook for the whole day.

But I have a different perspective. After all, I am retired and do have some free time to mess around. When I get one of these calls from a live person, I dive into it with all the nonsense I have, which is quite a lot.

After all, they called me, I did not call them.

The calls I like are those in which I'm asked person-

al questions.

"Do you have diabetes?"

I always respond to them, "No, I don't have diabetes, but I am a very sweet guy." Usually, when I say that on the other end of the phone, there's an amazing "click."

There are times when I answer using the voice of Daffy Duck. I've done this so often that I'm becoming quite skilled at it. Several times, when I respond to them on my end of the phone, they respond with a long list of vulgarities. And they asked me to do things to myself that are physically not possible.

One question I enjoy is when people ask me how old I am. I usually respond, "I don't know how old I am because my age changes every year and I don't know what it's going to change to this year."

I can't tell how many were so confused by my answer that they said nothing and just hung up on me.

If someone calls me on the phone and offers me a product they think I would want, I wouldn't take it from them. I will never trust anybody who randomly calls me with a product that I would really want.

Recently, I've been winning money from a PCH contest. I don't recall signing up for this contest, but I was grateful to have won it. The one prize was \$8.5 million and a brand-new Porsche. I couldn't tell you how excited I was to win all of this. It certainly was my lucky day.

In processing this, all I had to do was send them \$14,000 for the processing fee, and then I would receive all that money, along with the brand-new car.

I'm a Pennsylvania Dutchman, and we are rather frugal with our money. You touch my money, and I may say something nice at your funeral.

These phone calls are not going to stop. But no matter how many call me, they're not getting one dime from me. I only wish it were true when they say, "This is your last and final warning."

It's amazing how many people lie for a living. Thinking on this I was reminded what Solomon said, and he was spark on. "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal

truly are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22).

Whenever a person lies it has a way of coming back to them. I remember my father use to say that if I didn't lie I wouldn't need a good memory. I have lived long enough to understand

what he meant.

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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A Successful 1st Mega Family Reunion



Sister Tarpley
NDG Religion Editor

(Editor's Note: This column originally ran in July 2014. NDG continues to share Sister Tarpley's legacy every week in our print edition.)

Usually, June through September every year or every two years, there are family planned reunions all over the U.S.A. There were two family reunions that I attended this year. The Baker's and Smith's families annual re-

union, my maternal side, in Mexia, Texas; this reunion has been going on for 66 years. And my paternal side, the Demus'; also in Mexia Texas, has been going on for approximately 32 years. For the first time, the Demus' planned a mega family reunion with family members attending from every state in the U.S.A. and some parts of Africa. I met and I value the rich heritage that each family member brought to our precious history. At the Demus Mega reunion which was hosted by the Demus' from Dallas and Mexia, Texas on July 10-13, 2014, I heard many

family members exclaimed, "I didn't know that I had so many family members and especially in my area!" "Oh, I had heard some talk about our family in Texas getting together each year, but these cousins live here, close to me!" "Some have lived just a block or two away and I didn't know them." "Will you look at this man, lady, boy or girl, they look just like Aunt Margie, Uncle James, Cousin Solomon, Cousin Katie's grandson, granddaughter, etc., this is 'unbelievable,' a cousin's favorite word at the reunion." Family members continued to say the same things,

so my siblings and I, started saying, "It's in the blood!" Nothing more needed to be said. All the glory and honor belong to God. Also, I appreciate all committee members who worked ex-

tremely hard for two years preparing for our 1st mega reunion. Congratulations to my family on our very successful 1st mega family reunion. There is a saying that says, you don't know

where you are going until you know where you have been. As youngsters we don't know how to appreciate and value our ancestors. We fail to fully compre-

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NDG Bookshelf: Memoirs by various Black authors share insights

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

Sometimes, you just don't want to know any more.

You've had it with bad news, up to your eyebrows and no more. So maybe it's time for some good news. Maybe it's time for some memoirs, biographies, and the goodness you'll find inside these great books...

What goes better with a warm summer evening than a few tunes? A book about a musician, that's what, and "From the Shadow of the Blues: My Story of Music, Addiction and Redemption" by John Lee Hooker Jr. with Julia Simon (Rowman & Littlefield, \$34) is a great summertime read. It's the story of a born singer, the son of a sharecropper who struggled and



Terri Schlichenmeyer

got through it to become a Grammy Award winning bluesman. Inspirational and lively, this memoir is as entertaining as are its author's performances.

No doubt, you've read

some of Toni Morrison's work and you might be eager to learn more about her long career. In "Toni at Random: The Iconic Writer's Legendary Editorship" by Dana A. Williams

(Amistad, \$29.99), you'll understand about the great author's somewhat-hidden career, work that many of her fans don't know much about.

