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Kamala Harris:

MITCH MCCONNELL DOESN'T WANT A SENATE TRIAL HE WANTS A SENATE COVER-UP



**Chuck
Schumer
has made a
reasonable
request to
hear from four
additional
witnesses
with firsthand
knowledge of
the president's
misconduct.**

**McConnell is preventing witnesses from testifying
and has all but announced a verdict**

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Nation reacts as Trump becomes third president in U.S. history to be impeached

Newyorkbeacon.com

The House of Representatives voted on Wednesday to impeach President Donald Trump based on the charges of: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. The action makes Trump only the third president in US history to be impeached as the nation reacts.

As expected, the impeachment vote in the Democratic-dominated Congress was along partisan lines with not one Republican congressman breaking ranks. The abuse of power charge was approved in a 230 to 197 vote, with all GOP members opposing the ouster along with two Democrats: Minnesota's Collin Peterson and New Jersey's Jeff Van Drew. The obstruction charge passed 229 to 198, with Peterson, Van Drew and Maine Democrat Jared Golden joining Republicans in opposition. Hawaii Democratic Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, who is running for president,

voted "present" on both measures, which has been openly criticized on Twitter under the hashtag #TulsiCoward.

The next step is that Trump will go on trial in the U.S. senate that could lead to his removal from office. Such action is considered an unlikely prospect given that the proceedings will take place in the Republican-controlled upper chamber. Two-thirds of the Senate must vote to convict Trump in order to expel him from office. In fact, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is reportedly expected to block any additional witnessed for the trial and push for Trump's exoneration.

In the post-impeachment press conference, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said: "December 18th, a great day for the Constitution of the United States; a sad one for America that the president's reckless activities necessitated us having to introduce articles of impeachment."

NYC comptroller pressures Comcast to settle racial discrimination case with Byron Allen

Newyorkbeacon.com

Back down or damage your reputation. That's the message New York City Comptroller, Scott Stringer, issued to Comcast on Tuesday, urging the cable giant to sit with media mogul, Byron Allen, in the midst of his racial discrimination lawsuit against the company.

"Through its pursuit of this case in the Supreme Court, Comcast will have a direct and possibly deleterious impact on... one of our nation's oldest federal civil rights laws, and thereby limit access to U.S. courts for victims of discrimination," Stringer wrote.

Stringer manages more than \$200 billion dollars in pension

money for New York City, which is a major shareholder in Comcast, and says the city's pension has a "long-standing history" of "challenging discrimination at our portfolio companies."

Mr. Allen, CEO of Entertainment Studios, has sued Comcast under the Civil Rights Act of 1866, Section 1981, alleging the company refused to do business with him because of his race, as it did deals with other less successful networks.

"I remain open and willing to meet with Brian Roberts to resolve this matter immediately – before millions of Americans suffer the loss of our oldest and one of our most important civil rights," Allen said in a statement.



Trump signs Future Act to help HBCUs, minority serving institutions

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Senior Correspondent

One day after the House impeached him, President Donald Trump took decisive action to support and empower Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the country.

The President put his signature on the Future Act, legislation that for the time includes HBCUs in the federal 5-year STEM Education Plan and the National Research and Development Budget Priorities.

"When I took office, I promised to fight for HBCUs, and my Administration continues to deliver," Trump stated.

"A few months ago, funding for HBCUs was in jeopardy. But the White House and Congress came together and reached a historic agreement. For the first time ever, I signed legislation to permanently fund HBCUs and other institutions that primarily serve first-generation and minority students. This action guarantees more than \$2.5 billion over the next 10 years, including \$850 million specifically for HBCUs," the President stated.

He continued: "Today's achievement continues my unprecedented commitment to HBCUs. During my first weeks in office, I moved the HBCU initiative, led by Johnathan Holifield, to the White House and worked with Congress to increase funding for HBCUs by more than \$100 million. HBCUs have never had better champions in the White House. "The bill I signed today also reforms the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. The Internal Revenue Service will now seamlessly transfer applicants' records to the Department of Education, so that families can use a simpler, shorter application for financial aid and those with student loans do not have to complete a cumbersome income certification process year after year.

"This is a transformative change that has been talked about in Washington for more than a decade, but everyone always said it could not be done. We got it done."

HBCUs will now play an essential part in federal planning to advance bold, transformational leaps in science and technology to ensure America remains the global leader in science and technology for generations to come, White House officials said in a release.

With the bill's signing, Trump also established the inaugural HBCU Colors Day, which encourages HBCU supporters from across the country to wear HBCU apparel to show their support for HBCU institutions.

The Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education – or Future Act – means that, under the President's administration, investment in HBCU programs has significantly increased under Title III of the Higher Education Action of 1965.

This includes:

A \$35 million increase in the Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program (\$279.6 million);

A \$9 million increase in the Strengthening Historically Black Graduate Institutions (\$72.3 million);

A \$1 million increase in the Strengthening HBCU Masters Programs (\$8.6 million);

Meaningful increases investments in student



support like Pell Grants, Federal Work-Study, and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG); and Increases in Howard University's annual appropriation by nearly \$11 million, bringing its fiscal year 2018 investment level to \$232.5 million.

The bill also increased by \$30 million in investments in the HBCU Capital Financing Program, helping eight schools experiencing financial difficulty in redesigning and restructuring to better meet student and community needs and fulfill loan obligations.

Trump also has appointed both the Chairman of the President's Board of Advisors on HBCUs and Executive Director of the White House Initiatives on HBCUs.

"What we're talking about is permanent funding for HBCUs, as well as minority-serving institutions, to the tune of \$255 million in the annual formula and competitive funding," said Ja'Ron Smith, the Deputy Assistant to the President for the White House Office of American Innovation.

"That's over ten years, so you're talking about \$2.5 billion, and we didn't just stop there. With the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) simplification that only allows students to answer up to 22 questions on a current basis, we eliminated the burdensome process that will allow low-income students like myself, who had to navigate a FAFSA form without having parents who ever went to college," Smith stated.

Smith added that the legislation would help put more students in the pipeline, and more resources into HBCUs and minority-serving institutions.

"It's going to help them with programming infrastructure and help the students that go to these institutions," he stated.

The President and his administration are aggressively working on other strategies to assist HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions, Smith stated.

"During our last two presidential board of advisors meetings, the subject came up, and we're also taking a look at the money that can be leveraged into these institutions as well as community colleges," Smith said. "I think that we just need to be smarter as a government and harness our institutions. Many of these schools are located in areas where people depend on those institutions to get access to opportunity. Our commitment has always been to figure out a strategy to help these institutions throughout the 21st century."

Trump gets vindictive at rally after House slaps him with impeachment

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. — Six hundred miles away from the epicenter of his own impeachment, President Donald Trump took the stage at a rally here on Wednesday night and offered one of his longest, most frenetic appearances to date.

As Trump spoke, the House voted 230 to 197 to impeach him for abuse of power, and 229 to 198 for obstruction of Congress. The president praised Republicans for toeing the line and voting against the articles of impeachment and accused Democrats of being "the ones interfering with America's elections. You are the ones subverting democracy."

Trump found out about the votes when campaign spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany walked in front of the stage UFC-style with a sign that had the final tallies on it.

"And now the Democrats are trying to take credit for this great deal, and that's OK," Trump said to searing boos but with a weary expression. "Whatever it takes."

It wasn't until 40 minutes into the rally, after the House approved both articles, that Trump began to dig into impeachment. He recycled accusations of Democrats trying to undo the results of the 2016 election rather than introduce colorful new attacks, as he often does when he is under fire.



