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State of the Dream 2026 Finds Black America Facing a Recession Across Jobs, Housing, and Technology

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

The "State of the Dream 2026" report finds that policy reversals in 2025 triggered a broad economic regression for Black America—marked by rising unemployment, federal job cuts, weakened equity, tax, business, broadband, AI, and housing protections—amounting to signs of a Black recession rather than isolated labor market distress. (Image via NNPA)

Black unemployment surged to 7.5 percent by December 2025, a level that would signal a recession if it were reflected across the national workforce. But the latest "State of the Dream 2026" report makes clear the damage extends far beyond jobs. From broadband access and housing to artificial intelligence and federal workforce policy, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies finds that 2025 marked a sharp economic breakdown for Black America driven by policy reversals and the removal of long-standing safeguards.

Released this week, "State of the Dream 2026: From Regression to Signs of a Black Recession" draws on research from the Joint Center and partners including United for a Fair Economy, the Center for Economic Policy Research, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, and the Onyx Impact Group. The report situates rising unemployment within a wider retreat from equity-focused policy across nearly every sector shaping economic opportunity.

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NDG Quote of the Week:

"We are powerful because we have survived, and that is what it is all about- survival and growth." — Audre Lorde

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Kevin Hart

(Black PR Wire) Globally recognized comedian, actor, producer and entrepreneur Kevin Hart has announced a strategic partnership with Authentic Brands Group (Authentic), a global sports, media, entertainment and lifestyle platform. Through the agreement, Hart and Authentic will co-own and manage the Kevin Hart brand, scaling it across new verticals and markets through Authentic's innovative brand platform.

Eva RInaldi / Wikipedia

Hart also becomes a shareholder in Authentic, whose brand portfolio spans more than 50 brands, reaches nearly one billion social media followers and generates $32 billion in annual systemwide retail sales worldwide.

"This partnership is about acceleration, growth and diversification. I've spent years building businesses and creating opportunities, and joining Authentic gives me the platform and global infrastructure to take my brand to the next level," Hart said. "Becoming a shareholder allows me to co-own some of the most recognizable IP of all time while building my own brand legacy. I want the Hart name to live on for generations to come and be something that my grandkids and their grandkids will be able to be proud of."

Hart is a global entertainer and business mogul. His expansive career includes blockbuster films, global tours, streaming platforms, consumer products, fitness partnerships and more, supported by an audience of 292 million social media followers worldwide. Hart's portfolio includes, but is not limited to, successful ventures such as Hartbeat Productions, Gran Coramino, Fabletics and other category-defining businesses that reflect his creative and commercial range.

"Kevin is one of the most dynamic entertainers and entrepreneurs of our time," said Jamie Salter, Founder, Chairman and CEO of Authentic. "His creative vision, business instincts and cultural impact are unmatched. Kevin sees what we see: the power of brand ownership and the opportunity to build a global, long-term business. His investment in Authentic also reflects our mutual confidence and shared vision for that growth."

Corey Salter, President of Entertainment and International at Authentic, added, "Our strategy has always been to partner with visionary leaders who are building brands with long-term global relevance. Kevin represents the future of entertainment-driven IP, and together we will expand his brand across new categories and geographies, strengthening the entire Authentic network."

The partnership marks another meaningful milestone for Authentic as it continues to build one of the world's most powerful IP ecosystems, fueled by content, culture and a globally connected partner network. Hart joins a roster of globally influential partners across sports, culture and entertainment, including David Beckham and Shaquille O'Neal. Together, Authentic and Hart will expand the eponymous Kevin Hart brand across consumer products, state-of-the-art digital platforms, collaborations and live experiences.

Authentic Brands Group (Authentic) is a leading sports, media, entertainment and lifestyle platform. As the owner of some of the most iconic and beloved intellectual property in the world, Authentic acquires and invests in brands to create long-term value for all of its stakeholders.

Glenn B. Callison

Collin College recently announced the upcoming appointment of Glenn B. Callison, a distinguished attorney and community leader, to its Board of Trustees. With a wealth of experience in real estate law and a strong commitment to community service, Callison brings valuable expertise to the Board. Callison will serve Place 1 until the next regular election of the Board, which takes place in May 2027. Place 1 expires in May 2029.

"I am so appreciative of all the amazing candidates who applied for this position. Collin College is such a tremendous organization, and I love how the community responded to this opening," said Jay Saad, Board of Trustees chair. "Glenn Callison is a dedicated servant-leader, and we are privileged to have him on our team."

Callison, an equity shareholder attorney at Munsch Hardt Kopf & Harr, P.C., has served as outside general counsel for various organizations, including Whitman Peterson Partners and a publicly traded Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT). His leadership roles extend to numerous community organizations, including serving as a past chair for the Collin College Foundation, current chair for the Baylor Scott & White Medical Center Plano board, and the current president for the NAIOP North Texas Real Estate Association Board among other community-involved roles.

"I am honored to join the Collin College Board of Trustees and be of service to the college community in a new capacity," said Callison. "Education has always been an important cornerstone of my life, and I look forward to contributing to the college's growth and success while serving our number one priority, our students."

Callison holds a Bachelor of Business Administration and a Juris Doctorate from Baylor University and Baylor Law School, respectively, and has been recognized by various legal organizations for his outstanding contributions to the field.

Callison will be sworn in as the Place 1 Trustee at the Jan. 30 Board of Trustees meeting.

Collin College serves approximately 60,000 credit and continuing education students annually and offers more than 200 degrees and certificates. For more information, visit www.collin.edu.

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The Dream Cannot be Realized Without Financial Freedom

By Ben Crump

We honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. each January with speeches, service projects, and by

reciting powerful quotes we know by heart. But too many Black families will spend much of MLK Day the same way they spend most

Mondays.

With the gas tank hovering near empty, hoping the car can go until the next paycheck arrives. With a prescription waiting at the pharmacy counter because they cannot afford the cost. With a paycheck that has to stretch further than what seems possible. Dr. King understood that true dignity means being able to afford and build a good life. In one of his clearest reminders, he asked what it means to "eat at an integrated lunch counter" if you cannot "buy a hamburger and a cup of coffee."

That question still carries weight for many. Personal freedom will not be achieved without financial freedom. Dr. King spent the final chapter of his life pushing the country to face economic injustice. The day before he was tragically assassinated, Dr. King stood with sanitation workers in Memphis to call for economic equality. He helped launch the Poor People's Campaign because he knew

freedom hollowed out by poverty is not freedom at all. Dr. King kept pushing America to match its promises with practical pathways.

That is the part of his legacy we should sit with this MLK Day.

This work has never been more important or needed. The cost of groceries, rent, and childcare has become an increased burden. And many families go from stable to scrambling with just one unexpected expense. These realities are on display in a recent national survey commissioned by DreamFi, echoing what so many families already feel so deeply. More than one in four respondents told us they

used check-cashing services in the past year. This finding makes it clear that too many households still need simpler and more accessible options for moving money.

The survey also shows how unexpected expenses impact families. Only 41% of Black respondents said they could cover a $1,000 emergency, compared with 56% of white respondents. When a tire blows out, when a child gets sick, when hours get cut, the question is

not theoretical. The question is immediate, and the impact is real. We must shine a light on this struggle and work to equip families with tools to build better futures. We must recognize Dr. King's wisdom and acknowledge that financial stability is a civil

rights issue, because financial instability limits the ability to have choices.