Working at the publisher Random House gave Morrison a chance to nourish the careers of many Black authors and, in doing so, she helped change the entire publishing world, making it more open to diversity for readers, both Black and white. With its insight to Toni Morrison's career and the behind-the-scenes of publishing past, this is truly a reader's book.

If you can't help yourself, you have to watch politics, you'll want to read "Trailblazer: Perseverance in Life and Politics" by former Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun (Hanover

Square Press, \$32.99). Here, readers are taken back to Braun's childhood, to see what launched her to success.

There were many barriers that Braun smashed through: she made history as the first Black woman elected to the Senate. First woman representing Illinois in Washington. First senator to be appointed as an ambassador (to New Zealand). And even if you're not particularly a politics-watcher, this book is inspiring and empowering.

And, finally, if you haven't exhausted your examination of racism yet, "The Science of Racism: Everything You Need to Know but Probably Don't—Yet" by Keon West (Abrams Press, \$28.00) offers a very

different way of looking at the subject. West, who has "always been Black," argues that we've left science out of the topic of racism for far too long. By adding scientific measures to the realities of racism, we can understand the issue a little better, he says, and we might be able to have a different conversation about it. Go into this book with an open mind; it's full of examples, thought-provokers, smart words, and ideas. Look closely, and you'll also find a bit of humor to get you through...

If you need additional books on Black history or you want another memoir by a Black authors, then head to your favorite bookstore or library. Ask the friendly face there, and you'll find lots more.

JACKSON, from Page 10

2024, accusing Cascio of civil extortion and anticipatory breach of contract. Days later, Cascio's lawyers delivered draft lawsuits "riddled with outlandish scurrilous allegations" that directly contradicted his years of public statements.

The Geragos Factor

By January 2025, Cascio had replaced his counsel with Mark Geragos—ironically, Jackson's former defense lawyer who had proclaimed to Good Morning America that "there's nothing sexual going on"

and that Jackson was "100 percent innocent."

In his 2013 book Mistrial, Geragos wrote of Jackson's 2005 acquittal: "The evidence was overwhelming that he never touched this kid, and the entire thing was a huge shakedown." He also appeared on The Megyn Kelly Show in December 2021 to blast Leaving Neverland, calling it "a complete rewrite of history" and an "absolute travesty."

However, now Geragos has taken the opposite stance, representing Cascio

in a renewed effort to file public litigation. According to the estate's filing, Geragos lowered the demand to \$44 million but warned that if the estate refused, they would sue for defamation, emotional distress, and an alleged "cover-up."

The estate insists these claims are "bogus" and barred by the original settlement's releases and arbitration clauses. The petition points out that the agreement explicitly requires arbitration for any disputes, even the question of whether a claim is arbitrable. "The question of arbitrabil-

ity is itself a question to be resolved finally by the arbitrator," the contract states.

The Estate's Broader Mission

This latest legal battle comes as the Jackson estate continues to flourish. Since Jackson died in 2009, Branca and McClain have transformed a \$500 million debt into an empire generating over \$3 billion. Projects include the record-breaking concert film Michael Jackson's This Is It, Cirque du Soleil productions, and the upcoming Antoine Fuqua biopic MICHAEL, starring Jackson's nephew Jaafar.

Yet Branca says managing the estate means protecting it from opportunistic attacks.

"Michael was acutely aware of the racial undertones in how he was perceived," Branca told Black Press USA in a prior interview, recalling Jackson's lament: "Sinatra's the chairman of the board. Elvis is the king. Springsteen is the boss. But what do they call me? The Gloved One... that's racist."

Branca added, "I definitely believe there's a racist element in the media coverage of Michael Jackson

since the 1980s. Michael got so big many were jealous."

The estate has requested that the court order Cascio into arbitration and award legal fees. If the petition is granted, any subsequent proceedings would take place in private. For now, the estate is vowing not to yield.

"We will continue to manage the estate with the integrity and dedication that Michael deserved," Branca said. "Attempts like this to tarnish his memory for financial gain will not succeed."

TARPLEY, from Page 15

hend that if it had not been for our ancestors, we would not exist. We also fail to realize that we are the total sum of all of our ancestors;

and that our "special gift," be it singing, dancing, being a comedian, acting, preaching, teaching, nursing, being a doctor, playing

a musical instrument, etc. can be traced directly back to them.

The family reunion officially ended Sunday, July 13, with words of encouragement from our cousin,

Bishop Carl E. Morgan from Dallas, Texas. His topic came from John 3:1-8. There was a Man Named Nicodemus."

A family reunion is another excellent time to

teach your children their rich history and introduce them to other family members.

Remember always, if God brings you to it, He will bring your through it.

And, in happy or sad moments, praise God. In difficult moments, seek God. In quiet moments, worship God. In painful moments, trust God. In every moment, thank God.