"The do-nothing Democrats," Trump said, "are declaring their deep hatred and disdain for the American voter."

Kamala Harris: Will McConnell let the Senate hold a fair impeachment trial?

By Kamala D. Harris, U.S. Senator (D-CA)

As the House of Representatives has voted to impeach President Trump, sometime early in the new year I will take an oath on the Senate floor to uphold the Constitution, review evidence and follow the facts wherever they lead, regardless of party or ideology. Every one of my colleagues will be required to do the same.

As a former prosecutor, I understand the importance of holding powerful people accountable. I know that every trial requires fairness and truth. Having worked my whole life serving the people, I know that any trial that abandons the pursuit of truth cannot be considered fair or just.

But the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, appears more interested in covering up the president's misconduct than in pursuing truth and fairness. He is already trying to limit the impeachment trial by preventing witnesses from testifying, and he has all but announced a verdict. In doing so, he showed the American people that he has no intention of honoring his oath.

Let's be clear: Mr. McConnell doesn't want a Senate trial. He wants a Senate cover-up.

Fortunately, Mr. McConnell does not have the power to unilaterally undermine this trial. Every single senator will be empowered with an equal vote on how the trial will proceed. Though in just the past year, Mr. McConnell has used his position to unilaterally block legislation to restore the Voting Rights Act, lower the prices of prescription drugs and address the gun violence epidemic, he cannot wield the same authority in a Senate impeachment trial.

In this trial, senators will be far more than jurors. Every one of us will vote to determine the rules for the trial, decide which witnesses testify and ultimately serve as both court and jury. Each of us will be called on to uphold our oath with every decision we make. We will all be held accountable by the American people if we refuse to discover the facts relevant to the articles of impeachment.

The Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer, has made a reasonable request to hear from four additional witnesses with firsthand knowledge of the president's misconduct and to review documents that shed light on why the administration initially decided to cut off military aid to Ukraine.



We need to hear from Mick Mulvaney, the acting White House chief of staff, who admitted to Mr. Trump's bribery scheme on live television, and from the former national security adviser, John Bolton, who has been shopping stories about Mr. Trump to book publishers instead of speaking with Congress. Every senator should want to hear from anyone who can speak directly to the president's misconduct related to the articles of impeachment.

Even Richard Nixon allowed the key figures behind the Watergate scandal to speak to Congress, and he eventually turned over incriminating portions of his Oval Office recordings to investigators. But Mr. Trump has stonewalled Congress and inhibited our ability to seek justice by demanding that those closest to the center of the Ukraine scandal stay silent.

Senators must be allowed to subpoena relevant witnesses and submit questions to them directly. The Senate should not vote on any article of impeachment or consider a motion to dismiss the trial until we have reviewed the additional testimony and evidence that Mr. Schumer has requested.

I have never been in a courtroom where the accused can unilaterally block witnesses from testifying or prohibit prosecutors from asking witnesses questions. No court would allow a trial to proceed this way, and neither should any member of the Senate.

Ensuring the integrity of this trial is a solemn responsibility for every senator, with consequences that extend far beyond any one presidency. My colleagues and I have a duty to use our voice and our vote to insist on a fair trial, rooted in the pursuit of truth. We must demonstrate to the American people that in our system of justice all are equal under law, and that there are not two sets of rules, one for Donald Trump and another for everybody else. We must conduct the Senate impeachment trial in a way that is fair and that reflects impartial justice.

History will judge the actions taken by the United States Senate at a time when our Constitution and the rule of law were at stake. I'll be fighting for justice and accountability, and my colleagues should too.

Kamala D. Harris is a Democratic senator from California. The above article was originally published as a letter to the editor by The New York Times. The Times is committed to publishing a diversity of letters to the editor. The article is reproduced here by request.

Black spending power demand corporations to show more love, support for Black culture

By Nielsen(Trice EdneyWire.com) –

African-Americans want more for themselves and from corporate America, and they express it with their dollars as they move through the consumer journey, from brand awareness to purchase, as revealed today in Nielsen's 2019 Diverse Intelligence Series (DIS) Report on African Americans.

It's in the Bag: Black Consumers' Path to Purchase explores the non-linear and uniquely technologically driven road that African Americans follow to make purchasing decisions, which ultimately maximizes both online and in-person shopping options. This path highlights several differences in shopping behavior and purchasing when compared to the total U.S. population. The report also includes deeper insights into how culture, socio-economics and business influences how, why and what motivates African-American spending in a special co-authored section by advocate and media commentator Angela Rye, CEO and Principal of Impact Strategies.

"At 47.8 million strong and a buying power that's on par with many countries' gross domestic products, African Americans continue to outpace spending nationally," said Cheryl Grace, Nielsen's Senior Vice President of Community Alliances and Consumer Engagement and co-creator of the DIS Report. "This year, we wanted to help brands and marketers understand the multi-faceted process that Blacks take to buy the products they buy. There are several drivers, but culture is at the center of them all. Further, with their love for technology, they are much more savvy and conscious consumers. They are as we say, 'woke.' They pay attention to how companies are speaking to them. As they spend more, they want more for themselves and from the brands they support."

Dating back to 2011, this is Nielsen's ninth report highlighting the media consumption, purchasing habits, lifestyle interests and economic advancements of African Americans. It is the third in a theme, released by Nielsen this year following the comprehensive purchasing processes of Asian American and Latinx consumers. Key takeaways from It's in the Bag: Black Consumers Path to Purchase include:

African-Americans are welcoming recipients of advertising across all channels. However, while the trends of the Black buying power and over-indexing in spending continue to increase, companies' investments to advertise to them have decreased.

African Americans are more likely than the total population to agree that advertising provides meaningful information on most platforms, including mobile (42 percent higher), television (23 percent higher), radio (21 percent higher) and the internet (18 percent higher).



Advertising spend designed to reach Black consumers declined 5 percent between 2017 and 2018.

Physical appearance reflects a sense of cultural pride and self-expression in the Black community. This is evidenced by the top spending priorities for African Americans from everyday soap to luxury handbags.

African Americans outspend the total market on personal soap and bath needs by nearly 19 percent (\$573.6 million).

Men are making an impact with grooming habits, outpacing the total market by 20 percent on toiletry items.

Blacks are 20 percent more likely than the total population to say they will "pay extra for a product that is consistent with the image I want to convey."

They are also more likely to say they shop at high-end stores including Saks Fifth Avenue (63 percent), Neiman Marcus (45 percent) and Bloomingdales (24 percent).

While online shopping grows, African Americans continue to head to physical stores for the personal touch and feel experience—but with more discerning eyes.

More than half (52 percent) of African Americans find in-store shopping relaxing, compared with 26 percent of the total population.

55 percent of Black consumers say they enjoy wandering the store looking for new, interesting products.

When shopping, African Americans are more influenced than the total population by store staff (34 percent more likely), in-store advertising (28 percent more likely) and merchandising (27 percent more likely).

The "for us by us" trend of Black-owned brands is profoundly impacting the African American path to purchase and consumer marketplace. Black consumers support brands that align with their lifestyles and values.

African Americans dominate the ethnic hair and beauty aids category, accounting for almost 90 percent of the overall spend.

42 percent of Black adults expect brands they purchase to support social causes (16 percent higher than the total population).

35 percent of African American shoppers are more likely to agree, "when a celebrity designs a prod-

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Deval Patrick lays out policy vision

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

"A politics that says we have to agree on everything before we can work together on anything, that offers government by slogan and short-term wins, that consistently puts power ahead of principle, is exactly the kind of politics that brought us to this point," the former Massachusetts governor writes. He advocates for "leadership that builds bridges."