The survey also found hope that can guide how we move forward. Black families are not turning away from the idea of building stability. In fact, they are reaching for it. In the survey, 79% of Black respondents said they sought out financial education in the

past six months. Ours is a community hungry for tools and a fair shot at creating a better tomorrow.

So what does it mean to honor Dr. King right now? It means we get practical.

It means we expand access to clear, trustworthy financial education that respects people's time and speaks to real solutions. It means we support savings pathways that help families prepare for emergencies before emergencies arrive. It means we encourage options that make routine transactions easier and less costly, so a family is not paying extra simply to manage their own money.

Most of all, it means we stop treating financial instability as normal. Because normal is not the same as acceptable.

Dr. King asked America to make its promises real. The best way to honor him now is to provide opportunities for everyone to achieve Dr. King's dream.

Ben Crump is a nationally renowned civil rights attorney and founder of Ben Crump Law. Known as "Black America's attorney general," he has represented families in some of the most high-profile civil rights cases of our time, including those of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tyre Nichols, and Ahmaud Arbery. He is also co-founder of DreamFi, a financial empowerment platform focused on helping everyday people build stability through practical resources.

A Patient-Centered Approach to Treating Iron Deficiency in Women

(Newswise) — Iron deficiency anemia (IDA) affects nearly one-third of women worldwide, yet treatment is often delayed. To better address this common health issue, a new Yale study evaluated the cost-effectiveness of intravenous (IV) versus oral iron therapy for women with heavy menstrual bleeding and IDA. Their findings were published in Blood Advances.

DWG Studio

Caused by insufficient iron to support healthy red blood cell production, IDA can lead to fatigue, reduced cognitive functioning, and physical impairment. Women of reproductive age are disproportionately affected by IDA, most often due to heavy menstrual bleeding, defined as excessive or prolonged menstrual blood loss that interferes with daily life.

At a population level, iron deficiency and IDA remain widespread global health issues, says George Goshua, MD, MSc, assistant professor of medicine (medical oncology and hematology) at Yale School of Medicine.

"Collectively, we in medicine have had little advancement in addressing iron deficiency and iron deficiency anemia, affecting up to 2 billion and 1.2 billion women respectively, globally, dating back to at least 2000 now," he says.

Treating IDA in the setting of heavy menstrual bleeding typically involves iron supplementation, which can help alleviate symptoms and restore iron levels while the underlying cause of bleeding is addressed. Iron can be administered orally or intravenously, with IV formulations differing in dosing schedules, some delivered as a single high-dose infusion and others as multiple smaller doses over time.

In clinical practice, treatment decisions are often shaped by a mix of effectiveness, tolerability, and access, says Daniel Wang, a medical student in Goshua's lab.

"Oral iron is often the first option patients receive, but it can be difficult to tolerate because of gastrointestinal side effects and may not be as effective when blood loss is ongoing," Wang says. "IV iron, on the other hand, introduces a different set of challenges, including insurance restrictions and the need for repeated clinic visits."

These real-world tradeoffs, which can result in delayed treatment and inadequate iron repletion, inspired Wang to investigate how different iron formulations compare, not only in terms of clinical effectiveness, but also in quality of life, treatment burden, and cost over time.

Wang and his team built a decision-analytic Markov model to simulate patients' treatment courses across

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Employment remains the most visible signal. Black unemployment rose from 6.2 percent in January 2025 to 7.5 percent by December. Black youth experienced severe instability, with unemployment spiking from 18.6 percent in September to 29.8 percent in November before falling back to 18.3 percent in December. The report finds that if Black workers had maintained their 2024 prime-age employment rate, roughly 260,000 more Black adults would have been working in 2025, including about 200,000 prime-age Black women.

The collapse of federal employment accelerated the trend. Roughly 271,000 federal jobs were eliminated in less than a year, hitting Black workers particularly hard because they have historically been overrepresented in government roles offering stable wages, benefits, and protections. Before the cuts, Black Americans made up nearly 19 percent of the federal workforce, compared with about 13 percent of the overall labor force.

"Federal employment has historically functioned as an important sector for Black workers," the report notes, warning that buyouts, hiring freezes, and the dismantling of diversity-focused recruitment pipelines removed one of the most reliable pathways to middle-income stability.

Tax policy deepened the strain. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 made permanent tax cuts for high-income households and corporations while reducing investment in poverty-alleviating programs. Business preferences such as Section 199A, bonus depreciation, and estate tax benefits overwhelmingly favored wealthy households, while refundable credits that matter most to Black workers were left unchanged.

Black-owned businesses faced a parallel contraction. Executive orders issued early in 2025 redirected federal support away from disadvantaged firms, lowered small, disadvantaged business contracting goals, and moved to dismantle the Minority Business Development Agency. The Joint Center estimates these actions threaten $10 billion to $15 billion annually in lost federal support for Black-owned firms. At the same time, the U.S. Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institution Fund, a key source of capital for minority businesses, was defunded.

Beyond jobs and business, the report documents setbacks in broadband policy that risk widening the digital divide. The cancellation of the Digital Equity Act, the removal of mobile hotspots and school bus Wi-Fi from E-Rate eligibility, and weaker broadband pricing transparency requirements undercut efforts to expand internet access and adoption in Black households.

The information environment also shifted. While federal social media policy remained largely unchanged, platforms themselves pulled back on fact-checking and content moderation. The report notes that these platform-driven decisions reshaped the online information ecosystem, raising concerns about misinformation and its impact on communities that already face barriers to accurate and timely information.

Artificial intelligence policy marked another turning point. A new executive order titled "Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence" moved federal policy away from precautionary regulation toward a deregulatory, innovation-first approach. The report warns that unchecked AI deployment risks embedding bias into hiring, lending, housing, and public services without accountability.

Workforce policy changes further reinforced inequality. While apprenticeship programs expanded, initiatives designed to advance African American workforce participation stalled or were cut, setting the stage for reinforcing racial disparities rather than closing them.

Housing remains one of the most entrenched fault lines. U.S. Census Bureau data show Black homeownership at 45 percent compared with 74 percent for white households, a nearly 30-point gap that has persisted for generations.

"At a moment when hard-won rights and safeguards are being eroded, rigorous analysis is essential to building a fair economy," Joint Center President Dedrick Asante-Muhammad said in the report.

Dallas CASA Board of Directors Elects New Chair and Board Members

The Board of Directors of Dallas CASA has elected a new board chair and executive committee, as well as three new board members.

Janice Z. Davis will serve as board chair. A corporate and transactional attorney and partner at Haynes Boone, Davis advises clients on mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, divestitures and private equity transactions.

Her work spans industries including software, healthcare, energy, real estate and manufacturing. She holds a law degree from Baylor University and a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She has served as president of the Dallas Bar Association and an adjunct professor of business law at Southern Methodist University and currently serves on the board of directors for Broadway Dallas.

Janice Davis (Courtesy photo)

Krista Harvey (Courtesy photo)

Ashley Scheer (Courtesy photo)

Andrew White (Courtesy photo)

She has been a Dallas CASA board member since 2013. Davis is also a sworn volunteer advocate for Dallas CASA, having recently completed a complex four-year-long case with four children aged three to nine when they came into foster care.

