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*Bernadette Joy Graham, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor*

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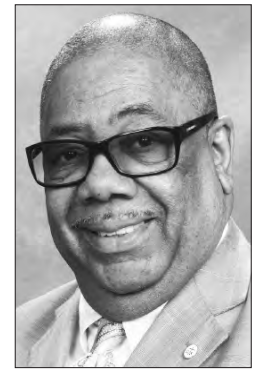
# Debt, Liberation, Justice and Jubilee

By Rev. Donald L. Perryman, Ph.D.

The Truth Contributor

*Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity; it is an act of justice.*

- Nelson Mandela



The bi-partisan passage of Ohio House Bill 29, with its transformative amendments from Senate Bill 37, aligns more closely with ancient biblical principles than modern political trends.

Passed in the waning moments of the marathon lame-duck 2024 Ohio legislative session, the bill eliminates debt-related driver's license suspensions.

While this effort appears like a dry policy change to some, the legislative accomplishment mirrors what biblical scholar Scot McKnight calls a "Jubilee vision – a radical economic reset rooted in liberation and justice."

According to The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's research report, "Road to Nowhere: Debt-Related Driver's License Suspensions in Ohio," a staggering one million Ohio drivers currently have suspended licenses. Approximately 60 percent of these suspensions are debt-related, specifically for owing unpaid fines and fees unrelated to dangerous driving offenses.

You already know! Not only do debt-related suspensions burden Ohio communities with an average annual outstanding total debt of over \$920 million, but debt-related suspensions are disproportionately burdensome in Ohio's most vulnerable communities, occurring at higher rates in urban areas, costing residents of Ohio's highest poverty zip codes an average of \$7.9 million each year and the residents with the highest percentages of people of color an average of \$12 million yearly.

These suspensions trap people of color in cycles of poverty as seemingly minor traffic stops quickly spiral into thousands of dollars owed to the state. When individuals lose their ability to drive due to unpaid fines and fees, they also lose their ability to work, attend school and care for their families, let alone earn the money to pay down their debt, according to *Road to Nowhere*.

This oppressive system mirrors the economic bondage described in the biblical book of Leviticus, where Jubilee—a proclamation issued once every 50 years—reset economic imbalances by forgiving debts, freeing

indentured servants and restoring land to families. It was not charity. It was structural change, a societal reset button designed to prevent generational poverty and systemic exploitation.

The Ohio Legislature's effort to provide immediate relief to those unfairly burdened by a system that penalized poverty parallels the biblical Jubilee spirit. In his reflections on Jesus' Jubilee vision, Scot McKnight highlights Luke 4:18-19 (my favorite passage), where Jesus declares his mission: "to proclaim good news to the poor...freedom for the prisoners...and to set the oppressed free." McKnight adds that Jesus' kingdom vision was not abstract spirituality but rather was deeply economic, social and transformative.

While policymakers may not have explicitly referenced Leviticus or Jesus' mission statement, it is indeed "good news" for Ohio's economy, our communities, and the millions unfairly trapped in cycles of debt.

Ohio's License Reform legislation is also a reminder that bipartisan cooperation can lead to meaningful reforms that uplift individuals and strengthen society as a whole.

Senate Bill 37's co-sponsors, Republican Senator Louis Blessing III and Democratic House Representative Catherine Ingram, along with Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Nathan Manning, were instrumental in the bill's passing and therefore merit special recognition.

Yet, a win for fairness, economic opportunity and social progress does not become a reality without broad support and the collaborative efforts of many others who deserve acclaim. These include the unparalleled work of Susan Jager, the Ohio Poverty Law Center and its many allies, and Rep. Josh Williams (R) District 44, who spoke on the House Floor in support of the measure, highlighting its practical importance: "The practice of suspending someone's license impacted the ability to find and keep a job."

Ohio is now back on the road – and moving in the right direction.

The passage of this transformational reform bill is a significant step toward an Ohio where justice isn't measured by punitive fines but by opportunities for restoration and dignity.

Contact Rev. Donald Perryman, PhD, at [drdlperryman@enterofhopebaptist.org](mailto:drdlperryman@enterofhopebaptist.org)



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# Gas is Dirty. LNG Proponents Don't Just Ignore the Facts, They Ignore the Human Toll

By Ben Jealous

Not long after her adopted twins came to live with her in Freeport, Texas, Melanie Oldham saw their health start to decline. Both children were diagnosed with severe asthma.

As Oldham sent the twins to school – every day with their inhalers – she realized a lot of the kids in her part of Brazoria County had bad asthma. She also began to see that other serious chronic illnesses were rampant in her community.

“It’s shocking the number of people in their 50s that already have severe COPD, all the skin problems we know are caused by different types of emissions, premature heart attacks, spikes in certain types of cancers – including one form of childhood leukemia – and the number of children with asthma is staggering.”

Those emissions she is referring to are from the oil, gas, and petrochemical plants peppering the landscape of her part of the Gulf Coast.

Increasingly, the source of that pollution is the growing number of liquefied methane gas (commonly referred to as LNG) facilities in the region. Freeport LNG, in Oldham’s town, is the third largest LNG export terminal by capacity in the country. The largest is Sabine Pass LNG, just a few hours along the coast from Freeport. That facility sits just over the Louisiana border from Port Arthur, TX – which is also home to Port Arthur LNG, currently under construction.

Port Arthur, like Freeport, is a textbook environmental sacrifice zone. John Beard, a Port Arthur community leader, says the entire region is a “sacrifice coast.” Texas Monthly once labeled this part of the state the “Cancer Belt.” Beard speaks of members of his community like Etta Herbert, a two-time cancer survivor whose daughter also has cancer and whose husband Roy just passed away from a long battle with cancer on November 30. And Beard’s own family has been impacted by the intense pollution in the area. His oldest son had to have a kidney transplant – despite no family history of kidney disease – and his daughter had a brain tumor removed.

This is what the extractive fossil fuel industry does to human bodies and communities. It is the real-life human toll of our continued reliance on fuels like methane gas. And it is a toll that will get significantly steeper if the US expands LNG exports and the infrastructure to support a continued LNG boom.

Despite decades of branding and rebranding efforts by the industry, the fact remains: methane gas is simply yet another dirty, dangerous fossil fuel polluting our communities.

LNG takes the deadly threats methane gas poses to the extreme, not just by increasing the amount of gas fracked, but by adding dangerous and pollution-heavy steps to the process. From fracking to pipeline transmission to the compression and liquefaction of the gas and the shipping of the LNG overseas, virtually every stage of the lifecycle leaks methane (which captures 80 times more heat than carbon dioxide), is powered by the burning of other dirty fossil fuels like oil, and carries the risk of catastrophic ruptures and explosions.

Yet fossil fuel interests and their allies in government continue to promote the fallacy of methane gas as a “bridge” fuel. Former presidential climate envoy John Kerry rightfully points to a “massive movement in the fossil fuel industry” to sanitize fracked gas’s image and brand it as part of our clean energy future. And the push to further build out LNG exports not only threatens the pace and success of the necessary clean energy transition already underway, it threatens to drive up energy costs for American households. The Department of Energy released an updated analysis just this month confirming that unfettered LNG exports would drive up domestic energy prices – and clearly showing that approving new or expanded gas exports is bad for the American people.

Part of the fossil fuel industry’s “massive movement” is an effort to use former politicians to sway core constituencies. One industry front group, Natural Allies for a Clean Energy Future, sends out politicians like former Ohio Congressman and presidential candidate Tim Ryan to tout the virtues of methane gas at events and on news shows without disclosing that they’re on the gas industry’s payroll.

According to the organization’s IRS 990 tax form, Natural Allies seems to have compensated Tim Ryan to the tune of \$246,943 in 2023 alone. The same 990 shows Natural Allies also spent \$290,723 on public relations services from a firm where former Senator Mary Landrieu (one of their other key voices) works.

Natural Allies also pays Black leaders to deceive Black audiences about how methane gas power is needed to keep their home energy costs down. Former Philadelphia mayor Michael Nutter and former Florida Congressman Kendrick Meek work in tandem to peddle that fossil fuel industry lie at events and in the Black press.

Meanwhile, as former Mayor Nutter and former Rep. Meek make the case that more methane gas will help Black, brown, and low-income communities, what about the communities of color and low-income communities bearing the brunt of the deadly pollution from this toxic industry? What about a place like Port Arthur, a majority Black and Latino city where nearly 30 percent of its people live below the poverty line?