It's a shot at the progressive candidates in race for the nomination who have argued for a wholesale, systemic overhaul rather than incremental changes. But while Patrick lays out his position on a handful of hot-button issues, his 11-page proposal offers few specifics on policy. He says voters care less about "policy abstractions" and more about "where policy touches people."





Former NBA player & coach will cover funeral expenses of Black father killed by police

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

Eric Garner, Oscar Grant, Alton Sterling, and Sean Bell are some names that may come to mind when reflecting on tragic cases where unarmed black men were unjustly murdered by police in the U.S.

On December 3, 2019, another situation similar to the aforementioned cases emerged in Kansas City, Missouri. According to KSHB-TV 41, a local NBC-affiliated Kansas City news outlet, Cameron Lamb, 26, was gunned down by police while he sat inside a car that was parked in his own backyard.

Laurie Bey, Lamb's mother, spoke with the local news outlet about how her son's killing has impacted her.

"You just don't think that someone is going to call you and give you that news, that was supposed to me. I should not have been sitting down with that funeral director yesterday planning my son's funeral. He was my baby, he was my youngest, he was my only son, he was so fun and loving," Bey told 41 Action News.

NBA player and coach has pledged to financially assist with Lamb's funeral expenses.

Earl Watson reached out to the family and wanted them to know that he was affected by it because he's from the Kansas City area.

"Even for me [feeling safe is not guaranteed]. I'm very aware of if I get pulled over, how to be. Just that interaction still makes me nervous," Watson said.

Illinois city to use marijuana tax to fund reparations for Black residents

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

With recreational marijuana sales in Illinois set to become legal on Jan. 1., the city of Evanston has voted to use tax from cannabis sales to fund a reparations program for Black residents.

According to NBC Chicago, the program aims to uplift the city's Black community by fighting the effects of slavery and discrimination while also providing job training and other benefits, according to 5th Ward Ald. Robin Rue Simmons. The program will

also address the city's wealth gap between its Black and white residents.

Simmons believes the program will benefit residents affected by the war on drugs. It remains unclear when exactly the tax will start being collected.

"Our community was damaged due to the war on drugs and marijuana convictions. This is a chance to correct that. Our disadvantage and discrimination has continued beyond outlawing Jim Crow and beyond enslavement," Simmons told The Washington Post.



Still no answers: Attorneys for FAMU student killed by police call for outside investigation

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

A 22-year-old man named Jamee Johnson was killed by a white police officer last Saturday December 14 and his family and attorneys are demanding answers. It is unclear if Johnson was currently enrolled at Florida A&M University due to varying reports, but what is known is that he was shot during a traffic stop after authorities claim he resisted arrest and reached for a gun. But what really happened that led to a white officer taking this young man's life?

Johnson was stopped at 21st and Buckman Streets in the Talleyrand section of Jacksonville, Florida. Authorities said that after Johnson was stopped, they learned that he had a gun in the car, according to a report from News4Jax. The sheriff's office claims that two officers – Officers Josue Garriga and K. Graham, asked Johnson to step out of the car during the traffic stop, to which he initially complied. However, authorities are also saying that once Johnson walked



to the back of the patrol car, he pushed Garriga and the two men struggled before Johnson got back in his car and proceeded to drive away.

The Sheriff's office reported that Johnson was reaching for his gun and amid the tussle, Johnson allegedly hit the gas while Garriga was partially hanging out of the car.

Garriga fired four shots, killing the 22-year-old.

Philadelphia plans to close 23 Schools, builds \$400M prison

If this is their plan for young people, then black people may want to come together and fight. The city of Philadelphia recently announced plans to close nearly two dozen schools, while simultaneously spending \$400 million dollars to build a shiny new prison. We hope that this isn't the intended replacement for those displaced students coming out of inferior educational systems.

Pennsylvania's School Reform Commission voted to approve the budget to close the schools in spite of pleas from parents and students not to do so. A total of 23 schools will be closed, roughly 10 % of those in the city. A stunning 81% of those school closings are going to impact black students, even though they only represent 58% of the student body.

According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, students are going to help cover the cities debt by returning to

class without new materials for learning. The impact is going to be felt the most in poor communities. A total of 3,000 people are going to lose their jobs, and programs in sports, art and music are going to be cut.

RT is also reporting that the cuts that students are going to endure are not going to fill the budget gap, since the Republican-controlled House of Representatives just approved a tax break for corporations that will cost the state \$600 to \$800 million per year. The state is also going to invest \$400 million to build two state correctional facilities.

The prisons that are being expanded have been subject to lawsuits claiming sexual and physical abuse of inmates.

Journalist Rhania Khalek said that the racial disparities in the prison and school populations in Philadelphia create a literal school-to-prison pipeline that destroys the futures of black children.

"In Philadelphia, black students comprise 81 per cent of those who will be impacted by the closings despite accounting for just 58 per cent of the overall student population," she wrote. "In stark contrast, just 4 per cent of those affected are white kids who make up 14 per cent of Philly students. And though they make up 81 per cent of Philadelphia students, 93 per cent of kids affected by the closings are low-income.



Black spending power demand corporations to show more love, support for Black culture

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duct, I am more likely to buy it."

Procter & Gamble (P&G) is the largest advertiser in African American media, spending more than a half-billion dollars (\$544.3 million). Five of the top 20 baby care category products come from P&G's Pampers and Luvs brands.

Soul food drives African American consumers' top grocery purchases. These consumers are also passionate about the environment, wanting to buy safe, locally sourced food items.

African Americans outpace the general market on: Quaker grits (\$19 million); Louisiana Fish Fry (\$11 million); Glory Greens (frozen and fresh, \$9.5 million combined) and Jay's Potato Chips (nearly \$2.7 million).

61 percent say produce is the most important category to buy

local, followed by bakery and prepared foods (56 percent), eggs (55 percent) and dairy (52 percent).

Blacks over-index the total population concerned about food safety issues: antibiotic use in animal production (by 20 percent); artificial ingredients (by 19 percent) and GMO crop development due to climate change. The biggest worry is rising prices due to trade tariffs (68 percent Blacks vs. 56 percent total population).

"Nielsen continues to unearth undeniable data and insights that highlight both the agency and power of Black consumers, and the plethora of opportunities that exist for companies that are focused on nurturing and empowering how they move through the world," said Jonathan Jackson, former 2019 Nieman-Berkman Klein Fellow in Journalism Innovation

at The Nieman Foundation for Journalism and member of Nielsen's African American External Advisory Council.

Nielsen uses U.S. Census data to determine population estimates that inform its U.S. panels and its understanding of consumer behavior. Given the rapid diversification of the U.S. population, an accurate census has never been more important. That's why Nielsen has signed on as a 2020 Census Official Partner with the U.S. Census Bureau, and utilized census data to show the economic and demographic impact of African American consumers. This is the second time the company has leveraged this partnership for the Diverse Intelligence Series, after the 2019 Latinx consumer report, released in August.

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Editorial

Philadelphia Observer

Donald the fool is not Jesus the Christ

By Julianne Malveaux

The hours before the House of Representatives impeachment vote were a study in contrasts. While Democrats approached the debate leading up the vote somberly, with all due consideration, and with historical references, Republicans seemed to think they were starring in a comedy show. And the now-impeached President added to the comedy with an unheinged and delusional letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that clearly illustrated the break he has taken from reality. So he compared himself to the people who were executed (yes, executed!) during the Salem witch trials in 1692-1693. Yes the fool had to go back more than 300 years to find a parallel for his "poor" treatment.