The children went through multiple placements during that time, but ultimately, the siblings' uncle received permanent custody of the children. At the time of removal, none of the children had ever attended school, and Davis and her co-volunteer, Judith Steiner, focused on educational advocacy and placement with their uncle.

Newly elected board members include:

Krista Hanvey is an attorney and Co-Partner in Charge of the Dallas office of Gibson Dunn, where she also serves as Co-Chair of the firm's Employee Benefits and Executive Compensation practice group. She graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in government before attending William & Mary Law School, where she graduated first in her class.

Ashley Scheer is an attorney at Jackson Walker LLP., where her practice focuses on employment matters. She is also an expert in school law and has represented numerous independent and parochial schools. She is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in government and psychology and Southern Methodist University School of Law. Scheer has served as a volunteer advocate for Dallas CASA since 2019, advocating for nine children on three cases during that time. She is currently co-advocating for permanency and safety for a 10-year-old girl in foster care.

Andrew White is a managing director at Goldman Sachs, which was the recipient of Dallas CASA's 2025 Champion of Children Award for the firm's commitment to children served by Dallas CASA. He is also a board member of the Tartan Classic, a golf tournament benefitting Dallas' Scottish Rite for Children, and the Texas Real Estate Council. He graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in business.

Jamal Carty will serve as Vice Chair and Chair-Elect, with VP Community Outreach Nicki Stafford, VP Development Kristy Robinson, VP Governance Paige Richey, VP Finance Susan H. Novit, Assistant Treasurer Greg May and Secretary Jonathan Basshham and Members-at-Large Corey Anthony, Veree Hawkins Brown, Jim Lozier, Juan Nevarez, Stephen B.L. Penrose and Lauren Rose Sands rounding out the executive committee.

Dallas CASA's volunteers work alongside judges, attorneys, educators and families to promote healing, safety and permanency for children who have experienced abuse or neglect and are living in foster care. In 2025, 1,116 volunteers advocated for the care of 2,340 children in protective care

CASAblanca Casino Party Planned for Jan. 30

The Dallas CASA Young Professionals will host the annual CASAblanca casino party on January 30. CASAblanca will feature casino games, dancing, cocktails, appetizers, prizes and fun, all amidst a winter wonderland theme with snow machines, themed drinks and a silent auction. The casino party will include blackjack, craps and poker tables and a roulette wheel. A pianist will open the evening, followed by The Special Edition Band, who will have guests hitting the dance floor. All proceeds benefit the children served by Dallas CASA. Tickets and sponsorship are available at dallascasa.org.

CASAblanca is hosted by the Dallas CASA Young Professionals, a vibrant group of volunteers whose mission is to increase awareness of Dallas CASA while providing charitable and social opportunities for people ages 21 to 40. Event co-chairs are Matthew Brown, Bayley Irish, Vivian Satterfield and Hayward Woodmansee.

The event will run from 8 p.m. to midnight on Friday, January 30 at The Adolphus Grand Ballroom (1321 Commerce Street 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.

Where Dreams Grow, a New Year of Opportunity

Joyce Foreman
Dallas ISD District 6

Langston Hughes's iconic poem Harlem asks, "what happens to a dream deferred?" Today, I would like to reflect on the opposite, on what happens when dreams and goals are intentionally nurtured with support, opportunity and belief. In Dallas ISD, our students are thriving every day, and dreams are cultivated through strong schools, dedicated educators, engaged families, and students who rise to meet every challenge.

Years later, Hughes' words continue to challenge us to ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed. Across generations, countless trailblazers have shown us that vision and resilience can turn possibility into progress. One pioneer, Mae Jemison, the first Black female astronaut, demonstrated the power of imagination and creativity in shaping new futures when she said ***"the arts and sciences are avatars of human creativity. It's our attempt as humans to build an understanding of the world around us… go on and do all you can with it and make the life you want to live."*** That same determination is what empowers today's students to explore and reimagine the world around them.

Apply today: District 6 schools continue to expand opportunities in STEM, the arts, leadership, and extracurricular programs that prepare students for college and career. To ensure your child can be part of this journey, explore our specialty schools or request a transfer to take advantage of the many opportunities available in District 6 legacy schools. Fill out an application at DallasISD.org/Choose by Jan. 31, and continue your education with Dallas ISD.

As a part of our ongoing commitment to innovation and exploration, the district will host the **largest STEM EXPO in Texas** from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 24 at the Automobile Building at Fair Park. The event will feature more than 100 interactive exhibits across math, science, engineering and technology. Families are invited to experience a day of discovery, critical thinking, and creativity as we engage the next generation of students in STEM fields.

2026 MLK Oratory Competition: Beyond STEM, our students are also developing their voices as civic leaders. Each year, students across the district honor the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., through the MLK Oratory Competition. Fourth- and fifth-grade students presented original speeches responding to the prompt: "As a student of Dr. King's life, what message of hope do you think he would have for today?"

Four District 6 students competed in the semifinal round on Dec. 9, 2025 at John Lewis Social Justice Academy. Congratulations to Madison P., (Thomas L. Marsalis Elementary STEAM Academy), Nyla S., (Thomas Tolbert Elementary School), Ximena M., (Barbara Jordan Elementary School) and Lyric D., (Adelle Turner Elementary School) for your bravery on stage and your dedication to sharing King's legacy of hope and unity.

Through public speaking and social awareness, these students carry forward the dreams of visionaries like King, Jemison, and Hughes by using their voices to imagine new possibilities for their community.

With the new year upon us, I want to thank teachers, administrators, and families for continuing the important work of supporting our students and ensuring that every dream in District 6 has room to grow.

Dallas College Lands $3.3M Federal Grant to Expand AI Education

)Dallas College) Dallas College is betting big on artificial intelligence, securing more than $3.3 million in federal funding to transform how students and faculty teach, learn and prepare for a rapidly evolving workforce.

The U.S. Department of Education awarded Dallas College a four-year, $3.3 million grant to launch the Dallas College AI-Enabled Teaching and Learning Initiative, a comprehensive effort to integrate artificial intelligence across classrooms, curriculum and workforce training programs.

DWG Studio

College leaders say the initiative will position Dallas College as a national model for responsible, scalable AI adoption in higher education by combining faculty development, curriculum redesign, industry-aligned microcredentials and employer validation.

"At Dallas College, our mission is to prepare students not just for today's jobs, but for the future of work," said Dr. Justin Lonon, Dallas College chancellor. "This investment allows us to accelerate the integration of artificial intelligence and data analytics into teaching and learning, ensuring our students and faculty have the tools to thrive in a digital economy."

The grant will be administered through the Academic Services division and will focus on expanding AI literacy for students across disciplines while equipping faculty with the training and resources needed to incorporate emerging technologies into instruction.

Senior Vice Provost of Academic Services Greg Morris said the award reflects national confidence in Dallas College's leadership in innovation and workforce readiness.

"This AI-Enabled Teaching and Learning Initiative places emerging technologies at the heart of our academic programs," Morris said. "Through our partnership with Workcred, we are aligning education with industry needs and empowering our region to lead in the future of education and work."

Workcred, a national nonprofit founded in 2014, specializes in quality assurance, workforce alignment and the development of high-quality microcredentials. The organization will work with Dallas College to design, align and evaluate microcredentials for rapid launch and continuous improvement.