To that, Port Arthur’s John Beard says: “By bringing more gas into play, you say that you’re helping me? When my town has some of the worst air quality in the country? When we’re already suffering from twice the state and national average for cancer, and high rates of heart, lung, kidney disease? When there’s already rampant air, land, and water pollution in my community? And that’s ‘helping me?’ My God, then I hate to see what you’re going to do if you want to hurt me!”

*Ben Jealous is the Executive Director of the Sierra Club, former President of the NAACP and a Professor of Practice at the University of Pennsylvania.*



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# OP-ED: The Case for a Presidential Pardon for Marilyn Mosby

By Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., President and CEO, National Newspaper Publishers Association

Guest Column

The political weaponization of the justice system has become a dangerous norm. Marilyn Mosby, former Baltimore State's Attorney, represents a troubling example of how blurred the lines between justice and politics have become. President Biden has a moral and constitutional obligation to address this by granting Mosby a presidential pardon, ensuring that the principles of fairness and equality under the law remain intact.



Benjamin Chavis

Mosby, a trailblazing prosecutor, made national headlines in 2015 for her bold decision to charge six officers involved in the death of Freddie Gray, an unarmed Black man whose death in police custody sparked widespread protests. Her pursuit of accountability was lauded by many as a necessary step toward justice in a system riddled with racial bias. Her zealous advocacy brought significant reforms to the criminal justice system, including implementing police body-worn cameras, decriminalizing marijuana, securing exonerations for the wrongfully convicted, and ending prosecutions for low-level offenses. However, her actions as a prosecutor also made her a target of the entrenched stalwarts of the status quo.

Mosby's indictment on charges of perjury and making false statements related to COVID-19 financial relief programs has raised serious questions. The charges allege that Mosby improperly accessed funds from her own retirement account under the CARES Act and made misleading statements on mortgage applications for two Florida properties. While public

officials should be held to high ethical standards, the context and vigor of her prosecution—amidst a sea of similar cases involving far less scrutiny—raises questions about selective prosecution and suggests something far more insidious. These charges seem less about justice and more about punishing a prominent Black woman who dared to challenge systems of power.



Marilyn Mosby

The pattern is disturbingly familiar. Across the nation, progressive prosecutors—especially Black women and other people of color advocating for criminal justice reform—face heightened scrutiny from political adversaries and segments of the justice system resistant to change. Cases like those of Marilyn Mosby and Kim Gardner illustrate how dissenting voices can be silenced through legal means, turning the scales of justice into tools of political retribution. This trend, which gained momentum during the Trump administration's Department of Justice, often involves aggressive investigations and prosecutorial overreach, disproportionately targeting Black officials and reform advocates to maintain the status quo.

The prosecution against State's Attorney Mosby has been driven by malicious personal, political, and even racial animus on the part of the prosecutors including notably, the former assistant US attorney Leo Wise, who has handled numerous high-profile criminal prosecutions against Black elected officials—including against Mosby, former Mayor Catherine Pugh, US Representatives Charlie Rangel and Maxine Waters.

Unbelievably, Leo Wise personally donated to both of Mosby's opponents in her successful 2018 re-election campaign and further demonstrated his animus by leaking details of a secret grand jury investigation to the media, seemingly to harass and embarrass her. This controversy must be viewed within the broader historical context of how reformist Black leaders, from the civil rights era to today, face heightened scrutiny and resistance from the ruling class—a pattern that cannot be ignored.

Critics will argue that a pardon is condoning Mosby's alleged actions. However, pardons have historically been used to address miscarriages of justice and restore balance when prosecutions are tainted by bias or overreach. Just as Biden called out selective prosecution in the case of his son – a case also prosecuted by Leo Wise – Biden can use this pardon to reaffirm the principle that our justice system must be blind to race, gender, and political ideology.

Marilyn Mosby's story is more than a personal tragedy—it is a microcosm of the broader fight for justice reform and equality in America. By granting her a pardon, President Biden will strike a blow against the politicization of justice and for accountability within the DOJ. As CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, I, and our 230 Black-owned newspapers and media companies, insist that President Biden issue a pardon for Marilyn Mosby, just as he intervened on behalf of his son, Hunter, for the same reasons.

Marilyn Mosby has paid a steep price for her convictions, yet she remains a champion for justice and a hero in our community. Be clear, whether police pull you over tonight in Baltimore or Boulder, your interaction with law enforcement will likely be recorded by an officer's body-worn camera and that layer of protection is largely thanks to Marilyn's leadership. It's time to define The Honorable Marilyn Mosby's legacy by her contributions to justice reform, not by a politically driven-prosecution.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and Executive Producer of The Chavis Chronicles on PBS TV Network, can be reached at [dr.bchavis@nnpa.org](mailto:dr.bchavis@nnpa.org)

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# Bernadette Joy Graham: A Journey of Healing and Heritage

By Asia Nail

The Truth Reporter

**Bernadette Joy Graham's** life is a testament to the power of perseverance and purpose. As a licensed professional clinical counselor (LPCC), she has dedicated her career to helping others navigate grief and mental health challenges, drawing from her own deeply personal experiences. Whether through her private practice, her work with the African American Legacy Project, or her powerful writing, Graham continues to inspire and uplift those around her with her unwavering commitment to healing and hope.

## A Mother's Influence: Colleen, the "Irish Girl"

Graham often speaks about the powerful influence of her mother, Miss Colleen, whose first name fittingly means "Irish girl." Colleen was of German and Irish descent and brought an indomitable spirit to her family. "My white mother always had mixed children, and she wasn't to be messed with. She loved all her kids," Graham shares.

Colleen's musical talents were another defining part of her life. She sang with her first husband, **Jon Hendricks**, and performed alongside the legendary **Stanley Cowell**. These rich cultural experiences deeply shaped Graham's worldview and her appreciation for her family's diverse heritage.

## Discovering Her Parents at the African American Legacy Project Museum

Graham's work with the **African American Legacy Project (AALP)** has been transformative—not just for the community but for herself as well. The organization, led by fellow veteran Robert Smith, is dedicated to preserving and sharing the stories of African Americans in Northwest Ohio.

During one visit to the AALP Museum, Graham had a profoundly moving experience. "I was walking around, and I saw both my parents," she recalls. "I was surprised mostly to see photos of my white mother." This unexpected encounter reaffirmed her pride in her family's story and her commitment to honoring their legacy.

## Grief as a Catalyst for Healing

Tragedy struck when Graham lost her mother at just 14 years old, during her freshman year at St. Ursula Academy. "Losing my mom was like having the floor ripped out from under me," she recalled. "There were no grief counselors or safe spaces to talk about it back then."

But instead of breaking her, this loss became a turning point. It planted the seed for her passion for grief counseling and mental health. "I wanted to be the person I needed when I was younger," she said. "Someone who could help people navigate their pain and come out stronger on the other side."

## Pioneering Grief and Bereavement Work

"When someone has lost a loved one, I always tell them to stop asking themselves why. You'll never know why, but one day you'll know the reason," she shares. "I needed my mom at 14 when she passed, but now I know the reason I went through this experience. If my mother wouldn't have died at that time, I wouldn't now be helping so many others get through their personal loss."

Her contributions to the field are significant. "I started the grief and bereavement division with the **American Counseling Association**," she says proudly. "Now there is so much research on grief and bereavement, whereas before,

there was hardly any information—one of my greatest accomplishments."

Graham also emphasizes that grief isn't just about death. "We lose a lot of things throughout our life—jobs, money, time and health. When one big one drops, it takes us to our knees. No one teaches us how to take a loss, only how to gain—how to gain education, get a job or start a family."

## Making Mental Health Care Accessible

Bernadette is passionate about ensuring that everyone has access to mental health care, no matter their circumstances. She offers practical advice for finding the right provider.

"*PsychologyToday.com* is a national website," she explains. "First, filter by your insurance so you don't have to pay out of pocket. Then you can filter to find a doctor by gender, religious preferences, and many specific categories. Doctors also list their specialties; for instance, I specialize in grief and bereavement, anxiety, and depression."

To address the broader issue of access, Graham is creating workshops to educate people about their healthcare options. "People just don't know this," she says. "I'm working on creating workshops to educate employees and employers on how to utilize their healthcare and mental health services better. Most people just don't know how to navigate this well."

She also highlights the lack of mental health resources at health fairs. "Most providers focus on physical ailments affecting the Black community, like diabetes and high blood pressure, but they rarely have information on mental health," Bernadette notes. "Everything starts in your mind. If you don't have your mind in check, it can actually be the root cause of physical ailments."