More egregiously, Mr. Trump was compared to Jesus the Christ, an abomination especially during this holiday season. We who are Christian celebrate the birth of the Christ child each year. It renews our faith. It provides us with hope. It should not be marred or be-

smirched by a paranoid charlatan who has the temerity to think he is anything like Jesus the Christ.

Who was Christ, anyway? The Jesus that the Bible celebrates was full of love for the least and the left out. In the Holy Bible, Matthew 25:40 Jesus said, "whatever you do for the least of these you do for me". Yet our 45th President has had nothing but contempt for the least of these, cutting food programs, caging innocent children, sputtering hate and nonsense at every opportunity. There was no Christ in the way that 45 attacked deceased Congressman John Dingell (D-Michigan), deliberately mocking his widow, now-Congresswoman Debbie Dingell. Mrs. Dingell was painfully transparent in her reaction to Mr. Trump's ignorance. She lost her husband less than a year ago, and our "Commander in Chief" is spinelessly attacking her and her husband. Where is the compassion of Christ in that?

Beyond utter hubris, the Christ comparison is pure delusional arrogance, but this is what we

have come to expect from this putrid and paranoid President and his pitiful minions. And while partisan discord is the name of the game, too many Republican who know better have decided that their oath of allegiance is not to the Constitution but to a morally flawed, constitutionally indifferent President. The fact that Republicans, many who know better, many who acknowledge it "off the record" march in lockstep behind someone who has abused his power, is disturbing. Even more disturbing in the fact that too many Republicans think it's okay.

Meanwhile, a mix tape of Christmas songs runs through my mind as I think of the temerity of Donald the Fool comparing himself to Jesus the Christ. "Oh Come Let Us Adore Him". That's what Donald the Fool wants — adoration. There is no sane Christian who will adore him because he is not the Christ, but a terribly flawed man who lies (15,000 y'all) and steals with impunity. Or the refrain from "Silent Night". Sleep in heavenly peace. But this Divider-in Chief has

brought us absolutely no peace, no quiet, no calm. As many of us spend these days around Christmas caroling and worshiping, it is repugnant that this charlatan compares himself to the virtuous Christ. Where are his virtues?

This comparison is also indicative of how conservative Christians (words that should not be used in the same sentence) have fractured faith by describing 45 as "the chosen one." Chosen by whom and to what end? It is the height of hubris that one would pick such a venal man as chosen, God did not choose this lying, genital grabbing crook for anything but to force us to organize, mobilize, and tap into the power we all have within.

It would take days to unpack the several lies that Republicans used in their "defense" of their President. They said Democrats were out to get him from day one. It is true that a few were but the fact is that Speaker Nancy Pelosi was always measured in her approach to impeachment. She resisted it for the longest time, only capitulating when the Ukraine matter was too



egregious to be ignored. The spoke of Democrats "hating" Trump, but disdain is not hate. The mangled the Constitution to their own end.

But in this Christmas season, the worst thing that any of them did was to compare Donald the Fool with Jesus the Christ. My mix tapes of hymns exalting the virtues of our Savior is in sharp contrast to the reality of Trump. To compare that horrid, venal man to anything resembling Christ is to slap every Christian in the face. Love is patient, love is kind, Trump is none of the above.

Dr. Julianne Malveaux is an economist, author, media contributor and educator. Her latest project MALVEAUX! On UDCTV is available on youtube.com. For booking, wholesale inquiries or for more info visit www.juliannemalveaux.com

Remembering the message of Christmas

By Jesse Jackson

On Wednesday, Christmas will be celebrated by millions of people across this country and across the world. Joy surrounds the holiday, with music in the air, lights on homes and lampposts, families gathering, presents exchanged and blessings shared. For some, Christmas is a difficult time — for the poor, for separated families, for the lonely, for the imprisoned and the sick.

Each year at this time, I use this column to recall the true meaning of Christmas. Christmas is literally the mass for Christ, marking the birth of Jesus. He was born under occupation. Joseph and Mary were ordered to go far from home to register with authorities. The innkeeper told Joseph there was no room at the inn. Jesus was born on a cold night in a stable, lying in a manger, an "at-risk baby."

His earthly father was a carpenter. Santa Claus wasn't around. He is an invention of 19th century Europe. Jesus was born at a time of great misery and turmoil, with his country under Roman occupation. Prophets predicted that a new Messiah was coming — a



King of Kings — one who would rout the occupiers and free the people. Many expected a mighty warrior — like the superheroes of today's movies — who would mobilize an army to defeat Rome's occupying legions. Fearing the prophecy, the Roman King Herod ordered the "massacre of the innocents," the slaughter of all boys two and under in Bethlehem and the nearby region. Jesus con-founded both Herod's fears and the peoples' hopes. He was a man

of peace, not of war. He gathered disciples, not soldiers. He began his ministry by quoting Isaiah 62:1: "the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor."

We will be judged, he taught us, by how we treat "the least of these," by how we treat the stranger on the Jericho Road. He called on us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to care for the sick, to offer aid to the refugee. It's an extraordinary story. Jesus was a liberator, but by his words and his example, not his sword. He converted rather than conquered. He accumulated no worldly wealth. He threw the money lenders from the temple. During his ministry, he owned no home, no land, and had no regular paycheck. His time with us was too brief, and he was crucified for his ministry.

And yet, he succeeded beyond all expectation to transform the world. The Prince of Peace, he taught us that peace is not the absence of violence; it is the presence of justice and righteousness. These days, the mass for Christ too often is viewed as a holiday and a payday for Santa, rather than a holy day, more secular than sacred. It is a time of sales, shopping and Santa, when its focus should

be on the poorest among us. It is a time to stop a moment and take stock of where we are in light of the mission to bring "good news to the poor." There is good news: unemployment is down, poverty is down, incomes have slowly begun to rise. We continue to lock up more people than any nation in the world, but at both the state and federal level, small steps are being taken to reduce the number of nonviolent offenders who are incarcerated. But surely, we have a long way to go. We are ignoring a climate crisis that threatens all of God's creation.

The U.S. continues to waste lives and literally trillions in wars without end and without apparent purpose. Inequality is at record extremes, and the tax cut Congress passed is making it worse. Millions still struggle in this rich country to secure adequate food to eat, yet the administration is cutting support for food stamps that allow the working poor to feed their families. On our borders, the administration descended to tearing babies away from their mothers and keeping so many locked up that we have no facilities to house them. Health care, a basic human

right, remains unaffordable for too many. Homelessness is rising, as adequate housing is priced out of the reach of more and more in our major cities. Jesus was not a partisan, but his birth was immensely political — both in the expectations of the people and the fears of the occupiers.

Instead of turning us on one another, he called us to our highest selves. We should not let the deeper meaning of Christmas be lost in the wrappings. In Chicago on Christmas Day, I will go with my family — as we do every year — to visit the prisoners at the Cook County Jail, one of the largest jails in this country. That reflects the real meaning of the Christmas story. In this secular age, let us remember the message of Christmas. Jesus demonstrated the astonishing power of faith, hope and charity, the importance of love. He showed that people of conscience can make a difference, even against the most powerful oppressor. He demonstrated the strength of summoning our better angels, rather than rousing our fears or feeding our divisions. This Christmas, this surely is a message to remember. Merry Christmas, everybody.

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Health

How and why we age

By Glenn Ellis(TriceEdneyWire.com)

It saddens me (as I grow older myself) how many people are struggling with accepting old age. Much of our society is filled with folks, young and old, who see aging as a negative aspect of life. Our society discards those who have reached old age, and we are inundated with promises and potions that have us fixated on staying young.