College officials said the initiative will help students gain in-demand, verifiable skills while strengthening connections between education and industry as artificial intelligence reshapes nearly every sector of the economy.

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thousands of scenarios.

"Our Markov model is a statistical tool that's commonly used in decision science, and it helps us quantify outcomes when there's uncertainty," says Wang. "You can run the model over thousands of iterations, with each one simulating a patient's walk through different health states."

The model draws on data from existing literature and real-world evidence, incorporating what is known about patients' experiences, iron metabolism, and differences in iron absorption between oral and IV therapies. "In that sense," Wang adds, "it almost lets you run a randomized trial without actually running one, which would be incredibly difficult to do at that scale."

Across a wide range of scenarios in the model, the team identified IV iron, specifically the formulation IV iron dextran, as the most cost-effective first-line treatment.

"IV iron dextran can be dosed as a very large, one-time infusion," says Wang. "At face value, IV iron looks more expensive, but when you look over the long run, especially for women with ongoing blood loss, it provides much better value. That includes not just what insurers pay, but the time and costs patients absorb themselves, like childcare, transportation, and taking off work."

The study offers a more patient-centered framework for evaluating first-line therapy for IDA, particularly for women with heavy menstrual bleeding, who often cycle through treatment delays and suboptimal care.

Irving ISD Student Recognized Among World's Top AP Art and Design Portfolios

IRVING – An Irving ISD student is earning international recognition for her artistic excellence.

MacArthur High School senior Isabella Earl has been selected for the 2025 AP Art and Design Exhibit, a prestigious global showcase featuring just 51 student portfolios worldwide chosen from more than 82,000 submissions. Isabella is one of only two students from Texas represented in this year's exhibit.

The AP Art and Design Exhibit highlights examples of original inquiry-based student work rooted in curiosity and ideas that reflect their own perspectives of the world. Last year's exhibition drew more than 250,000 views worldwide.

Isabella Earl (above) has been selected for the 2025 AP Art and Design Exhibit with her piece entitles "Mind Jam" (at left). (Courtesy photos)

"Isabella's selection for the exhibit is a moment of tremendous pride for MacArthur High School," says MacArthur High School Principal Victoria Youngblood-Baldwin. "Being recognized on a global stage affirms not only Isabella's achievement, but also the rigor, creativity and instructional excellence of our AP Art and Design program."

MacArthur High School's Visual Arts Lead Teacher, Marci Lee, said Earl's work reflects a rare balance of complexity and accessibility.

"Isabella has always had a unique way of seeing the world and an equally unique way of translating that perspective into her artwork," says Lee. "This recognition feels long overdue, especially considering how many of our students are already thriving in creative fields."

The AP Art and Design program, established in 1972, has grown from about 4,500 students in 1978 to more than 80,000 participants annually.

Earl's portfolio is now featured in the official 2025 AP Art and Design Exhibit on the College Board website, where viewers around the world can experience her work.

More details about Earl's achievement and her artistic journey are available at irvingisd.net..

Fifth Circuit Hears Arguments in Challenges to Ten Commandments Displays in Texas and Louisiana Public School Classrooms

NEW ORLEANS — The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, sitting en banc, heard oral arguments in two cases challenging state laws in Texas and Louisiana that require public schools to display the Ten Commandments in every classroom. The cases, Rabbi Nathan v. Alamo Heights Independent School District and Rev. Roake v. Brumley, araise fundamental questions about religious freedom and the separation of church and state guaranteed by the First Amendment.

These arguments come nearly a year after a unanimous three-judge panel of the 5th Circuit ruled that Louisiana's House Bill 71 is "plainly unconstitutional," finding it directly contradicted long-standing Supreme Court precedent. That decision was vacated when the full court agreed to rehear the case en banc. Federal courts in Texas have likewise issued multiple preliminary injunctions blocking enforcement of Senate Bill 10, concluding that the law violates students' First Amendment rights by forcing government-endorsed religious scripture on public-school children.

The plaintiffs in both states are multifaith and nonreligious families who simply want their constitutional right to decide their children's religious education respected by the government. They want their children's public schools to remain welcoming and inclusive for their families and students of all backgrounds.

"I send my children to public school to learn math, English, science, art, and so much more — but not to be evangelized by the state into its chosen religion," said Rev. Jeff Sims (he/him) from Louisiana. "These religious displays send a message to my children and other students that people of some religious denominations are superior to others. This is religious favoritism and it's not only dangerous, but runs counter to my Presbyterian values of inclusion and equality."

"No one faith should be canonized as more holy than others. Yet Texas legislators are imposing the Ten Commandments on public-school children," said Rabbi Mara Nathan (she/her) from Texas. "Though they are a sacred text to me and many others, the Ten Commandments has no place on the walls of public-school classrooms. Children's religious beliefs should be instilled by parents and faith communities, not politicians and public schools."

The Texas plaintiffs in Rabbi Nathan v. Alamo Heights Independent School District are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Texas, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation, with Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP serving as pro bono counsel.

The Louisiana plaintiffs in Roake v. Brumley are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Louisiana, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation, with Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP serving as pro bono counsel.

"We are proud to be in front of the 5th Circuit representing Texas families who are challenging forced Ten Commandments displays in public school classrooms," said Sarah Corning (she/her), attorney at the ACLU of Texas. "S.B. 10 is a blatant violation of our First Amendment rights and sends students the message that they only belong if they follow the government's chosen religion. Texas schools are not Sunday schools, and the Constitution protects Texans' right to decide how or whether they practice their faith. Texas families want and deserve better from our public schools."

"Public schools are meant to educate, not evangelize," said Daniel Mach (he/him), director of the ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief. "When the government mandates the display of a specific religious text in every classroom, it crosses a constitutional line by pressuring students and families to conform to the state's preferred religious doctrine. The First Amendment

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From Afterthought to Champions: Indiana's Historic Rise

By Jamal Baker
NDG Sportswriter

Photo: Bobak Ha'Eri / Wikipedia, NDG Composite

The Indiana Hoosiers completed a historic season by defeating the University of Miami 27-21 in the College Football Playoff National Championship at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Just two seasons ago, Indiana finished the year with a 3-9 record, but that proved to be a blessing in disguise as the Hoosiers hired former James Madison head coach Curt Cignetti to turn the football program around.

"If you look at the record since Indiana started playing football and relative to the success we've had the last two years, we've broken a lot of records here in terms of wins, championships, postseason games, top-10 wins," Cignetti said.

"It's been kind of surreal."

Cignetti took over one of the FBS's most historically losingest programs and quickly made his mark, guiding Indiana to the College Football Playoff in his first season before a first-round exit that many pundits labeled a fluke.

A year later the Hoosiers won their first national championship while becoming the first major college team since Yale in 1894 to go 16-0.

"It's a great story, tremendous story," Cignetti said. "Most people would tell you that are in the know, it's probably one of the greatest stories of all time."

What can the doubters say now? That Indiana is here to stay, and Cignetti is arguably the best coach in college football.

Heisman trophy winner Fernando Mendoza completed 16 of 27 passes for 186 yards and added a rushing touchdown.

Although Mendoza did not have his best statistical performance, the Miami native delivered a clutch 12-yard touchdown run on fourth-and-4 with 9:27 left to put Indiana up 24-14.