## Care for All, No Matter Their Situation

Graham's dedication to her patients goes beyond standard practices. She ensures that those in need receive care, regardless of their financial or insurance situation.

For example, she offers a sliding scale for therapy services. "I'd rather my patients get help and pay something, even if it's not much, as opposed to receiving no mental health help at all," she explains.

## Breaking Stigmas in the Black Community

One of Graham's most impactful initiatives is her monthly column, *A Mental Health Moment*, right here at our own Sojourner's Truth Newspaper. Through her writing, she aims to break down the stigma surrounding mental health therapy in the Black community.

"In our community, there is a serious stigma against mental health therapy,"

...continued on page 7



Bernadette Joy Graham, LPCC

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# Minority Business Development Agency Releases Report on Closing Supply Chain Gaps with MBEs

Special to The Truth

Last week, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce released its “Ways in Which Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) Can Meet Gaps in the U.S. Supply Chain” report.

This report presents several avenues for MBEs to meet gaps in the U.S. supply chain and discusses opportunities to conduct, commission, and collaborate on new studies with other federal, state, and private institutions on this topic.

This report offers a data-driven snapshot of the MBE supplier landscape, analyzing representation of MBE firms in both manufacturing industries and the service industries that support manufacturing. The data shows there is room to grow representation of MBEs, particularly in manufacturing.

\* MBE firms comprise about 22 percent of the service sector firms support manufacturing but represent only about 10 percent of manufacturing firms.

\* As a comparison, MBEs comprise about 20 percent of all employer firms.

The report identifies barriers present in supply chains for MBE participation; and the ways in which policy makers, technical assistance providers, and large corporations can utilize MBEs to advance the U.S. supply chain.

“MBDA has embarked on a new chapter of our long and proud history to serve and support MBEs,” said Deputy Under Secretary of Minority Busi-

ness Development Eric Morrisette. “The Minority Business Development Act of 2021 empowered our agency to work toward equity among U.S. firms and strengthen our national economy, and we are forever committed to that mission. Together with public and private sector partners, we will continue to address capital access disparities and highlight sources of alternative financing while closing gaps in the U.S. supply chain.”

The report highlights many public and private initiatives directed toward promoting the success of MBEs in supply chain industries and breaking down barriers. Increasing MBE participation in advanced technologies and manufacturing relies on a range of initiatives to ensure MBEs can develop the capacities and skills needed to compete in rapidly changing markets.

The report recommends four potential opportunities through which MBEs can help close supply chain gaps through policy and business plan changes:

\* Leverage the Large Number of MBEs in High-Tech Manufacturing Support Services: Assist MBEs to Access Opportunities as Part of the Growth Spurred by Federal Investments, Including the CHIPS Act.

\* Fostering Inclusive Entrepreneurship In Manufacturing: Promote Talent Pools of Entrepreneurship; and Support Training Programs and Expand Innovation Incentives.

\* Expand Corporate Supply Chain Diversity: Expand and Strengthen Procurement Programs; Build Corporate-MBE Supplier Relationships; and Ensure Stable Cashflow for MBEs.

\* Provide Support to MBEs in Manufacturing: Leverage Business Centers and Networks; Develop Initiatives Helping MBEs Grow in Scale and Size; Foster Networks and Partnerships; and Encourage Community Engagement.

Other suggestions made in the report include addressing unique challenges by MBE demographic groups and expanding qualitative data gathering to learn about the needs of MBEs in manufacturing.

This report was mandated under the Minority Business Development Act of 2021. The Act codified MBDA and many of its existing programs. The report, and details of its findings, can be reviewed at [www.mbd.gov](http://www.mbd.gov) [1].

The U.S. Department of Commerce, Minority Business Development Agency is the only Federal agency dedicated to the growth and global competitiveness of U.S. minority business enterprises (MBEs). For more than 50 years, MBDA's programs and services have better equipped MBEs to create jobs, build scale and capacity, increase revenues, and expand regionally, nationally, and internationally.

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## Wage Increases Take Effect Jan. 1, 2025

Ohio's minimum wage is scheduled to increase Jan. 1, 2025, to \$10.70 per hour for non-tipped employees and \$5.35 per hour for tipped employees. The minimum wage will apply to employees of businesses with annual gross receipts of more than \$394,000 per year.

The current 2024 minimum wage is \$10.45 per hour for non-tipped employees and \$5.25 per hour for tipped employees. The 2024 Ohio minimum wage applies to employees of businesses with annual gross receipts of more than \$385,000.

The Constitutional Amendment (II-34a) passed by Ohio voters in November 2006 states Ohio's minimum wage shall increase on January 1 each year by the rate of inflation. The state minimum wage is tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) for urban wage earners and clerical workers over the 12-month period prior to September. The CPI-W index increased by 2.4 % over the 12-month period from Sept. 1, 2023, to Aug. 31, 2024.

For employees at smaller companies with annual gross receipts of \$394,000 or less per year after Jan. 1, 2025, and for 14- and 15-year-olds, the state's minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. For these employees, the state wage is tied to the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, which requires an act of Congress and the President's signature to change.

Employers can access the 2025 Minimum Wage poster for display in their places of business by visiting the Ohio Department of Commerce's Division of Industrial Compliance's Bureau of Wage and Hour website.

# Portrait of Emery Troy – Emery Carl Troy

By Tricia Hall

The Truth Reporter

Emery Carl Troy, the last son of Charlie and Willie Bell (Troy) Taylor, was born in Cleveland, OH, on October 30, 1929. On his first birthday, his father died from pneumonia. A few years later, the family moved to Toledo, where his life's journey continued under the guidance of his mother and stepfather, Will Taylor.

Emery belonged to a dynamic trio of brothers who dedicated their lives to service the communities in which they served.

His eldest brother, J. Frank Troy, was instrumental in improving the lives of Toledo's Black community, including establishing the Area Office on Aging. Emery's second brother, the Rev. Leon L. Troy Sr. improved the lives of many in his community in many ways: through the pulpit, through housing, and the education of young people. His eldest sibling, and only sister, Charlie Pearl Cobb, also preceded him in death. She was very instrumental in her church community and had a strong faith. She believed in continuing education and went back to school after retirement and received an associate's degree in early childhood development.

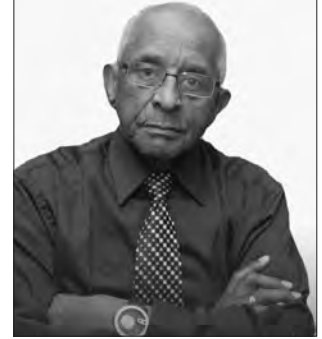
Emery Troy was the president/CEO of Dooley House, Inc – a nonprofit agency located in Camden, NJ. Mr. Troy wore many "hats" during his time at the agency. As one of the co-founders, he saw the agency grow from a home that cared for children with HIV/AIDS only in the 1980s to an agency that provided transitional housing for children with multiple medical problems, as well as HIV/AIDS. Dooley House also provides transitional housing and case management for adults living with HIV/AIDS, a transportation fleet serving HIV/AIDS individuals to medical and social service appointments, and a permanent housing program for homeless individuals with multiple diagnoses.

In 2003 through vision and good fortune, Dooley House moved into a new million-dollar facility generously furnished with gifts from individuals and corporate sponsors. In 2009, Dooley House Moved its administrative department to another building in Camden City, the Troy/Wallston House of Hope. At this location, Dooley House offered a Senior Services program that was designed to respond to all aspects of life and provide an environment that recognized the contributions of seniors. The Troy-Wallston/Chazz Witherspoon Youth Academy was an affiliate of Dooley House, Inc, which provided programs to help develop the youth community of Camden to reach and achieve their potential in a safe and positive environment.

Mr. Troy's vast knowledge in the field of HIV/AIDS spanned more than 30 years. Being on the front lines of the struggle for HIV/AIDS education and information, he saw many changes in the educational training, medial treatment and the overall thoughts of the general public related to HIV/AIDS.

Emery served as chairperson of the Camden City AIDS Advisory Council; he was appointed to the Governor's AIDS Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS for the State of New Jersey in 2003; and he served on the Ryan White Planning Council of the Philadelphia Office of HIV Planning.

Before the dream of Dooley House became e reality, Mr. Troy worked in



various areas of the business field, as well as an Alcohol/Drug Counseling Director. He attended Diamond Business & Professional College in Cleveland, Ohio, where he majored in business administration.

Mr. Troy received numerous awards and countless commendations for his tireless work for the improvement and care of children and adults with medical problems and living with HIV/AIDS.