We are programmed to die; aging is the outcome of this programming, and it is no secret that the human body changes over time. Both genetics and lifestyle play a huge role in how we age.

We all age (if we live long enough), but seldom do we think about the process that takes place that takes us from the vibrant, youthful, and energetic creatures we used to be, to the sedentary and limited beings we become in old age.

There are those in the scientific and medical community who are advocating that aging should be treated as a disease. Aging is defined as the progressive accumulation of damage to your cells, tissues and organs, leading to disease and death. According to one study, this dreadful process starts at 24 years of age, at least for the brain; it could be a bit later.

Aging is nothing more than the natural wear and tear of the body's component parts. It's inevitable, and endlessly intriguing. While many age-related changes cannot be prevented, a lifestyle that

includes exercise and a well-balanced diet will slow or minimize many problems related to aging.

As we age, our body's organs and other systems make changes. These changes alter our susceptibility to various diseases. Researchers are just beginning to understand the processes that cause changes over time in our body systems. Understanding these processes is important because many of the effects of aging are first noticed in our body systems.

No single process can explain all the changes of aging. Aging is a complex process that varies as to how it affects different people and even different organs. Most Gerontologists (people who study aging) feel that aging is due to the interaction of many lifelong influences. These influences include heredity, environment, culture, diet, exercise and leisure, past illnesses, and many other factors.

Since 1900, average U.S. life expectancy has risen from 47 to 79. A lot of those gains come from a lower infant-mortality rate: A century ago, 1-in-10 babies born in the U.S. died before age 1, while today that figure is 1-in-170. But longevity gains in later years have also been substantial.

Most people are scared, indeed, terrified of old age because they feel that aging is characterized by a progressive loss of essential body functions that they have learnt to take for granted over the years; for instance, loss of vision, hearing, teeth, memory, intelligence, sexual drive, muscle



strength and vigor. However, it needs to be emphasized that you can become old healthily; remember that old age does not necessarily mean progressive deterioration or susceptibility to a plethora of ailments!

Fortunately, aging doesn't have to be a downhill slide. Older people have the reputation of being more mature, experienced and thoughtful. Whether or not you become wiser as you grow older, you are likely to become farsighted for sure! Farsightedness, one example of aging, is a change in vision that's a normal part of aging. It is caused by a gradual hardening of the eye's lens, which

impairs your ability to see up close. Your optometrist may recommend a pair of non-prescription reading glasses or prescribe bifocals for you.

Never think of age as being anything but just a number. There are some things in life we have no control over, such as when we were born. Age is no more than a circumstantial detail, like the color of your eyes, or the names of your parents; it does not define who you are. Aging is inevitable, growing old is avoidable. Expressed differently, one is never too young to be old or die, but one is never so aged as to become old.

If we live long enough, we

will age. Just like the flowers, trees, bees, and all other living species on earth. It is up to us to accept aging as another stage of the life cycle—nothing more. Too many of us become despondent, depressed, and feel worthless. Just make the best of whatever you have to work with in old age. Remember, healthy aging is not just about preventing problems. It's also about spotting them and addressing them before they get worse or drag down the rest of your health and independence.

Dying is not just an event that happens to us at the close of our lives. It is our purpose for being. We begin to die the very day we are born and live all our life towards death. Sure, we may get sick as we age, but we can get sick at any stage of life. Illness and aging need not go hand in hand. If you take good care of your body in the "morning", it will take good care of you in the "evening" of your life.

Remember, I'm not a doctor. I just sound like one. Take good care of yourself and live the best life possible!

The information included in this column is for educational purposes only. It is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Glenn Ellis, is Research Bioethics Fellow at Harvard Medical School and author of Which Doctor?, and Information is the Best Medicine. Ellis is an active media contributor on Health Equity and Medical Ethics. For more good health information visit: www.glennellis.com

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On the scene

Trina Braxton marries Von Scales



The Braxton's (L-R) Traci, Toni, Miss Evelyn, Trina, Tamar, Towanda

Posted by Audrey J. Bernard
ST. LOUIS, MO -- On Sunday, December 15, 2019, **Trina Braxton** and **Von Scales** tied the knot at the Windows

on Washington in St. Louis in a ceremony officiated by **Judge Mablean Ephriam**. The wedding was a Braxton Family affair, with Trina's siblings **Toni, Tamar, Traci, Towanda** and **Michael Jr.**, and

mother **Evelyn** in attendance. The reality star, 45, and her husband, businessman **Von Scales** tied the knot surrounded by those closest to them. Trina's breathtaking dress was designed by Naama & Anat

Haute Couture and her hair styled in an afro puff served as a halo around her beautiful face. Von's dashing suit was by Cedric Cobb. The ceremony was filmed for an upcoming episode of "**Braxton**

Family Values," giving fans an inside look at Trina and Von's special day. The new season of WE tv's hit series will premiere in 2020. "I'm married to an amazing man," she gushed. (Source WE tv)



The Bride & Groom kiss after ceremony



The Bride & Groom perform their first dance during reception



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American Black Film Festival Honors announces nominees for 'Movie of the Year' award

Newyorkbeacon.com

The American Black Film Festival Honors today announced the nominees for the "Movie of the Year" award.

The ABFF Honors "Movie of the Year" award is a competitive award presented to the best feature length film of the year directed by and/or starring a lead actor or actress of African descent.

BLACK & BLUE – An action thriller about a rookie cop (Naomie Harris) who inadvertently captures the murder of a young drug dealer on her body cam. After realizing that the murder was committed by corrupt cops, she teams up with the one person from her community who is willing to help her (Tyrese Gibson) as she tries to escape both the criminals out for revenge and the police who are desperate to destroy the incriminating footage.

DOLEMITE IS MY NAME – Eddie Murphy portrays real-life legend Rudy Ray Moore, a comedy and rap pioneer who proved naysayers wrong when his hilarious, obscene, kung-fu fighting alter ego, Dolemite, became a 1970s Blaxploitation phenomenon.

HARRIET – Based on the thrilling and inspirational life of an iconic American freedom fighter, Harriet tells the extraordinary tale of Harriet Tubman's (Cynthia Erivo) escape from slavery and transformation into one of America's greatest heroes. Her courage, ingenuity, and tenacity freed hundreds of slaves and changed the course of history.

JUST MERCY – After graduating from Harvard, Bryan (Michael B Jordan) might have had his pick of lucrative jobs. Instead, he heads to Alabama to defend those wrongly condemned, with the support of local advocate Eva Ansley (Brie Larson.) One of his first, and most incendiary,

cases is that of Walter McMillian (Jamie Foxx,) who, in 1987, was sentenced to die for the notorious murder of an 18-year-old girl, despite a preponderance of evidence proving his innocence and the fact that the only testimony against him came from a criminal with a motive to lie. In the years that follow, Bryan becomes embroiled in a labyrinth of legal and political maneuverings and overt and unabashed racism as he fights for Walter, and others like him, with the odds-and the system-stacked against them.

THE LAST BLACK MAN IN SAN FRANCISCO – A young man (Jimmie Fails) searches for home in the changing city that seems to have left him behind.

QUEEN & SLIM – Slim (Daniel Kaluuya) and Queen's (Jodie Turner-Smith) first date takes an unexpected turn when a policeman pulls them over for a minor traffic violation. When the situation escalates, Slim takes the officer's gun and shoots him in self-defense. Now labelled cop killers in the media, Slim and Queen feel that they have no choice but to go on the run and evade the law. When a video of the incident goes viral, the unwitting outlaws soon become a symbol of trauma, terror, grief and pain for people all across the country.