"We put it in for this game," Cignetti said after Indiana claimed its first national title. "It was a quarterback draw, but it was blocked differently. And we rolled the dice and said they're going to be in (the same defense) again. We blocked it well, he broke a tackle or two and got into the end zone."

When his team needed him most, Mendoza rose to the occasion and took some big hits from Miami defenders along the way.

"I'll die for my team," Mendoza said. "Whatever they need me to do, they need me to take a shot to the front or back, I'm going to die for my team out there because I know they'll do the same thing for me. That's what makes this national championship so special."

With only eight four or five-star players currently on the roster, the Hoosiers proved that strength in numbers and elite coaching are keys to success.

"I think we sent a message, first of all, to society that if you keep your nose to the grindstone and work hard and you've got the right people, anything's possible," Cignetti said. "In our particular situation in the athletic world, college football has changed quite a bit. The balance of power, also. But we have the right people on our staff, in the weight room, in the locker room, and we have great senior leadership and togetherness, and we had a really good quarterback that played his best when the chips were down.

"Are there eight first-round draft choices on this team? Probably not, no, there aren't. But this team, the whole was greater than the sum of its parts."

As a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.—founded at Indiana—all I have left to say is Go Hoosiers!

ACLU, from Page 7

protects the freedom of every family to decide matters of faith for themselves, and today's arguments underscore why we must uphold that principle in our public schools."

"Public schools exist to educate, not indoctrinate," said Alanah Odoms (she/her), executive director of the ACLU of Louisiana. "They must remain spaces where all children are safe, free, and respected — regardless of their family's beliefs. Religion is a personal choice, made by families, not something imposed by politicians through our public schools."

"We appreciate the Court's time and its thoughtful engagement during today's argument," said Jon Youngwood, co-chair of Simpson Thacher's global litigation department. "This case centers on a fundamental constitutional principle: Families — not the government — must retain the right to decide whether and how their children engage with religion. The laws at issue disrupt that longstanding protection, and we look to the court to safeguard these core First Amendment guarantees."

Let us hear from YOU!!!

If there are any news, events or anything else we need to know about, give us an e-mail at: editor@northdallasgazette.com

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
Thursday, January 22, 2026
5:30 p.m.
Turney W. Leonard Governance
and Training Center
Conference Area
5151 Samuell Blvd.
Dallas, TX 75228

The 2024-2025 DISD Annual Performance Report

The Dallas Independent School District will hold a public hearing to share information with the community regarding the educational performance of the district. The Meeting will take place at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, January 22, 2026, Conference Area, 5151 Samuell Blvd.

Persons interested in making comments at the public hearing must register to speak by contacting Board Services at (972) 925-3720. Registration will begin at 7:30 a.m., Tuesday, January 20, through Wednesday, January 21, at 5 p.m

Courtesy photo

Film Review: 'Primate' Takes the Cute Out of Chimps

By Dwight Brown
NNPA Film Critic

(***) Monkey see. Monkey kill.

Chimpanzee gone wild is a rare one for the horror genre. But not a preposterous premise. Anyone who remembers back to news stories in February 2009, may recall Travis a male chimpanzee. He was the pet of Sandra Herold since he was three-days old. As he grew up, townspeople in her North Stamford, CT community knew him well. Travis even appeared in a Pepsi TV commercial and was on The Maury Povich Show (where beasts gather). One day her friend Charla Nash came over and Travis, now weighing 200 pounds, mauled her. Mauled her bad. Blinded her, severed body parts and lacerated her face. She lost her eyelids, nose, lips, face bone structure and nine fingers. Before and after pictures of her attach shocked the world. Evidently, chimpanzees are immensely stronger than humans, have powerful jaws, sharp teeth and deadly fighting instincts.

Keep that in mind as you calculate the amount of fear this tale of terror, horror and hopeful escape generates. Director/writer Johannes Roberts (47 Meters Down and Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City) and co-writer Ernest Riera (47 Meters Down) start with a premise not different from Nash's ordeal. Unlike many horror films about primates, their narrative is not about a King Kong gigantic ape or intelligent apes that fight the good fight (Planet of the Apes). Their antagonistic primate is more similar to Travis. And that grounding makes this venture scarier because it's steeped in past truths.

They've gathered at a cliff-side villa in Hawaii. That's where family patriarch Adam (Troy Kotsur, Oscar® winner for Coda), a successful author, still lives with his youngest teen daughter Erin (Gia Hunter). Her big sis Lucy (Johnny Sequoyah) has come home from college with two friends in tow: Hannah (Jess Alexander) the flirty one and Kate (Victoria Wyant). They're picked up at the airport by their buddy Nick (Benjamin Cheng). But not before Kate has made friends with two guys on the plane, Drew (Charlie Mann) and Brad (Tienne Simon).

The young ladies settle into the palatial home, which has three levels leading down to an infinity pool with a steep, long drop to a rocky shore. Kate is shocked when she sees an animal. It's Ben, a chimpanzee. He's the family pet and Adam's primate friend. Sometimes caged. Sometimes not, roaming around like a family member.

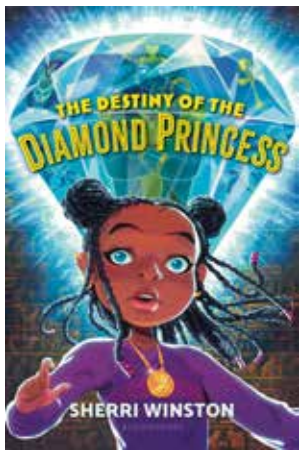
See FILM, Page 10

NDG Bookshelf: 'Destiny of the Diamond Princess' is great one for kids

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

Dripping in jewels from head to foot.

If you were a princess or a queen, that's what you'd have. Jewels, gold, lux gowns and lush thrones, not to mention power and respect. It would be so much fun. It would mean a lot of work, too. And in the new book, "Destiny of the Diamond Princess" by Sherri Winston, it might include an ancient curse.



For her entire life, Zahara-Grace Jones had known that she was adopted. What she didn't know was that her life was a lie!

That whole time, her Mom claimed she didn't know a thing about Zhara-Grace's birth parents. She didn't even have names, she said, but on the evening of Zahara-Grace's twelfth birthday, the truth was revealed. She'd known a lot about Zahara-Grace's birth; in fact, she was there right after Zahara-Grace entered the world, and she was given a mysterious box to give to Zahara-Grace on her twelfth birthday.

Inside the box was a medallion, a statue, and a letter that said everything would make sense soon. Zahara-Grace put the medallion around her neck immediately, as she seethed with anger. Why did her mother keep such an important secret for so long? She hated to be mad at the people who loved her most, but she had so many questions.

And then there was more: As Zahara-Grace competed in her favorite school sport, equestrienne skills, there was a commotion on the sidelines. A tall, regal gentleman loudly announced that she was the granddaughter of the King of Maliwanda, and the descendant of Princess Fara – which meant that Zahara-Grace was a real-life, bonafide, honest-to-goodness princess!

What a shocker, right? Her BFFs were unfazed, her mother was nervous, and her G-Pop was gracious, but becoming royalty could seriously change a girl's life, starting with rumors of a curse, palace jealousy, and a poisoning, centuries ago.

Was Zahara-Grace the heir to that curse? And was it truly a coincidence that the mummies of her ancestors were about to be on display at a local art museum...?