Emery Troy departed this life on December 4, 2024 in Toledo. Although he is gone, his life, his deeds and the love he had for others will never be forgotten.

## Bernadette Joy Graham... continued from page 5

she says. "That's why I started my column. The more education I provide, the more we can encourage understanding and acceptance."

### Advice for Navigating Loss

Graham offers simple yet profound advice for those dealing with grief. She encourages people to honor their loved ones in a way that feels meaningful to them, especially during tough times like the holidays.

"Feel your feelings—don't bottle it up," she says. "Honor them in your own way."

### Following Her Heart

Graham's favorite quote, "Follow your heart and chase your dreams, one day you'll catch up because you will always be on the right path," encapsulates her life's journey.

From honoring her parents' legacy to forging new paths in mental health care, Bernadette Joy Graham is a shining example of resilience, compassion, and hope. Her dedication reminds us that healing is not just a personal journey but a gift we can share with the world. Thank you for continuing to inspire others to heal, dream, and chase their own paths to fulfillment.

For More Read: 'A Mental Health Moment' here.



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# The 13th Annual Christmas Bazaar

Special to The Truth

On a beautiful winter day, the 13th Annual Christmas Bazaar was held on Saturday, December 14, 2024, at St. Clement Hall, Toledo, OH.

The event was hosted by Donnetta Carter, The Social Butterfly Company. There were over 65 vendors and crafters that participated. There were vendors such as Savvy Sista's Boutique, Delicate Soap, paparazzi Jewelry; products such as Tupperware and handmade wreaths, and many, many others and booths by a number of agencies and offices such as Lucas County Auditor's Office, Katie Moline.

There were two new food trucks "Better Than Yo Mama's" and "Tosha Cake Addiction." And Santa Claus and the Mrs. arrived on their sleigh and distributed treats and took photos with the children and families.

This was one of the highest attendances for the annual Christmas Bazaar with guests in record numbers of 650 plus.

The entertainment provided by DJ Steven Wolfe, F.A.M.E.D Studio dancers, Shawanda Clarke, Founder. Also, in attendance were Toledo City

Councilwoman Cerssandra McPherson and newly elected Judge Ken Walz.

The Social Butterfly thanked everyone including the small businesses, sponsors, volunteers, guests and all who supported the annual event. The next scheduled event will be the 14th Annual Business and Health EXPO, Saturday, April 5, 2025, from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the YMCA Wayman D. Palmer, Toledo, OH.

For more information contact Carter via email [events@thesocialbutterflyllc.com](mailto:events@thesocialbutterflyllc.com) or (419) 367-9765.



Event Organizer Donnetta Carter and Toledo City Councilwoman Cerssandra McPherson



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# Historic Church Celebrates Community Christmas

By Tricia Hall

The Truth Reporter

Community members, youth and their families and Toledo Pride Prince Hall joined historic St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church on Sunday, December 22, 2024. The community-centered program celebrated Christmas and St. John the Apostle and Evangelist Day.

“On behalf of our Pastor, First Lady and St. Paul family,” welcome MiKayla Evans, during the official service welcome. “We welcome all our guests. Glad that you are here with us. Welcome, welcome, welcome.”

Traditional devotion service opened the program, which was followed by a procession led by Rev. James Willis, Sr, the pastor of St. Paul MBC and members of Toledo Pride Prince Hall Masonic family.

The service continued with the youth choir, which sang ‘Joy to the Word’ and ‘Away in a Manager,’ Mylan Allen sang Isaiah 9:6, Zoey Harris led the Lord’s Prayer, MiKayla Evans delivered a welcome, Celina Winfield-White led the Christmas Litany, Kaitlyn Diggins said the announcements, Kendall Cooper led the scripture reading, Aydrn Brown assisted with Altar Call, Joyful Praises featuring Zane Harris and Ayden Brown presented a praise dance, Zane Harris delivered a Christmas Speech, and Aufwiedersehen Agee shared Merry Christmas.

Rev. James H. Willis Sr, pastor of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church and a leader in the Toledo Pride Prince Hall Masonic Family, delivered comments about St. John’s Day and the sermon for that Sunday.

“St. John Evangelist Day is December 27. We celebrate today the second fest,” noted Rev. Willis. “St. John represents an



Rev. James Willis; Che Couch Well, The Illustrious Commandress of Mecca Court 73 and Desmond V. Jones, Illustrious Potentate of Mecca Temple 43 and he’s also the Right Worship



Rev. James Willis, Pastor of St. Paul; Tanya Roach, Amaranth Grand Chapter Foundation President; Leverage Scott, Jewel Chapter Worthy Matron and Keith McWhite, Jewel Chapter Worthy Patron

emotional sign of love. He’s notable to not forsaking Christ and was the first to reach Jesus’ tomb. He is also called the apostle of charity, and each group that was here today gave charity. That is what we are all about.”

Members of Toledo Pride Prince Hall Masonic Family along with members of Amazon Lodge, Composite Lodge, Jewel Chapter, Order of Pythagoran, Mecca Court, Mecca Temple and others all presented monetary donations to St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church and Rev. Willis.

“Today, the message is to apply thyself to a pure heart like St. John,” shared Rev.



St. Paul devotion

Willis. Thank you to all our members and guests that are also in attendance. Thank you for joining us this morning. Thank you for celebrating with us this morning.”

# Blue Gill Fishing Club Hosts Annual Christmas Party

By The Truth Staff

The Blue Gill hosted its annual Christmas party Sunday, December 22 at the Blue Gill Fishing Club on 642 N. Detroit Ave.

The event featured music and catered food by Labaron’s Place- Toledo Wings, the food truck will be opening as a restaurant January 2025 at the former Ruby’s Kitchen.

The Blue Gill Fishing Club was organized in 1992 by five community men, initially as a social club. Over the years, the Blue Gill has also evolved into a service club that raises funds for scholarships, to feed neighborhood youth and to assist community action organizations in their missions.



Al Chapman, an original co-founder of the Blue Gill, and Gloria Chapman



Freddie Tisdale, an original co-founder of the Blue Gill, and Toni Tisdale



Members of the Blue Gill Fishing Club



Brenda Jackson, Bonita Christian (co-owner of Labaron’s Place - Toledo Wings), and Taujanic Taylor

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New York City:	October 24-28, 5 days, 4 nights, \$899*

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# The Truth HEALTH



## Let the Slow Cooker Do the Work

By Patrice Powers-Barker, OSU Extension, Lucas County

The Truth Contributor

Happy new year! It's a time where we reflect on the last year, possibly set some goals or resolutions for the new year and stay bundled up for January weather. From a food and nutrition perspective, it's always a good time to make meals easier on yourself. Whether you are looking to eat a little healthier or eat less meals out, don't forget to use the slow cooker!

### Less Hands-on Work

For many recipes, food ingredients can be put in the crock and it cooks during the day without any other attention. It's simple to prepare recipes all in one step. Many slow cooker recipes can cook for 8 to 10 hours. The exceptions to this rule are milk products and some tender vegetables and herbs and some starches like pasta. They do not need to cook for many hours and should be added during the last hour of cooking.

### Economical

Using a slow cooker to prepare recipes can be a good value. First, it's economical to operate. Low wattage over a long-time costs less than high wattage for a short time. Cooking food slowly helps keep it tender. This allows for the use of less expensive cuts of meat because slow cooking tenderizes the meat. Liquids do not boil away like on the stovetop and slow cooking keeps more of the natural juices and flavors of foods. Lastly, having a healthy home cooked meal can limit the need for picking up food at a restaurant, which in turn can help with the household food budget.

### Food Safety Tips

- Completely thaw frozen meat in the refrigerator before cooking it in the slow cooker. The slow cooker is great for cooking meals all day but it will not reach a high enough temperature fast enough for frozen meat.
- Do not fill food to the very top of the slow cooker. When adding ingredients, only fill the crock pot halfway or three fourths of the way full.
- Do not leave cooked food to cool down in the slow cooker. Once you turn it off and eat the meal, place left-over food in the refrigerator.
- Don't use the slow cooker for reheating food. You can use the slow cooker to keep food warm on a buffet table but for reheating food, use the stove or microwave.