US – In order to get away from their busy lives, the Wilson family takes a vacation to Santa Cruz, California with the plan of spending time with their friends, the Tyler family. On a day at the beach, their young son Jason almost wanders off, causing his mother Adelaide (Lupita Nyong'o) to become protective of her family. That night, four mysterious people break into Adelaide's childhood home where they're staying. The family is shocked to find out that the intruders look like them, only with grotesque appearances.



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Remembering Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher: First of Firsts



By Marc H. Morial
TriceEdneyWire.com

"I thought that it was the greatest thing in the world that he was going to be our mayor. He was someone who looked like us and fought for the things we believed in and needed. But the thing that struck me the most about Hatcher was his accessibility. In his 20 years at City Hall, Hatcher was always accessible to everyone. He was a rock star then, but he made sure that he met everyone." – Karen Freeman Wilson, current mayor of Gary, Indiana

"He literally opened the door to Black political empowerment on the local level, state level and federal level. He sent a message across the country and he gave rise to other Black mayors in small and big cities."

When Richard Hatcher was inaugurated as mayor of Gary, Indiana, in 1968 one of the nation's first Black mayors of a big city, he insisted upon inviting a little-known "youth group" to perform alongside the major stars.

"Nobody wanted to hear the youth group," Rev. Jesse Jackson told radio station WBZE. "They wanted to see the stars."

The "youth group" was Gary's own Jackson 5, who went on that year to sign with Motown Records.

Richard Hatcher, who passed this week at the age of 86, was a visionary in more ways than one.

A graduate of Indiana University and Valparaiso University School of Law, he served as deputy county prosecutor in the early 1960s until his election to Gary City Council

in 1963. In 1967, he defeated the incumbent mayor in a primary and overcame resistance from the local Democratic machine to win with the support of national political figures like Sen. Robert Kennedy and Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

During his swearing in ceremony, Hatcher promised that, "together, we shall beat a way; together we shall turn darkness into light, despair into hope and promise into progress. For God's sake, for Gary's sake, let's get ourselves together."

Hatcher's election was the first in a historic string of victories for Black mayors across the nation, and the beginning of a trend that would put Gary at the center of Black political power. Four years later, Hatcher would bring the historic National Black Political Convention to Gary. More than 10,000 delegates and attendees gathered to formulate a political strategy for Black America, including Rev. Jackson, Coretta Scott King, Shirley Chisholm, Amiri Baraka, Louis Farrakhan, Bobby Seale, and Betty Shabazz.

In his speech at the convention, Hatcher warned that if the two major political parties continued to neglect their concerns, Black Americans would create a third party, and "we shall take with us the best of White America...many a white youth nauseated by the corrupt values rotting the innards of this

society...many of the white poor... many a White G.I....and many of the white working class, too."

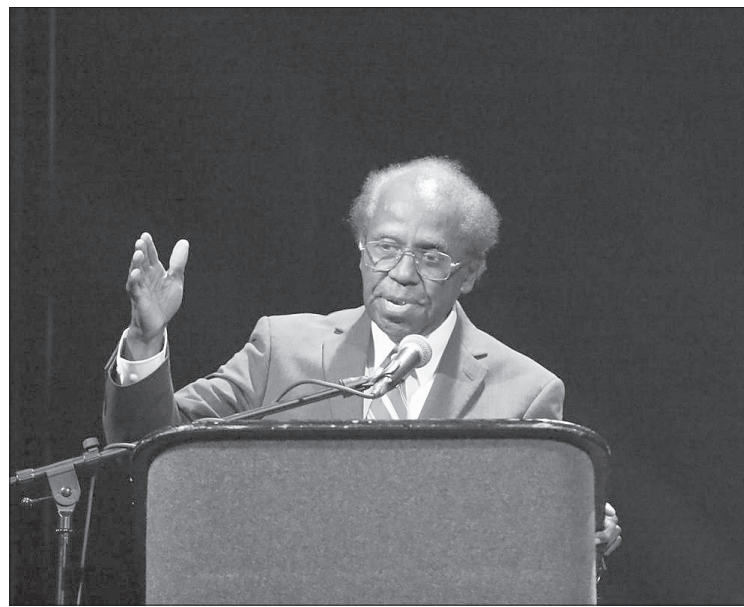
Hatcher was instrumental in founding Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) with Rev. Jackson, and later served as chairman of Jackson's presidential campaign in 1984.

He served as the Vice-Chairman of the Democratic National Committee from 1981 to 1985 and as President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

In 1978, he co-founded TransAfrica, an advocacy group aimed at changing U.S. policy toward Africa and the Caribbean.

Hatcher paved the way for the many Black mayors who would follow, including my own father, Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial, who was elected the first Black mayor of New Orleans in 1977 – and for the later generation mayors that I joined when I was elected in 1994.

I was proud that the National Urban League was able to honor Hatcher, on the 50th anniversary of his election, during our 2017 Conference in St. Louis. As I noted at the time, Hatcher aspired to political office at a time that was not so far removed from lynchings, segregated schools, and anti-miscegenation laws. Every step, every vote and every position attained was marred and marked by transparently racial barriers, and every victory was made all the more sweet by overcoming them.



Dwyane Wade speaks out about coming to grips with having a gay son

Newyorkbeacon.com

Wade, in fact, said Wednesday on the Matt Barnes and Stephen Jackson Showtime podcast All the Smoke that it was his son who taught him, the parent, about acceptance and maturity. Zion is Wade's son from a previous relationship.

"You want to talk about strength and courage," the 37-year-old former Miami Heat guard asked the hosts. "My 12-year-old son has way more than I have."

Wade added, "You can learn something from your kids."

Wade, Union and the rest of their blended family have received backlash on social media since the release of a Thanksgiving family photo that showed Zion wearing a crop top and long painted nails.

Wade responded on Twitter, "Stupidity is a part of this world we live in — so I get it. But here's the thing — I've been chosen to lead my family not y'all. So we will continue to be us and support each other with pride, love & a smile!"



West Africa's colonial era currency is dead! Long live 'the Eco'

(GIN) –

A decades-old reminder of the years of colonial French rule finally ended this month with the renaming of the colonial era currency – the CFA franc – to a name of independence – the Eco.

The announcement was made in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) by Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara. It was seen as an effort by France to reshape its relations with its former African colonies.

"The CFA franc is dead," declared the French newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche*.

French President Emmanuel Macron, at a press conference with President Ouattara, said the new currency would still be pegged to the euro and guaranteed by France. However, countries using the currency will no longer have to keep half of their reserves at the French treasury, nor will there be a French representative on the currency union's board.

The French-backed currency was established in 1945. Former French colonies Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo still use the currency, as does Guinea-Bissau.

Speaking in Abidjan, the economic hub of the Ivory Coast, Macron acknowledged that colonialism had been "a grave mis-



take", but he also criticized "the youth" for calling out the French for a backwards economic and monetary relationship with Africa. "They judge it to be, and I quote them, postcolonial," he said, sounding a note of disbelief.

"I belong to a generation which was not that of colonization," he added.

"The African continent is a young continent," he said. "Three-fourths of your country never knew colonialism," he continued, addressing the Ivorian audience, and called on African youth to "build a new partnership of friendship with France".

"The question of the CFA franc crystallizes numerous debates and criticisms of the supposed role of France in Africa," Mr. Macron said skeptically. Macron has said he wants to dismantle the "França-

frique" sphere of influence with former African colonies in favor of more normal, business-oriented relations free of any colonial taint.

"France is leaving the governance of the whole system in west Africa," a French finance ministry official told the *Financial Times*. "It's a significant move as through our presence in institutions we had an influence on the decisions taken by the currency union."