To your adult eyes, a mummy's curse novel might seem like old-school fiction. And it is, but it's also not, in this case. "Destiny of the Diamond Princess" has shades of 1932, but with a 2026 twist that's fresh as can be, and fun,

See BOOKSHELF, Page 14

FILM, from Page 9

When dad goes away on a business trip, something ignites a mean aggressive behavior in Ben. The kids are baffled, shocked and then scared shitless as the docile chimp goes on a maiming and killing rampage. Salivating, growling and maiming with no remorse. There's a call for help. Operator: "911. What's your emergency?" Caller: "He's gone crazy!"

Those who love the horror genre will get the fear, terror and blood-rushing through your veins thrills they crave. The script measures out the mayhem in sprints. It's a tight rhythm (editor Peter Gvozdas, The Purge, The Avengers) of head bashing, mouth gouging, ripping and severing. As a director, Roberts doesn't reinvent the wheel. Doesn't need to. Also, special effects are limited and believable. Largely thanks to Miguel Torres Umba, who plays Ben in a man-in-suit costume. So, the central character isn't a telltale CGI fake. That's helpful.

Quick, agile camerawork (cinematographer Stephen Murphy, Atlanta) follows the victims as they run in vain, lock themselves in cars and hide in closets. Nothing is wonderfully lit, the composition is so-so, the colors adequate, the sets ordinary (production designer Simon Bowles, A Quiet Place Day One) and props too (Ellie Forey and Tina Jones). In others' hands, that would be a deficit. With this tech team's professionalism, it just makes the surroundings seem real and not like replicas—even if they are.

Roberts has a good sense of horror and how to make genre requirements work to the movie's advantage. Audiences will scream "get in the other car" or "hide deeper in the closet." Not because they want to, but because they're compelled. The casual set up makes the characters seem more real, approachable and accessible. Easy to get wound up in their plights. The older sister protecting the young one. The brave girl not afraid to try alternate means of escape. The dudes who show up unaware. None of it seems silly and campy like a Scream or a I Know What You Did Last Summer. Nor serious and earnest like George A. Romero's 1988 horror film Monkey Shines. What's on view is just natural and alarming enough to pull you in. Make you cover your eyes at the scariest moments and uncover them for more gore. And the gore is not overblown. Most of the fear is based on dread and impending violence.

All this was achieved with roughly a $21M+ budget. Likely because there are so few locations and no big stars in the cast, except Kotsur. As an ensemble, the young cast steps up nicely. Hunter's Erin is vulnerable and impulsive like a kid would be. Mann and Simon as the interlopers are fun to watch. Alexander's Hannah is as rebellious as Wyant's Kate is concerned. Kotsur, who is deaf, is a brilliant casting choice as non-verbal communication is part of the film's theme. So much hinges on Sequoyah's portrayal as the courageous Lucy, and she's up to the challenge—emotionally and physically. Tweens, teens and twenty-somethings will likely flock to theaters and enjoy the movie and cast even more on streaming services.

You'll be frightened. Not by demons, ghosts or fake-ass monsters. Instead, one innocent-looking but deranged chimpanzee will make you quiver. A wild, crazed primate will leave an indelible impression. Monkey see. Monkey kill. Monkey scare.

Visit Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com.

Coalition calls for halt to wage garnishment on defaulted student loans

Default rate five times higher than whites adds to Black grads' economic distress

By Charlene Crowell

On behalf of the nearly 9 million people who are now in default on their student loans, a coalition of advocates from consumer, civil rights, and education organizations are appealing to the federal Education Department to halt its plans to begin garnishing borrower wages this month. Default status connotes borrowers are 270 days or more behind on their payments.

Citing new research from Protect Borrowers, formerly the Student Borrower Protection Center, the coalition advised Education Secretary Linda McMahon in a January 7 letter that a new student loan default occurred every nine seconds in 2025. That escalating rate is unprecedented, and is nearly three times worse than in 2019the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further, according to the advocates, the Trump administration's student loan policies are disproportionately harming Black and older borrowers. Signing the joint letter of appeal were: Protect Borrowers, American Federation of Teachers, the Debt Collective, NAACP, National Education Association, the Student Debt Crisis Center, and Young Invincibles.

"Research shows that involuntary collections only exacerbate the economic challenges faced by defaulted borrowers, who are disproportionately seniors and Black borrowers," wrote the coalition. "In fact, of the borrowers already in default, roughly a third of them are older borrowers. Black graduates are additionally five times more likely to default than their white peers."

Additionally, and according to Protect Borrowers, nearly two-thirds of the borrowers who defaulted during the Trump Administration—more than 2.6 million people—live in states that President Trump won in the 2024 election. Among the states most severely affected were Florida, Georgia, Ohio, and Texas, each of which saw 100,000 or more borrowers default last year.

"The decision to resume wage garnishment against millions of borrowers amidst a growing affordability crisis crushing working families is calloused and unnecessary," continued the coalition. "The decision also comes at a time when struggling borrowers have been forced to wait amidst a nearly 1 million application backlog to enroll in an Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plan, and as mass layoffs at the Department have made it even harder for borrowers to get help with their student loans or if they are experiencing issues with their student loan servicer."

For Derrick Johnson, President and CEO of the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights organization, the Trump administration policies are about financial rights.

"By garnishing wages for defaulted student loan borrowers, the Trump Administration will only deepen financial hardship for working families and disproportionately harm Black borrowers," said Johnson. "Millions are already struggling with rising costs and economic uncertainty, and stripping wages will only push families further into financial crisis."

Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, agreed with Johnson: "This is not about borrowers' responsibility; it's outright hostility to the young people trying to get ahead. The Trump Administration is choosing to squeeze teachers, nurses and others while prices are increasing and families are struggling to stay afloat, ripping away wages and tax refunds when people need them most."

A fact sheet developed by the Center for Responsible Lending tracks key 2025 policy decisions that summarize the Education Department's actions taken against student loan borrowers. These include:

• In March 2025, the Department cut nearly half its workforce, with the Federal Student Aid office and Office for Civil Rights among the hardest hit. With Federal Student Aid's servicing and community outreach infrastructures dismantled, systemic servicing errors are less likely to be caught or corrected, leaving borrowers with fewer avenues for help just as major loan policy changes are being rolled out.

• In May 2025, the Department reinstated the Treasury Offset Program, allowing the government to seize tax refunds from borrowers in default.

• On August 1, 2025, the Department of Education restarted interest accrual for borrowers with Department of Education loans in the SAVE forbearance. Since 2023, SAVE's unpaid interest shielded borrowers from balance growth. With that protection gone, borrowers' balances will now grow during this forbearance and may keep rising if monthly payments do not fully cover accrued interest. This shift makes repayment harder and adds long-term uncertainty for more than 7 million borrowers.

Beginning July 1, 2026, parents who take out new Parent PLUS loans will no longer be eligible for any income-driven repayment plan. That means no access to income-contingent repayment (ICR) or repayment assistance plan (RAP) leaving the standard repayment plan as their only choice. Borrowers with existing Parent PLUS loans can preserve access to ICR if they consolidate their loans before the July 1, 2026, deadline.

"As safeguards are rolled back and oversight weakens, borrowers face growing balances and greater financial strain, making it urgent to press for stronger policies that preserve the promise of higher education as a pathway to opportunity," concluded CRL.