### Additional cooking tips:

- Most slow cookers have clear lids so you can see the food while it's cooking. Every time you lift the lid, you have to add an additional 15 -30 minutes of cooking time.
- Most recipes offer you the option of a longer cooking time on low or a faster cooking time on high. Usually 1 hour on high is equal to 2 hours on low.
- As mentioned before, a few ingredients like milk products and some tender vegetables and herbs should be added during the last hour of cooking.
- In the slow cooker, steam collects on the lid and the contents can get watered down. The recipe might call for thickeners like flour or cornstarch to thicken the sauce.
- Spray with cooking spray for ease of cleaning or look for coupons or sales on slow cooker liners which are placed in the crock before the food and can be thrown away when done cooking.
- If you already own a slow cooker, use it! If it's an older model, make sure the cord is in good shape, that the legs and handles are heat-resistant and that it conducts heat evenly. If you are looking to purchase a new slow cooker, there are many options from size, cost and other features to make cooking the meal easier for you.

This recipe for **Moroccan Beef and Sweet Potato Stew** is from the Cattlemen's Beef Board and National Cattlemen's Beef Association. This can be made in a 3 ½ to 5 ½ quart sized slow cooker.

- 2-1/2 pounds beef stew meat, cut into 1 to 1-1/2-inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon ground red pepper
- 1-pound sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces (about 3 cups)
- 1/2 cup regular or golden raisins
- 1 can (14-1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes with garlic and onion

Optional ingredients for serving: hot cooked couscous or other grain, chopped toasted almonds and/or chopped fresh parsley.

Prepare ingredients in the slower cooker:

- Combine flour, cumin, cinnamon, salt and red pepper in slow cooker.
- Add beef stew meat, sweet potatoes and raisins; toss to coat evenly.
- Pour tomatoes on top.
- Cover and cook on HIGH 4 to 6 hours or on LOW 8 to 9 hours or until beef and potatoes are fork-tender. (No stirring is necessary during cooking.)
- Season with salt, as desired.

**Optional ways to serve the stew:** You can serve it over a cooked grain such as couscous. Garnish the top with almonds and parsley, if desired. Best wishes for 2025.




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## A Mental Health Moment

# The Journey of Black Therapists

By Bernadette Joy Graham, MA, LPCC

The Truth Contributor

Being a therapist is a rewarding but often challenging profession that requires compassion, patience and a deep understanding of the human experience. For Black therapists, the journey is uniquely shaped by both their professional training and the cultural context in which they grew up with experiencing their own lived experiences.

So, have you ever wondered what it's like to be a therapist, specifically a Black therapist? We will explore what it is like to be a therapist in the Black community, highlighting the importance of cultural competence, self-awareness and the evolving role of mental health care in an underserved population with much stigma.

One of the key elements in the work of a Black therapist is cultural competence. Cultural competence refers to the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures different from one's own. For Black therapists, this often means using their own lived experiences to better connect with clients, particularly those from similar backgrounds. However, cultural competence goes beyond race; it involves understanding the full spectrum of a person's identity, including their socioeconomic background, gender, and life experiences.

Research shows that Black clients often feel more comfortable seeking therapy when they see therapists who share their cultural or racial background. According to the American Psychological Association, ethnic minorities are less likely to seek therapy, partially due to concerns about racial bias in treatment. Black therapists, therefore, play a crucial role in providing accessible and culturally resonant care. A study published in *Psychology Today* notes that "representation in the therapeutic space is important for validating experiences of racism and discrimination and for fostering trust between the therapist and client" (Fleming, 2022).

For Black therapists, the work extends beyond clinical skills. Many face the challenge of balancing their professional identity with their personal experience as Black individuals in a predominantly white and female field. The lack of diversity in the mental health profession can sometimes make it difficult for therapists of color to find mentors or colleagues who understand their unique challenges. Moreover, Black therapists often face the pressure of being seen as the representative of the Black experience. This can add an emotional toll, especially when clients expect a therapist to understand their struggles with racial discrimination without needing to explain it.

Despite these challenges, many Black therapists find strength in their ability to relate to their clients on a deeper level, using their lived experiences to foster a sense of shared understanding. As Dr. Jessica Pryce, a clinical psychologist, shares in *The Atlantic*, "When I'm working with a client who's Black, there's a particular knowing that we share, even if our stories are different" (Pryce, 2021).

The Black community has historically faced significant mental health challenges, stemming from the intersection of systemic racism, poverty, and trauma. Black therapists not only address personal mental health issues but also engage with the larger social and political factors that affect their clients' well-being. The stigma surrounding mental health in Black communities, often rooted in cultural and historical factors, makes therapy an even more critical service. By fostering open and non-judgmental spaces, Black therapists can break down these barriers and help reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health care.

The rise of culturally specific mental health initiatives, such as therapy groups that center on Black identity or Black empowerment, has been instrumental in normalizing the conversation about mental health in these com-



munities. Black therapists are often at the forefront of these efforts, helping clients to navigate issues such as intergenerational trauma, identity, and the emotional toll of racism.

Being a Black therapist means embracing both the professional challenges of providing therapeutic care and the personal significance of offering support to a community in need. The work is both a calling and a responsibility—one that requires resilience, empathy, and a deep commitment to the healing and well-being of individuals and communities. As more Black therapists enter the field, hopefully, more Black male therapist they continue to play a vital role in shaping the future of mental health care, advocating for culturally competent practices, and ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, has access to the support they deserve.

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*Bernadette Graham is a Licensed Professional Psychotherapist in private practice. She also provides educational workshops on matters of grief, death and dying and everything mental health. She is a sought out phenomenal international speaker (Bookings speaking, presenting or workshops you may email [graham.bernadette@gmail.com](mailto:graham.bernadette@gmail.com))*

*Bernadette has been an advocate within the Mental Health field for over 20 years. A sliding fee schedule is offered if you do not have health insurance or having financial hardship. You may contact her for appointments in office or telehealth or complete an intake at the following:*

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## Navigating Mental Health During the Holidays

Special to The Truth

The holiday season is often portrayed as a time of joy, connection, and celebration. Yet, for many, it can also be marked by stress, loneliness and overwhelming expectations.

For many, maintain mental health during this busy time of year can be difficult. Dr. ?? said that it is important to recognize signs of depression and offers methods to find peace and enjoyment this holiday season.

**Acknowledge Your Feelings**

Give yourself permission to experience and process your emotions without judgment.

"It's important to validate your emotions," said Rajiv Parinja, Mercy Health psychologist. "Whether you're grieving the loss of a loved one, feeling the pressure of financial strain, or simply exhausted from the de-

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# End of Year Book Roundup – A Few of the Year's Best!! Part II

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

The Truth Contributor

So you looked at the calendar the other day and... eeeek.

We're in the middle of the holidays already – but there is always time to gift someone ... or even yourself with one of these great books of this past year!

the controversy she lit.

## Politics

Was your giftee dismayed at the political landscape for the past few years? Then **"Good Reasonable People"** by **Keith Payne** (Viking, \$29.00) should be the book you wrap up to give. There is a way back to unity and away from polarization, Payne says, and with an explanation of the psychology and behind it, it's do-able.

Be sure you know where your giftee's politics lie if you wrap up **"The MAGA Diaries"** by **Tina Nguyen** (One Signal Publishers, \$28.00). Nguyen cut her teeth in the conservative movement, though she never felt entirely comfortable there. Eventually, she needed to get out; how she did it is a story the right giftee will love.

The person on your list who's mourning the end of the political season, will be happy to get **The Handy Civics Answer Book: How to Be a Good Citizen** by **David L. Hudson, Jr. J.D.** (Visible Ink Press, \$29.99). It's a large, heavy book about our American documents, the Amendments they should know about, what it means to be a "good citizen," and more.

Remember the Reagan years? For your giftee that does, too, **Dear Mom and Dad** by **Patti Davis** (Liveright, \$27.99) will be a great gift to unwrap. Davis, of course, was the Reagan's daughter, and this love letter to family and country is perfectly appropriate this year. Wrap it up with **Woodrow Wilson: The Light Withdrawn** by **Christopher Cox** (Simon & Schuster, \$34.99), a hefty biography about a "superbly unsuited" man who nevertheless became our 28th

President.

Here's a political issue your activist will want to know more about: **The Stolen Wealth of Slavery: A Case for Reparations** by **David Montero** (Legacy Lit, \$29). Part history, part business, part eye-opener, this book is one of the better looks at this controversial subject.

## True Crime

If there's a true-crime lover on your list, you can't go wrong with **Killer Moms: True Stories** by **Amanda R. Woomer** (Visible Ink Press, \$22.95). These stories will chill you, they'll fascinate you, and they'll keep you up at night. And for more up-all-night gifting, **"Children of Darkness and Light"** by **Lori Hellis** (Pegasus Crime, \$28.95) will fill the bill nicely. It's the further story of Lori Vallow, Chad Daybell, and the murders of Vallow's two children.