Opponents of the old currency say it prevents countries from devaluing to counter external shocks and has hampered industrialization by keeping the exchange rate artificially high. Some regard it as a useful arrangement — to the detriment of the poor — between France and the moneyed elites of francophone Africa, whose spending power is inflated.

India clamps down against citizenship law protests

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

Authorities have imposed an emergency law banning large gatherings in parts of India's capital, Delhi, as nationwide protests escalated, injuring police and demonstrators.

A week after a controversial new citizenship law was passed by parliament, which has been accused of openly discriminating against Muslims, protests across the country showed no sign of abating.

Clashes between demonstrators and police in the Seelampur district of Delhi turned violent on Tuesday, with 21 injured and buses and a police outpost set alight, leading police to bring in

emergency measures to prevent the gathering of more than four people in certain Muslim-dominated areas of the city.

Under the new legislation, tens of thousands of Hindu, Christian, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan will be allowed to claim Indian citizenship. The same will not apply for Muslims, who the BJP government argues are not a threatened minority in these countries.

Some of the most violent altercations between protesters and police over the past week have occurred on Muslim-majority university campuses, where students who were marching against the citizenship law were met with police brutality.



From impeachment to death sentences: How other countries punish wayward leaders

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

President Donald Trump thinks he's suffered more injustice than the alleged witches of Salem, but it could be worse.

Pakistan's former president, Pervez Musharraf, faced possible impeachment in 2008, leading to his resignation. In the end — earlier this week — Musharraf was sentenced to death for treason.

At the other end of the spectrum, Trump isn't even the first leader to face impeachment this month. That (dis)honor belongs to Carrie Lam, the chief executive of Hong Kong.

Lam survived a Dec. 5 impeachment vote by a margin of 36 to 26, but need not have worried too much. The vote was an intermediate step and the Communist Party hierarchy in Beijing would likely have stepped in to end the process if she had lost. That's a luxury Trump won't have if his impending Senate trial goes unexpectedly awry.

The travails of Trump, Musharraf and Lam raise the question of how countries around the world offer lawmakers and



citizens the chance to remove high-office holders from their positions.

In parliamentary systems, a national government leader can typically be replaced for any reason if they have lost the confidence of a majority of members of the lower house of parliament (the equivalent of the U.S. House of Representatives).

American-style presidential impeachment exists in countries including India, Brazil, Russia, France, Germany, South Korea,

Philippines, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Ireland.

While American lawmakers now have impeached a president three times, the world leader in impeachment is Norway, which modeled its system after the United States' and had invoked impeachment eight times before 1927, until the constitutional mechanism fell into disuse following a failed attempt to impeach the prime minister and six members of his Cabinet.

Canada police prepared to shoot indigenous activists, documents show

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

Canadian police were prepared to shoot Indigenous land defenders blockading construction of a natural gas pipeline in northern British Columbia, according to documents seen by the *Guardian*.

Notes from a strategy session for a militarized raid on ancestral lands of the Wet'suwet'en nation show that commanders of Canada's national police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), argued that "lethal

overwatch is req'd" — a term for deploying snipers.

The RCMP commanders also instructed officers to "use as much violence toward the gate as you want" ahead of the operation to remove a roadblock which had been erected by Wet'suwet'en people to control access to their territories and stop construction of the proposed 670km (416-mile) Coastal GasLink pipeline (CGL).

In a separate document, an RCMP officer states that arrests would be necessary for "sterilizing the site".



Culture



Eddie Murphy hints he might do some signature skits during 'SNL' return

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

When it comes to Eddie Murphy's anticipated return to Saturday Night Live this weekend, the 58-year-old actor and comedian said he wouldn't mind playing Gumbey, Buckwheat or even Bill Cosby — characters that became his trademarks on the show.

For all the people too young to relate — Gumbey was a mythical, pliable, asymmetrical green person who was the star of a children's show. Buckwheat was a Black character on TV's Little Rascals played by

late actor William Thomas Jr. Both were on the air when Murphy was growing up. On SNL, Murphy portrayed the innocent Gumbey as a wisecracking cigar smoker and Buckwheat as a messy headed wide-eyed man of the world. Murphy's portrayal of Cosby predated the entertainer's fall from grace and 2018 imprisonment on a sexual assault conviction.

"We're talking about a Gumbey thing; we're talking about a Buckwheat thing and I told you a Bill Cosby thing, maybe," Murphy told the Today show's Al Roker on Thursday.

Hair is still an issue: Sisters banned from 'Black Nutcracker' over braids

PhiladelphiaObserver.com

While there are a plethora of other issues to combat, Black folks' hair has become an unnecessary topic of conversation and not in a complimentary or flattering way. A Harlem mother is voicing her concerns as her two daughters were recently banned from a production of the "Black Nutcracker" because they chose to wear their hair in braids.

Pix11 reports that 9-year-old April and 10-year-old Brooke will not be able to participate in the production, which is being put on by the Uptown Dance Academy. The mom, Lisa Skinner, said that the rules of the dance company are that students must secure their hair for safety reasons. However, her daughters were apparently told that their hair cannot be in braids, even if it is placed in a bun, per the suggested safety precaution.



Skinner said that the teacher and school founder, Robin Williams, informed her that if her daughters were to have their hair in braids, they would "not be permitted to participate" in the performance.

"They were expelled from the school because I would not adhere to this ludicrous policy and she said to me then I will send you a refund of your ticket purchase money," said Skinner.

Lisa Willis becomes New York Knicks' first female coach as assistant for G League Team



History has been made in the state of New York! According to The Washington Informer, the Westchester Knicks have added former WNBA player Lisa Willis to their coaching staff, becoming the first female coach in the history of New York's basketball franchise.

In addition to Willis' hiring, the Westchester Knicks—the official NBA G League affiliate of the New York Knicks—also announced the

hiring of Allen Deep as an assistant coach.

Willis, who was the fifth overall pick in the 2006 WNBA Draft, played for the Los Angeles Sparks her first two seasons before continuing her playing career with the New York Liberty (2007-08). While attending UCLA (2002-06), the Long Beach, California, native was recognized as the nation's best defender by ESPN's Nancy Lieberman. She graduated as

the Bruins' all-time three-point leader and second all-time in then-PAC-10 history and ranked ninth all-time in scoring.

"The Westchester Knicks continue to be a vital part of our player development program at the New York Knicks," said Steve Mills, president of the New York Knicks in a press release. "Today, we've added two talented coaches who will improve our players' skills both on and off the court."

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A story about justice and redemption

By Dwight Brown
Guest Scribe

“Just Mercy”

A young Harvard-educated lawyer, Bryan Stevenson (**Michael B. Jordan**), could have his pick of law firms. Instead, he heads to rural Alabama to set up a small practice. In the deep south, with all its confines, he seeks to reverse death row sentences for wrongfully convicted prisoners. Stevenson partners with local advocate Eva Ansley (**Brie Larson**).

Many on death row are in need. Walter McMillian (**Jamie Foxx**), who was convicted of killing an 18-year-old white woman, becomes a prime client. McMillian says, “I didn’t do it.” There’s enough evidence to question his arrest, trial, conviction and sentence. But where he lives, in 1988, no one has enough power or know-how to fight the judicial system. He needs a crusader. Stevenson: “Your life is still meaningful, and I’m going to do everything I can to keep them from taking it.”

To get a feel for Michael B. Jordan’s interpretation of the role, close your eyes and imagine a young Sidney Poitier. That’s the way Jordan plays the character. Not like a fiery, agitated Denzel Washington. Or a gritty, emotionally raw Jeffrey Wright. Jordan’s Stevenson has a slow, steady and academic manner. It’s a refreshing change from the heroes and martyrs he often plays.