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

New Trump Tax Law Locks in Gains for the Rich, Leaves Blacks Behind

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Senior National Correspondent

Image via NNPA

President Donald Trump's new tax law is now in force, and as the 2026 filing season begins, economists say the damage is not theoretical. It is already written into the tax code. The legislation locks in and expands Trump's 2017 overhaul while layering on new provisions that funnel wealth upward, raise taxes on millions of low-income Americans, and deepen racial inequities that have defined the U.S. economy for generations.

"This massive tax-and-spending package does more to transfer wealth upward than any other single piece of legislation in decades while penalizing lower-income Americans and cutting public benefits," the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy said in its analysis of the law.

According to ITEP, the poorest 40 percent of Americans will pay more in taxes under the new law, while the middle fifth receives only marginal relief. The richest 1 percent, however, will take home more benefits than the bottom 80 percent combined in 2026. The racial divide is stark. High-income households are disproportionately white, while Black and Latino families are far more likely to be concentrated in income groups that lose ground.

At the center of the imbalance is the expanded pass-through business deduction, increased from 20 percent to 23 percent. Treasury Department data show that nearly all of the $1 trillion in tax cuts generated by this provision over the next decade will flow to the top 1 percent. Hispanic taxpayers, who account for 15 percent of the population, receive about 5 percent of the benefit. Black taxpayers, 11 percent of the population, receive roughly 2 percent.

The law also sharply weakens the estate tax by permanently raising the exemption to $15 million for individuals and $30 million for married couples, indexed to inflation. Economists say the change all but eliminates the tax for ultra-wealthy families while locking in racial disparities tied to inherited wealth. White families are about three times as likely as Black families to receive an inheritance, and the median inheritance for White families is roughly 25 percent higher.

Supporters of the law point to larger tax refunds expected this year as proof that working Americans are benefiting. The Tax Foundation estimates individual income taxes were reduced by $129 billion for 2025, with as much as $100 billion likely to be paid out through higher refunds during the 2026 filing season. Average refunds could rise by several hundred dollars, and in some cases close to $1,000.

But analysts say those refunds are largely the result of delayed withholding adjustments, not sustained gains in wages or financial security. Many low-income filers, particularly those with little or no tax liability, receive little to nothing. ITEP said provisions marketed as help for working families continue to bypass the poorest households, many of them Black.

The child tax credit was raised to $2,200 per child, yet it remains only partially refundable and far below its 2021 level. Millions of very low-income families are still excluded. Census data show that nearly one in five Black and American Indian people lived below the poverty line in 2024, placing them among those least likely to see any benefit.

The law offsets tax cuts at the top by reducing funding for health care, food assistance, and other programs relied upon by working families. Economists warn that the long-term costs will fall heaviest on younger Americans. Millennials and Gen Z, the most racially diverse generations in U.S. history, will inherit higher deficits and fewer public resources.

The Internal Revenue Service began accepting 2025 returns on Jan. 26 and expects to process roughly 164 million filings this year. New deductions for overtime, tips, auto loan interest, and seniors are now available, though many phase out well before reaching higher income levels. Analysts note that administrative readiness does not change who ultimately wins and loses under the law.

ITEP said Congress had options that would have protected working families without deepening inequality, including limiting tax extensions to households earning under $400,000 and restoring the expanded child tax credit. That approach would have delivered larger tax cuts to the bottom 60 percent of Americans at a fraction of the cost.

"This law harms the economic well-being of poor and working families of all races, especially people of color," ITEP said. "The new tax and spending law doesn't meet the basic test of fairness, and it falls tremendously short."

Black-Owned Company Launches Exam-Based Certification to Help Small Businesses Compete in a Merit-Based Corporate Contracting Landscape

(Black PR Wire) Fort Mill, SC — As legislative shifts and the rollback of DEI-based supplier development programs continue to reshape corporate contracting, small businesses are facing a more competitive, merit-driven environment with fewer development resources.

In response, Dr. Dawn Nicole McIlwain, Founder and CEO of ProcuraFind®, has launched the Corporate Contract Ready™ (CCR) Certification, a national, exam-based credential designed to help small businesses compete for corporate contracts through preparation, professionalism, and demonstrated readiness.

The CCR™ Certification is a universal, professional, exam-based industry credential that validates a business's understanding of corporate procurement processes, contracting requirements, and buyer expectations.

"When the rules changed, expectations didn't disappear—they simply became less visible," said Dr. McIlwain. "Corporate buyers still expect suppliers to be prepared, compliant, and low-risk. Yet many small businesses were never taught how corporate contracting actually works or how they're evaluated. That gap is what this certification addresses."

Over the past three years, Dr. McIlwain has cultivated corporate partnerships with national and global organizations including ADP, Lowe's, First Citizens Bank, the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, and other leading institutions. Through ProcuraFind®'s supplier development ecosystem, she has supported small businesses that have collectively secured more than $4.75 million in corporate contracts.

DWG Studio

Following legislative changes in January 2025, ProcuraFind® observed contract opportunities slow, procurement outreach decline, and hands-on supplier development efforts decrease. The shift made one reality clear: small businesses now had to show up ready—or risk being excluded altogether.

Developed from years of supplier development experience, the Corporate Contract Ready™ Certification establishes a consistent, competency-based standard for supplier readiness. The 112-question CCR™ exam reflects real-world corporate contracting scenarios and evaluates whether a business understands how procurement functions, what buyers expect before issuing contracts, and how to navigate RFPs, supplier portals, and compliance requirements. The exam covers twelve core competency areas, including modern sourcing practices and the responsible use of AI.

"This certification isn't about checking a box," Dr. McIlwain added. "Ownership-based certifications tell buyers who you are. CCR™ tells them you're ready."

Small businesses interested in earning the Corporate Contract Ready™ designation may learn more or register at https://procurafind.com/apply.

Corporations seeking stronger, more prepared supplier pipelines are invited to participate as Corporate Partners. Additional information is available at https://procurafind.com.

TABC Legal Notice

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a Mixed Beverage Permit (MB) and Beer & Wine Retailer's Permit (BQ) by Elite Hospitality Operators LLC, dba Hyatt House Dallas/Addison, to be located at 4900 Edwin Lewis Dr, Addison, Dallas County, Texas 75001.

Officers of said company are Rafeek Veerani (Principal Owner), Ahmed Dhanani (Member), and Abdul Kareem Dhanani (Member).

What It Was, Was a Coughing and Sneezing Contest

By Dr. James L. Snyder

The New Year started rather nicely for us. After all the exciting holiday activities, it was nice to settle into a more relaxed frame of mind. We had a whole week before us with nothing really to do and no place to go. What could be better?

I like it when there's not much to do, but The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage has a very opposite view. If she's not doing something in her craft room, she can't handle it.

However, some things have a way of changing.

Halfway through the first week of the New Year, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came down with flu-like symptoms. She was coughing, sneezing, and all that's associated with the Flu.

She was sitting on the couch with her eyes closed, and as lunchtime approached, I said, "Would you like me to make lunch today?"

She always makes lunch, and I thought this was an opportunity to help her out with the lunch plan.

She opened her eyes, looked at me very strangely, and then said, "Heavens no. I'm sick enough as it is, I don't need any more." She then got up, went to the kitchen, and began making lunch. At least I tried to help.