The reader on your list who loves unusual peeks into the lives of crime solvers will devour **Clay and Bones: My Life as an FBI Forensic Artist** by **Lisa Bailey** (Chicago Review Press, \$28.99), a memoir by the FBI's first female forensic sculptor, the job, and the crimes she's helped to solve.

## Pets and Animals

For the dog lover on your gift list, **Rethinking Rescue** by **Carol Mithers** (Counterpoint, \$28.00) will be a welcome present. It's the story of Lori Weise, Los Angeles's "Dog Lady," who helps pets and their owners in the city's poorer neighborhoods. It's also a basic history of animal rescue and activism.

Is there someone on your gift list who's wild about animals? Then **Meet the Neighbors: Animal Minds and Life in a More-Than-Human World** by **Brandon Keim** (Norton, \$29.99) will make a great present under the tree. It's a look at wild animals and the ways they're not quite so different from us. Pair it with **Earthly Bodies: Embracing Animal Nature** by **Vanessa Chakour** (Penguin Life, \$20), another, differently nuanced book about animal and human behavior.

The grieving pet owner on your list may like **"I'm Still Here: A Dog's Purpose Forever"** by **Cathryn Michon** (Andrews McMeel, \$19.99). It's a story as told by a dog who crossed the Rainbow Bridge, but never really leaves. Hint: Wrap it up with tissues.

If you have a cat lover on your gift list, **"Cats of the World"** by **Hannah Shaw and Andrew Marttilla** (Plume, \$32.00) will be exactly the right thing to wrap. It's filled with stories and photographs of cats, cats, kittens, and owners, taken from around the world.

## Health, Self-Help & Wellness

There are several kinds of people on your gift list who'd like to read **"The Long Haul: How Long Covid Survivors are Revolutionizing Healthcare"** by **Ryan Prior** (MIT Press, \$24.95). Absolutely, nurses will want it. Former Covid-19 patients will want it. Any current sufferers of Long Covid will absolutely want to see it. Wrap it up with a book that might help them: **"Soothe: Restoring Your Nervous System from Stress, Anxiety, Burnout, and Trauma"** by **Nahid de Belgeonne** (Penguin Life, \$19), a book that explains where emotions are from, where the body stores them, and how you can self-soothe when things get really bad.

The insomniac on your gift list will be so happy to unwrap **"Sleepless: Unleashing the Subversive Power of the Night Self"** by **Annabel Abbs-Streets** (Putnam, \$28). It's a book about neuroscience, creativity, and learning to harness our "Night Selves." Wrap it up with **"This is Why You Dream"** by **Rahul Jandial, MD, PhD** (Penguin Life/Viking, \$29) and a gift certificate for a nice warm glass of milk.

If there's someone on your gift list who loves to read True Medical stories, then **"A Fatal Inheritance"** by **Lawrence Ingrassia** (Holt, \$29.99) is the one to give. It's the story of Ingrassia's family, loss, and a legacy of cancer that seems more than coincidental. It's also the tale of the doctors whose research helps unlock the key for families prone to cancer.

For the medical-minded person who's also concerned about justice, wrap up **"Madness: Race and Insanity in a Jim Crow Asylum"** by **Antonia Hylton** (Legacy Lit, \$30). On a random day in March of 1911, a dozen Black men were forced to build a hospital for "the Negro Insane." This is the tale of that segregated hospital and the people who were sent there. Wrap it with **"Facing the Unseen"** by **Damon Tweedy, M.D.** (St. Martin's Press, \$30), a book on mental health care for anyone who needs it.

Your giftee loves to read True Medicine stories, so **"Gray Matters: A Biography of Brain Surgery"** by **Theodore H. Schwartz** (Dutton, \$32) is the book you want to give. It's the story of one man's career, yes, but your giftee will

... continued on page 13

## Kentucky Derby Packages



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**Book Roundup... continued from page 12**

also learn that reading is not brain surgery.

**Death & Dying**

So books on death might not seem like a great holiday gift, but the right reader will be comforted by *“Other People’s Words”* by **Lissa Soep** (Spiegel and Grau, \$27.00). After losing two close friends, Soep realized that the things we said once (or didn’t say) are with us inside memories that we keep. This is a good and gentle book for the person who needs it most. Wrap it up with *“Grief is for People”* by **Sloane Crosley** (FSG, \$27.00), the story of a suicide and a lost friend.

The person who wants to live as authentically as possible in order to understand death will want *“Briefly Perfectly Human”* by **Alua Arthur** (Mariner, \$28.99), a book on being a better human now, so there are no regrets. So what will you do with life, then, hm?

For the grieving parent, *“Fi”* by **Alexandra Fuller** (Grove Atlantic, \$28.00) might be a comfort. It’s a memoir of Fuller’s son, and the unimaginable losses she suffered not long ago when he died shortly after Fuller lost her father, her home country, and a relationship she treasured. Pair it with **Gail Godwin’s** *“Getting to Know Death”* (Bloomsbury, \$26.99), a book about loss and surviving it.

For the person who wonders why we must leave this world, *“Why We Die”* by **Venki Ramakrishnam** (Wm. Morrow, \$32.50) offers plenty of science to explain. Why do we die, and why can’t we live forever – or, at least a whole lot longer? The scientist on your list will want to read this book to find out. Wrap it up with *“This Ordinary Stardust: A Scientist’s Path from Grief to Wonder”* by **Alan Townsend** (Grand Central, \$29.00) for another scientific look at healing.

The grieving person on your gift list may not feel so festive, which is why *“Conscious Grieving: A Transformative Approach to Healing from Loss”* by **Claire Bidwell Smith, LCPC** (Workman, \$19.99) may be a welcome gift. This book helps make sense of a time that has no sense inside it. Wrap it up with *“The Wet Wound: An Elegy in Essays”* by **Maddie Norris** (University of Georgia Press, \$23.95), a book on the pain of grief.

Even at the holidays – especially at the holidays – loss can feel especially keen. Your giftee may appreciate opening *“Near-Death Experiences: After-life Journeys and Revelations”* by **Jim Willis** (Visible Ink Press, \$22.95), a scientific look at what happens when the worst almost happens, and how science and religion tie together with this issue.

**Fiction for the LGBTQ+ Reader**

If there’s someone on your gift list who’d enjoy a coming-of-age story, *“Shae”* by **Mesha Maren** (Algonquin Books, \$28.00) is a good choice to give. It’s a boy-meets-girl tale, but when a pregnancy happens, it spurs bigger changes in their lives than just parenthood.

If a fun little rom-com is what your giftee loves to read, then look for *“We Could Be Heroes”* by **Philip Ellis** (Putnam, \$20.00). It’s a light tale of a chance encounter and a friendship that starts out small and becomes pretty super. You might want to wrap it up with *“Love and Hot Chicken”* by **Mary Liza Hartong** (Wm. Morrow, \$30), a sweet, funny story of two Tennessee women, a chicken shack, and amour.

If your giftee loves rom-coms, there are a bunch to choose from this fall. Consider *“The Ride of Her Life”* by **Jennifer Dugan** (Avon, \$17.99), a girl-meets-girl novel of a new ranch-owning horse-girl and the farrier who disagrees with her ranching ideas.

**Nonfiction for the LGBTQ+ Reader**

The person on your gift list who loves memoirs will devour *“Cactus Country”* by **Zoe Bossiere** (Abrams Press, \$27.00), the story of an eleven-year-old and a new start in which everyone sees him as the boy he is. But life as a trans boy isn’t easy in the beautiful area he’s come to embrace, and neither are the people who surround him. Wrap it up with *“The Long Hallway”* by **Richard Scott Larson** (University of Wisconsin Press, \$21.95), a memoir of a boy who identifies with a movie monster who helps him see that hiding parts of himself can help him come to terms with who he is.

For the Trans man or woman on your gift list, look for *“The Last Time I Wore a Dress”* by **Dylan Scholinski and Jane Meredith Adams** (Penguin Publishing), a story of abuse, bullying, mental anguish, and a happy ending. This book was first published more than 25 years ago but now has a new, satisfying and joyful ending... Wrap it up with *“Mama: A Queer Black Woman’s Story of a Family Lost and Found”* by **Nikkya Hargrove**, the tale of a love, responsibility, and more love.