Foxx gives his best performance since *Ray*. Every action, facial expression and ounce of dialogue is channeled through him with a conviction that he rarely shows. Brie Larson finds the core of her character too. Rob Morgan, Tim Blake Nelson, Rafe Spall, O’Shea Jackson Jr. and Karan Kendrick as



Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx

Walter’s wife form the rest of the very earnest ensemble cast.

Director Destin Daniel Cretton’s approach to the crime/courtroom/drama genre is near formulaic. Nothing on view—from style, to production elements, to substance—seems particularly new or unique. But his guidance gets the job done.

Cretton and co-writer Andrew Lanham use the real lawyer Stevenson’s award-winning non-fiction book *Just Mercy: A Story of*

Justice and Redemption as source material. The script they’ve created is clear, has distinctive characters, evolves competently and heads to an ending that is bigger than its building blocks. Yet, something is missing. Something big. Something that would make this an extraordinary tale about injustice.

As the story unfolds, images of the south, prison environs and rural Black neighborhoods are created and visualized by production de-

sign (Sharon Seymour), editing (Nat Sanders), costume design (Francine Jamison-Tanchuck), music (Joel P. West) and cinematography (Brett Pawlak) that are solid.

Adult and urban viewers should find the film’s depiction of poor Black men being railroaded into death sentences—well into the late ’80s—alarming and enlightening. Whether they view *Just Mercy* in a theater or on a streaming service, its details on

history, racism and activism should be quite affecting.

On a far more personal level, watching a very northern and stiff African American lawyer awkwardly adapt to a friendly rural southern Black community is compelling. It’s a fascinating juxtaposition. A contrast in cultures that elevates a true story. Visit **NNPA News Wire Film Critic Dwight Brown at DwightBrownInk.com and BlackPressUSA.com.**

Slow steady drama that builds and builds

By Dwight Brown

“Clemency”

This poignant, behind-the-scenes look at the inhumanity that follows death penalty convictions could point the heated debate about capital punishment in a new direction.

Part of Bernadine Williams’ (**Alfre Woodard**) duties as a prison warden is to carry out death row executions. She’s organized and directed the last moments of countless prisoners’ lives. Sensitive, prepared and orderly—almost to a fault. It’s as if her routine is her rock: Rehearse the staff. Arrange last meal. Be cordial to lawyers and families. Oversee lethal injections.

Never an emotion on her face, she dispenses compassion with detached feelings. Like an overworked funeral director on a busy day. Outwardly, she looks unflappable and has had few failures. Then there’s that inevitable catastrophe. One that weighs on

her psyche, keeps her distant from her husband (Wendell Pierce) and aggravates a drinking problem.

Writer/Director Chinonye Chukwu has done her homework. Her drama is not about the alpha males in incarceration that lord over inmates. Or brawls on the prison rec yard. Or redemption. It’s about the toll legally killing people levies, on all involved.

Slow steady drama builds and builds. Each moment takes you deeper and deeper inside the soul of a prison exec who is forced to question a disheartening existence with no happy ending in sight. The ambitious premise, as developed in a thoughtful screenplay, plays out intelligently and emotionally as events careen toward a day of reckoning.

Woodard deftly carries the weight of her character and the subject matter. She creates a protagonist who is likeable yet unapproachable and somehow doesn’t make that a contradiction. Her supporting cast is exceptional: Aldis Hodge as the cop-killer next



Alfre Woodard

in line for death; Richard Schiff the convict’s hopeful lawyer; Danielle Brooks a person from the prisoner’s past; and Wendell Pierce the husband who watches his wife’s essence fade way bit by bit.

An ominous cloud follows Warden Williams everywhere. That gray atmosphere is aptly documented by cinematographer Eric Branco. He knows how to light a prison cell, dank bar room and messy home. Phyllis Housen’s editing gives the footage a funeral dirge’s rhythm. Production Designer Margaux Rust and Costume Designer Suzanne Barnes partner up on colors, settings and clothes that depict a very drab working-class life. Jazz/Pop Artist Laura Mvula adds her angelic voice to the soundtrack.

By the end of the movie, you’re not sure if Williams is a saint in trouble or an abettor whose time has come. Her dilemma will make you ponder her circumstances and the ethics of judicial executions. Getting you to that point is why



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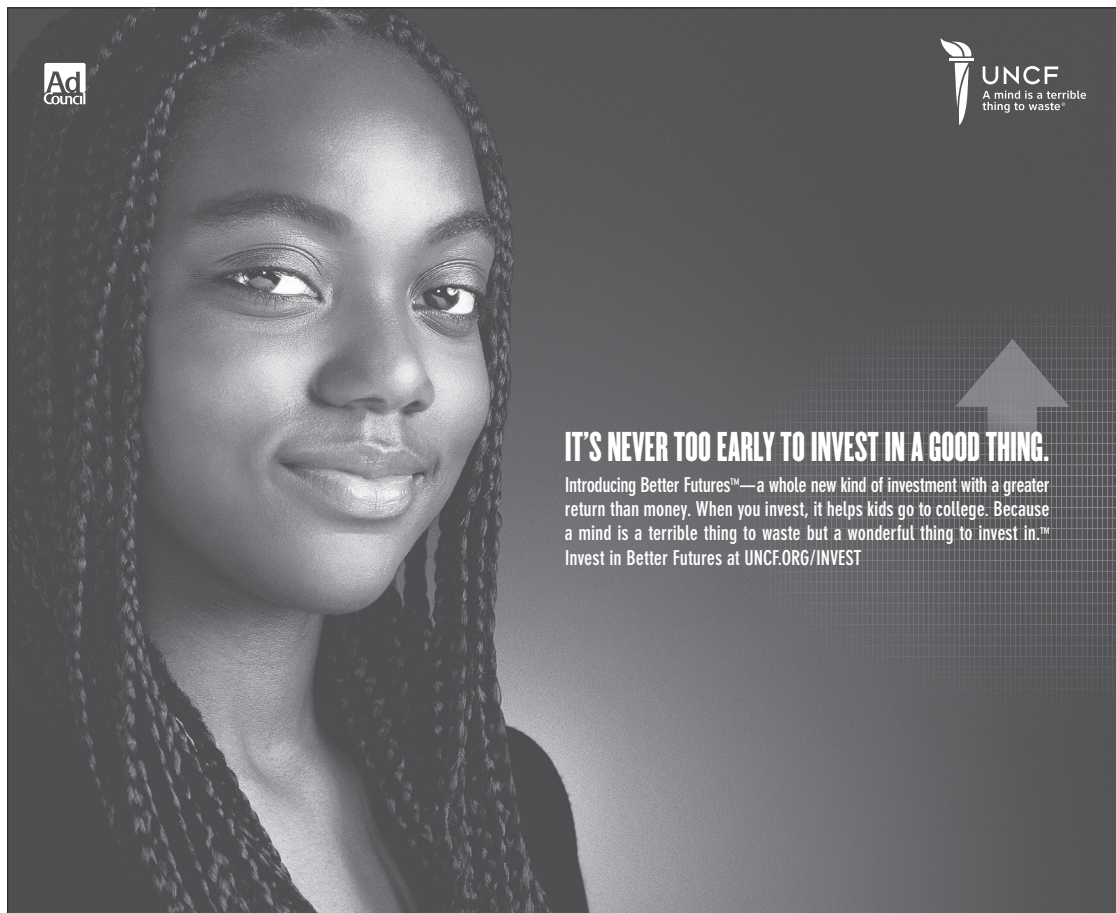
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