By the time she finished lunch, I started coughing and sneezing. My nose was running so much that I couldn't handle it. It was then that it occurred to me that whatever she had, she gave to me.

It wasn't long before both of us were sick, and I couldn't help but laugh at how our 'Flu' had turned us into a couple of couch potatoes. We were coughing, sneezing, and feeling miserable, but somehow, it made our start of the New Year memorable in a funny way.

I often wonder why they call it "Flu" when it never flies away. I want to say, "Whatever I had, it Flu away. But this Flu has a very exaggerated fascination with me. And of course, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage.

This went on for at least a week. For six days, I never got out of my pajamas. It was like I never got out of bed in the morning. I didn't have the energy to put on my work clothes, so I just stayed in my pajamas.

The only work I was doing was walking into the living room, taking a cup of coffee, and sitting down in my easy chair. It took a lot of work to get here.

Not only did I not change out of my pajamas, but The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage did the same. One thing was quite strange: she never left the house to go shopping. That was the real clue that she was sick.

We couldn't handle much activity, but then The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage invented some game for us to play. She called it the "Cough and Sneeze Challenge." I never heard of that before, but I was in for it. I had nothing else to do, and there was no way I could stop from coughing or sneezing.

It was rather strange that I sneezed three times. I couldn't sneeze just once or even twice, but three times.

At the beginning, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was far ahead of me in her coughing and sneezing. After all, she got this flulike thing way before I did. But it did not take long for me to catch up with her.

We were sitting together in the living room, coughing and sneezing in turn. I would let her go first, and then I would follow not long after. I tried to be a gentleman about it, but pretty soon I was no longer in control of my coughing and sneezing.

She had a couple of hours ahead of me, but it wasn't long before I caught up.

After my last coughing and sneezing fit, I looked at The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and said, "When will this game be over?"

She coughed and sneezed and then cleared her throat and said, "It will be over when one of us wins the contest."

I really didn't know what she was talking about or how to respond. It went on for five days, and each day seemed worse than the one before. We got up in the morning coughing and sneezing, and it continued throughout the day, and then we went to bed coughing and sneezing.

"I have an idea," I said to her, "if I surrender and let you win can we then call it quits?"

As soon as I said that, I went into the worst coughing and sneezing fit I had all week.

Laughing between coughing and sneezing fits, she said, "Are you really willing to lose this game?"

She knows that I don't like losing. But I've had a history of losing, and this would be a great time to keep losing. I wouldn't mind losing to this if we get it over with.

For the next half hour, we coughed and sneezed together as partners. Sometimes quitting is not an option.

In the middle of a sneeze, a Bible verse came to mind. "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 1:3-4).

Patience has a way of getting through difficult times.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail jamessnyder51@gmail.com, website www.jamessnyderministries.com.

BOOKSHELF, from Page 10

too.

Author Sherri Winston's character, Zahara-Grace, is a great kid, kind and responsible, and her family is supportive of her interests, which widens the story and lets in more believability. On that same note, there's African history and mythology in the tale, which gives it a ring of truth that your child will love, but not so much that the story feels textbookish. What young readers will probably enjoy best, though, is the exciting Indiana-Jones-like tone that Winston uses in this book. It's thrilling and just a little scary, but safely so.

"Destiny of the Diamond Princess" is meant for kids ages 8-to-11 but slightly older children might enjoy it, too. As might an adult, because this book is a gem.

Some Famous Quotes of Dr. M. L. King, Jr.

Sister Tarpley
NDG Religion Editor

Lest we forget some of these inspiring words and quotes of Dr. King, remember the following:

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige, and even his life for the welfare of others."

"There are some things so dear, some things so precious, some things so eternally true, that they are worth dying for. And I submit to you that if a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live."

"When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, Black men and White men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!'"

"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."

"We've been in the mountain of war. We've been in the mountain of violence. We've been in the mountain of hatred long enough.

"It is necessary to move on now, but only by moving out of this mountain can we move to the promised land of justice and brotherhood and the Kingdom of God.

"It all boils down to the fact that we must never allow ourselves to become satisfied with unattained goals. We must always maintain a kind of divine discontent."

"When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice."

"We all have the drum major instinct. We all want to be important, to surpass others, to achieve distinction, to lead the parade. … And the great issue of life is to harness the drum major instinct.

It is a good instinct if you don't distort it and pervert it. Don't give it up. Keep feeling the need for being important. Keep feeling the need for being first. But I want you to be the first in love.

I want you to be the first in moral excellence. I want you to be the first in generosity."

"Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase."

"Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it."

"I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law."

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

"Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."

(Editor's Note: This column originally ran in January 2015. Sister Tarpley passed away in May 2024. We keep her words alive every week in our print edition.)

McKINNEY HOUSING AUTHORITY
603 N. Tennessee St. * McKinney, TX 75069
www.mckinneyha.org

McKinney Housing Authority
2026 ANNUAL PLAN
PUBLIC MEETINGS NOTICE

The Quality Housing & Work Responsibility Act of 1998 requires the McKinney Housing Authority to submit an Agency Plan each year.

The PHA Plan is a comprehensive guide to public housing agency (PHA) policies, programs, operations, andstrategies for meeting local housing needs and goals. There are two parts to the PHA Plan: the 5-Year Plan, which each PHA submits to HUD once every 5th PHA fiscal year, and the Annual Plan, which is submitted to HUD every year.
Below is a list of meetings that are scheduled to review and discuss the Agency Plan documents for the 2026 fiscal year. Program participants, the public and staff are encouraged to attend the meetings.

Autoridad de Vivienda McKinney
PLAN ANUAL 2026
REUNIONES DARSE CUENTA

La Ley de Vivienda y Responsabilidad Laboral de Calidad de 1998 requiere que la Autoridad de Vivienda de McKinney presente un Plan de la Agencia cada año.

El Plan PHA es una guía completa de las políticas, programas, operaciones y estrategias de las agencias de vivienda pública (PHA) para satisfacer las necesidades y los objetivos de vivienda locales. Hay dos partes en el Plan PHA: el Plan de 5 años, que cada PHA presenta a HUD una vez cada quinto año fiscal de PHA, y el Plan anual, que se envía a HUD cada año.
A continuación hay una lista de reuniones que están programadas para revisar y analizar los documentos del Plan de la Agencia para el año fiscal 2026.

Tuesday January 27, 2026	4:30pm	Board of Commissioners Meeting	Newsome Homes Community Center	1450 Amscott St. McKinney, TX 75069
Tuesday February 24, 2026	4:30pm	Board of Commissioners Meeting	Merritt Homes Community Center	1200 N. Tennessee St. McKinney, TX 75069
Tuesday March 31, 2026	4:30pm	Board of Commissioners Meeting	Newsome Homes Community Center	1450 Amscott St. McKinney, TX 75069

A draft of the proposed ANNUAL Plan is available for review at the MHA main office located at: 603 N. Tennessee St. McKinney, TX.

Comments can be submitted by hand delivery, mail, or email to McKinney Housing Authority. Main Office; 603 North Tennessee Street; Attn: Roslyn Miller; McKinney, TX 75069 or info@mckinneyha.org. The final public hearing for plan adoption will be held on Tuesday, March 31st at 4:30pm – Newsome Homes community center.