If your giftee is exploring their sexuality, *“Fierce Desires: A New History of Sex and Sexuality in America”* by **Rebecca L. Davis** (Norton, \$35) might be a welcome gift. Have we come a long way, in understanding people’s sexuality? Yes and no – your giftee may have ideas about that.

**Younger Kids**

Here’s a book that the littlest kid will love, as long as Mom and Dad are on-board: *“Digging Into Nature”* by **Pooja Sarin Tandon, MD, MPH, FAAP,**

**and Danette Swanson Glassy, MD, FAAP** (American Academy of Pediatrics, \$19.95) With this book in hand, adults can create and cultivate a love of the outdoors for their toddler and preschooler. The activities are easy to do, fun, and kid-friendly.

If there’s someone in your family who’s gay, lesbian, or trans and your littlest giftee has questions, wrap up *“Hooray for She, He, Ze, and They!”* by **Lindz Amer, illustrated by Kip Alizadeh** (Simon & Schuster, \$18.99). It’s a book that explains pronouns in a way that kids can understand. Also try *“Gorgeously ME!”* by **Jonathan Van Ness, illustrated by Kamala Nair** (Penguin Flamingo, \$19.99), a book about everybody being their awesome, fabulous selves; and *“The Rainbow Parade”* by **Shane Jordan and Rick Hendrix, illustrated by Jieting Chen** (Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, \$18.99), a book full of Pride.

And for the little dog-lover on your list, you can’t go wrong if you give *“Brownie the War Dog”* by **Kelly Nelson, illustrated by Aaron Boyd** (Wisconsin Historical Society Press, \$17.95), the story of a brave dog who served in World War II. And if there’s a dog missing in your little one’s life, pair it with *“Find Momo Everywhere”* by **Andrew Knapp** (Quirk Books). It’s the story of love, loss, and remembrance.

**Kids Ages 9-13**

The adventurous giftee on your list will want to read *“Moko Magic: Carnival Chaos”* by **Tracey Baptiste** (Disney Hyperion, \$17.99), a kids novel about three cousins who learn one day that they have super powers that can protect their Brooklyn community. It’s a fun book and it’ll tickle your child’s imagination.

Kids who love the ocean will love receiving *“Super Ocean Weekend”* by **Gaelle Almeras** (Greystone Kids, \$21.95). Part fiction, part authentic science, it’s the just-right gift for the kid who loves marine life, too. For the kid who loves astronomy, too, look for *“A Kid’s Guide to the Night Sky”* by **John A. Read** (Sourcebooks, \$16.99)

The young dog lover on your gift list will truly enjoy getting *“Walkin’ the Dog”* by **Chris Lynch** (Simon & Schuster, \$17.99), the story of Louis, who’s about to enter public school for the first time, after having been home-schooled for years. Fortunately, to distract him from the drama, he takes a job walking the neighbor’s dog but that drama is never too far away...

**Young Adult / Teen Readers**

If there’s a young fantasy lover on your gift list, *“The Strange Tales of Oscar Zahn: Volume One”* by **Tri Voung** (Ten Speed Graphic, \$26.99) will fit their wish list. Oscar Zahn is a paranormal investigator with a strange assistant and their beat runs across several times and places. Told in graphic novel form, it’s a book teens will love.

Readers who thrilled to the Eragon series will absolutely want to see *“Murtagh”* by **Christopher Paolini** (Knopf, \$29.99) under the tree this year. Featuring one of the series’ best-loved characters, it’s got your dragons, your battles, and your magic. What more could a reader want?

For the teen who loves a book with a little bit of creepiness to it, wrap up *“Ruin Road”* by **Lamar Giles** (Scholastic, \$19.99). Cade Webster is a football star, but he’s also got powers that are welcome at first... but not forever. Wrap it up with *“MrBallen Presents Strange, Dark & Mysterious”* by **MrBallen, Illustrations by Andrea Mutti** (Ten Speed Graphic, \$24.99), a book of short, scary stories told in graphic-art format.

For the teen who likes a feel-good story with a touch of hope, *“Not Nothing”* by **Gayle Forman** (Aladdin, \$17.99) will be a welcome gift. It’s the story of a 12-year-old who’s done something “very very bad” and he’s sentenced by a judge to spend his entire summer volunteering at a retirement home. When he meets a man who’s nearly nine times his age, well, your giftee won’t be able to put this book down.

And now for the housekeeping: things change. Prices might go up or down. Authors might change. Covers might change. Books are no longer written on stone tablets, so beware. And while you’re shopping for the people on your gift list, don’t forget YOU. Season’s Readings!



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# Ten Health Recommendations for the New Year

Special to The Truth

Looking to improve your health in 2025 and beyond? Check out these recommendations from the American Medical Association:

**Make nutritional tweaks:** Reduce your intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and processed foods, especially those with added sodium and sugar. Drinking sugary beverages, even 100% fruit juices, is associated with a higher mortality risk, according to a study published in JAMA Network Open. Drink water and choose nutritious, whole foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry.

**Get active:** A recent study published in JAMA found that putting down the TV remote and going for a walk can improve healthy aging—highlighting the importance of small everyday habits. Adults should get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity.

**Get up-to-date:** Get your vaccines in advance of respiratory virus season—including the annual flu vaccine and the updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine for everyone six months and older, as well as pregnant people. People 65 and older and those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised should receive a second dose of the 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine six months later.

**RSV can be dangerous for older adults.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend those 75 and older, and 60 and older at high risk for severe RSV, get vaccinated. Immunizations are also available to protect babies from getting very sick from RSV. This is important because RSV is the leading cause of infant hospitalization nationwide.

**If you have questions,** speak with your physician and review trusted resources, including GetMyFluShot.org. You can also reduce the spread of respiratory viruses by covering coughs and sneezes, frequently washing your hands, wearing masks, improving air quality, and staying home if you are sick.

**Get screened:** Make an appointment for preventive care, tests and screenings to help your doctor spot certain conditions before they become more serious.

**Know your blood pressure numbers:** Visit ManageYourBP.org to understand your blood pressure numbers and take necessary steps to get hypertension under control. Doing so will reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke. If checking your blood pressure at home, visit ValidateBP.org to see if your device has been tested for accuracy.

**Learn your type 2 diabetes risk:** Take a 2-minute self-screening test at DoIHavePrediabetes.org. Steps you take now can help prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes, which carries a higher risk of heart disease, kidney disease and vision loss.

**Drink only in moderation:** If consuming alcohol, do so in moderation as defined by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans—up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men, and only by adults of legal drinking age.

**Quit tobacco and nicotine:** Ask your doctor for resources and guidance for quitting tobacco and nicotine. Declare your home and car smoke-free to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure.

**Follow dosage instructions:** When taking prescription opioids or other medications, store them safely to prevent diversion or misuse, and properly dispose of any leftover medication. If you're prescribed antibiotics, take the full course to prevent antibiotic resistance—a serious public health problem.

**Manage stress:** Good mental health is part of good overall health. Get sufficient sleep (at least 7.5 hours per night), exercise and ask for help from a mental health professional when you need it.

More health resources and tips can be found by visiting [ama-assn.org](http://ama-assn.org).

“The best way to address the post-holiday doldrums is to do something good for your health,” said Bruce A. Scott, M.D., president of the AMA. “Even small, positive choices you make now can have a big impact on your long-term wellbeing.”

*Courtesy StatePoint*

## Navigating Mental Health... continued from page 11

mands of the season, acknowledging your feelings can be the first step toward healing.”

**Set Realistic Expectations and Budgets**

“Perfection is not the goal,” Parinja explained.

Instead, focus on the moments of connection and the traditions that truly bring joy. Simplify your to-do list and let go of unnecessary pressures. Remember, it's the moments of connection that matter most, not the extravagance of the celebration.

Financial stress is a common challenge during the holidays. Setting a

realistic budget and sticking to it can alleviate a lot of anxiety. Thoughtful, inexpensive gifts or shared experiences can often mean more than material items. Your presence and thoughtfulness are more valuable than expensive presents.

**Manage Family Dynamics**

“Family gatherings can be both a source of joy and stress,” Parinja added. “Setting boundaries and communicating openly with loved ones can help. If certain topics are off-limits or you need a break, express your needs respectfully.”

It's okay to excuse yourself or leave early if a situation becomes overwhelming.

**Stay Connected**

Loneliness can be especially challenging during the holidays. According to a 2023 survey by the U.S. Surgeon General's office, one in three adults report experiencing loneliness regularly, and the holidays can amplify these feelings.

Reaching out to friends, family, or community groups can make a world of difference. Even virtual gatherings or phone calls can help foster a sense of connection. Volunteering can also be a fulfilling way to give back and build new relationships.

**Seek Professional Support When Needed**

If the holiday season feels unmanageable, consider reaching out to a mental health professional. “Therapy or counseling provides a safe space to explore your feelings and develop coping strategies,” Parinja noted.

Many organizations offer support groups specifically for those navigating holiday stress. Additionally, prioritize activities that rejuvenate you, whether it's reading a book, taking a walk, or practicing mindfulness. Small acts of self-care can make a big difference to your mental well-being.

**Remember, You're Not Alone**

“The holidays can be a challenging time for many people,” Parinja said. “Remember that you're not alone in your feelings, and there are resources and communities ready to support you. By taking small steps to care for yourself and connect with others, you can create a season that's meaningful and manageable.”

The holiday season is a time for giving - not just to others but also to yourself. By prioritizing your mental health and practicing compassion toward yourself, you can embrace the joy and connection that the holidays have to offer.

**Prestige School of Protocol**




## School Admissions and Job Interview Day Camp

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*Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity!*

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## Architectural & Engineering Services

The Toledo Regional Transit Authority (TARTA) intends to award a master agreement for an architectural and engineering firm or firms capable of providing on-call multi-discipline support services for various potential TARTA projects within Lucas County, Ohio.

Projects may involve one (1) or more TARTA facilities, program support and any future properties the agency may acquire. Current properties include:

- TARTA Central Avenue garage, 1127 Central Ave, Toledo, OH 43610
- TARTA Move paratransit office, 130 Knapp St, Toledo, OH 43604
- TARTA Transit Hub, 612 N Huron St, Toledo, OH 43604

TARTA reserves the right to award multiple firms. There is no guarantee of work through this solicitation.

The submission deadline for questions regarding this request for qualifications is Monday, December 23. Submissions must be delivered by 4 p.m. on Monday, December 30 through [opengov.com](http://opengov.com) (free to sign up, can follow TARTA for all future procurement notices) or to:

**Kattie Bond, Director of Capital Projects**

TARTA  
1127 Central Avenue  
Toledo, OH 43610

## DRAFT NOTICE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (“RFP”) FOR FURNITURE VENDOR SERVICES

The Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County (MHR SB) requests qualifications for a vendor to provide furniture and associated services in connection with Dani’s Place, an adult, residential mental health rehabilitation center for NW Ohio (Project) located on the campus of the Northwest Ohio Behavioral Hospital in Toledo. Hplex Solutions has been selected as Owner’s Rep (OR), and NAC has been selected as design professional (DP).

Services required include working with MHR SB, the OR, and the DP for order finalization and fabrication, storage, delivery, and installation of furniture products for the Dani’s Place project as indicated on the drawings and per the specifications planning & design, and at-risk construction of the Project.

As required by ORC 9.33, et seq., MHR SB requests proposals from experienced firms to provide services for the Project. The complete RFP may be obtained from the MHR SB website at <https://www.lcmhrsb.oh.gov/publicnotice/>.

Interested firms must submit **2 paper copies and 1 digital copy** of their proposal as outlined within the RFP available on the MHR SB website, to OR contact John Durda ([john@hplex.com](mailto:john@hplex.com)), Hplex Solutions, 65 Hidden Ravines Dr., Suite 100, Powell, OH 43065, no later than **12:00 pm on January 13, 2025**. Submittals received after this time may be considered solely in MHR SB’s discretion. Direct all questions to the DP and OR as noted in the RFP.

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## NOTICE

Will Ms. Marcia Ricketts or anyone who can provide information of her whereabouts kindly contact JULIANNE HEWITT, Attorney-at-Law whose address is

Shop C10,  
Shoppes of Pineapple,  
Sylvia Lawn,  
Main Street, Ocho Rios, Saint Ann, Jamaica,  
W.I.

Telephone – (876) 208-9667 and (876) 341-1165

Email address: [juliannehewitt@outlook.com](mailto:juliannehewitt@outlook.com)

Will Ms. Karen Ricketts or anyone who can provide information of her whereabouts kindly contact JULIANNE HEWITT, Attorney-at-Law whose address is

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Will Ms. Sophia Ricketts or anyone who can provide information of her whereabouts kindly contact JULIANNE HEWITT, Attorney-at-Law whose address is

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Will Ms. Waneka Ricketts or anyone who can provide information of her whereabouts kindly contact JULIANNE HEWITT, Attorney-at-Law whose address is

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Will Ms. Maxine Smalling or anyone who can provide information of her whereabouts kindly contact JULIANNE HEWITT, Attorney-at-Law whose address is

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# Bishop Marjorie Holt Brings Cheers To 167 Ella P. Stewart Academy For Girls

*Special to The Truth*

Not many had much to say on December 18th that was exclusive of a heartfelt THANK YOU to Marjorie Holt, DMin, a longtime community advocate, educator and bishop, who surprised all of the students at Ella P. Stewart Academy for Girls, kindergarten through six grades, with a new pair of tennis shoes to carry home at the end of their day.

Each class entered the gymnasium with an element of anticipation as they took their designated positions, accompanied by their teachers. And as the gymnasium continued to be filled with the students, an aura of excitement and joy was finding its place as each of them would soon experience the reason for which they had entered. While the teachers were aware of what would be happening, the students seemed to sense that they were becoming a part of something that they had no idea as to what was getting ready to happen.

The activity for the gifting of the tennis shoes to each student, had been set by Shannon Carter, principal. Prior to this day coming, Bishop Holt contacted Carter about this idea and eagerly anticipated that this day would come. Each teacher had been asked to provide the names and sizes of the students in their class.

After being introduced to the students, Holt spoke and provided them with a cheerful, positive chant and message as she asked them to repeat after her. She engaged them in a chant with these words: "If I can think it in my head, believe it in my heart, see it with my eyes, I can be somebody!"

The students shouted it out with an arousing, cheerful response, which was probably evident because they knew then that she had delivered each of them a new pair of tennis shoes. The shoes were topped off with a backpack that the shoes were placed in. The backpacks were donated by U.M.A.D.A.O.P. of Lucas County with bold words printed on them that read "SPREAD THE LOVE," which is a recent campaign that has taken off and gained traction and momentum at a fast pace in the community.

Holt stated that this was truly an act of LOVE. She further stated that she hopes that those of us who understand the importance of loving our children, especially during these critical times, would realize that our children still need a village. The message loud and clear by the bishop, with this phenomenal gift to the students at Ella P. Stewart, is to rethink how we can give of our time, talent, and don't be too narrow in our scope when investing in our young people.

Principal Carter stated that "this would be a day that the 167 students receiving shoes, would never forget!" Holt stated that she lives with this mantra, "To whom much is given, much is required" because "giving is living"

The teachers also shared the appreciation for this gesture and cheers and participated in dispensing the shoes to each student in their class. Giving is not an enigma nor is it strange to Holt. She has been a longtime advocate for children in this community. She retired from Lucas County Children Services in 2015 and is presently a Consultant at U.M.A.D.A.O.P. under the leadership of John Edwards, Sr., as well as senior pastor at Bethesda Christian Center. She states simply that she believes that as Builders and Visionaries, *we should pave the way, make the way, and prepare to get out of the way!*



*Bishop Marjorie Holt - center - and students*



# Annual Christmas Basket Give Away at Simply D'Vine Boutique

*By Dawn Scotland  
The Truth Reporter*

Terrie Cook, owner of Simply D'Vine Botique and the ladies of Gamma Phi Delta Sorority, Inc. held their annual Christmas basket give away at the boutique Saturday, December 21. Recipients lined outside the store doors before 9am to receive baskets of food including turkeys for the holiday.



The group gave away 50 baskets. Simply D'Vine boutique has hosted the event for 10 years and the with the sorority joining the effort four years ago.

Cook opened Simply D'Vine Boutique in August 2014 and brought to life an idea she had been nurturing for 19 years – a stylish boutique that offers something for every pocketbook and for a variety of tastes.

In addition to girls' and women's clothing, Cook also carries men's apparel – shirts, socks and ties. Men's suits are available to order. It's a small tidy shop with an abundance of goods.

Terri Cook and Simply D'Vine Boutique can be reached at 567-455-5940 or by email at simplydvinebtq@gmail.com. You can also view the shop's products by going to the website or Facebook page – Simply D'Vine Boutique.



*Gamma Phi Delta Sorority, Inc. including Terrie Cook, owner of Simply D'Vine Boutique (far left)*

