

"Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus; Another thing to fall" and
"Condemn the fault and not the actor of it?". ~ Angelo



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CIRCULATION
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November 20 - 26, 2025

Jimmie C. Gardner, Exonerated After 27 Years in Prison, Forms Foundation for Social Justice

By D. Kevin McNeir
Special to the AFRO
kmcneir@afro.com



Jimmie C. Gardner was on his way to stardom with the Chicago Cubs before being falsely accused by two elderly White women of sexual assault and robbery. After 27 years in prison, his conviction was overturned. Today, he has established a foundation to support others facing similar injustices. (Photo courtesy **Jimmie C. Gardner**)

In 1990, Jimmie C. Gardner, now 59, was a member of the Chicago Cubs Minor League team in Charleston, W. Va., pursuing his lifelong dream of playing professional baseball. But after two elderly White women falsely accused him of sexual assault and robbery, he was arrested, convicted and sentenced to 110 years in prison.

After serving 27 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, Gardner's conviction was overturned — one of

more than 140 cases in

which the state relied on falsified forensic evidence testimony by the chief serologist to secure a conviction.

The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia, while overturning the conviction, said Gardner's conviction was "not only a total miscarriage of justice," but that he "had been held in legal purgatory for 27 years."

In 2023, the Dawson, Ga., native found himself

Continue **Justice** Page 5

POLITICS

In Major Win for Rep. Al Green, Texas Maps Blocked by Federal Judge

By Lauren Burke



Rep. Al Green

In a ruling signed by a federal court and signed by a Judge nominated by President Donald Trump, new congressional maps created by the Texas GOP have been blocked.

The maps were recently changed in August after President Trump publicly urged Texas Republicans to redraw the congressional maps to pick up five more GOP seats. Republicans in the Texas state legislature then took action that would help the Republican party keep control of the U.S. House majority in the 2026 midterm elections. Currently

US Mint presses final pennies as production ends after more than 230 years

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

Facing Fire and Funding Cuts, Farmer Fights to Save His Land

By Megan Sayles
AFRO Staff Writer
msayles@afro.com



New York farmer David Haughton is seeking donations after a fire destroyed his home in August 2025. The disaster came on the heels of federal funding cuts that eliminated many of Haughton's customers and threatened his farm's survival. (Photo courtesy of **David Haughton**).

New York farmer David Haughton had hoped the end of the COVID-19 pandemic would bring relief from his revenue challenges. But just as he began to recover, new funding gaps under the 47th president's administration brought hardship back to his farm. In March 2025, the U.S. Department of Ag-

riculture (USDA) announced that it would cancel the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) Cooperative Agreement Program, which had helped farmers like Haughton sell produce while supplying fresh food to communities in need.

Haughton's major customers, like The Campaign Against Hunger and Grow-

NYC, were directly affected.

"Because of the cut, we actually lost 60 percent of our market," said Haughton. "Some of them dropped out. Some of them we will have to wait a period of time to get money [from]. Some of them still owe me money."

The LFPA program was

created in 2021 under former President Joe Biden to help farmers cope with pandemic-related challenges.

It provided funding to states to purchase produce from local farmers and then distribute it to food banks and other hunger-relief organizations. The

Continue **Land** Page 6

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The U.S. ended production of the penny Wednesday, abandoning the 1-cent coins that were embedded in American culture for more than 230 years but became nearly worthless.

When it was introduced in 1793, a penny could buy a biscuit, a candle or a piece of candy. Now most of them are cast aside to sit in jars or junk drawers, and each one costs nearly 4 cents to make.

"God bless America, and we're going to save the taxpayers \$56 million," Treasurer Brandon Beach said at

the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia before hitting a button to strike the final penny. The coins were then carefully placed on a tray for journalists to see. The last few pennies were to be auctioned off.

Billions of pennies are still in circulation and will remain legal tender, but new ones will no longer be made.

Other coins have been discontinued, but the half-penny in 1857 was the last U.S. coin to be discontinued because of its low value, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.

Most penny production ended over the summer, officials said. During the final pressing, workers at the mint stood quietly on the factory floor as if bidding farewell to an old friend.

When the last coins emerged, the men and women broke into applause and cheered one another.

"It's an emotional day," said Clayton Crotty, who has worked at the mint for 15 years. "But it's not unexpected."

President Donald Trump ordered the penny's demise as costs climbed and the 1-cent valuation became vir-

tually obsolete.

"For far too long the United States has minted pennies which literally cost us more than 2 cents," Trump wrote in an online post in February. "This is so wasteful!"

Still, many Americans have a nostalgia for them, seeing pennies as lucky or fun to collect. And some retailers voiced concerns in recent weeks as supplies ran low and the end of production drew near. They said the phaseout was abrupt and came with no government

Continue **Mint** Page 3



Recognizing #BLACK EXCELLENCE for 78 Years



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RELIGIOUS/NEWS

The Believers' Conduct in Relation to Unjust Suffering

I Peter 2:18-25



Rev. Johnny Calvin Smith

In this marvelous epistle, Peter is writing to Jewish believers struggling in the midst of persecution. Although they were indeed believers who were "elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ (I Peter 1:2), they were not immune or exempt from suffering and trials. In the midst of their persecution, Peter reminds them of their roots. They have been born again to a living hope, and therefore, both their character and conduct can be above reproach as they imitate the Holy One who called them. The fruit of these believers' character will be manifested in actions rooted in submission as they imitate the example of Christ!

I Peter 2:18-25 may be outlined as follows: I. The Exhorta-

tion for Servants to be Subject to their Masters – I Peter 2:18-20; II. The Example of the Sufferings of Christ – I Peter 2:21-25.

I. The Exhortation for Servants to be Subject to their Masters – I Peter 2:18-20

It is interesting that neither Peter nor Paul attacks slavery as an institution! However, Peter exhorts servants to be subject to their masters. As believers, we are to be the best employees on our jobs, and we demonstrate that fact by being subject to our managers. We are to be in submission to our managers even when they are unreasonable and hard to get along with! We are to be subject to them as long as they are not asking us to do that which is contrary to our Christian belief!

In verse 18, in essence, Peter calls on servants to submit vol-

untarily to their masters. He states a principle. Submission does not depend on the character of the master. Peter exhorts the servants to be in subjection to both the considerate and unreasonable masters (v. 18). In verses 19-20, Peter states that suffering unjust punishment is commendable; however, nothing is admirable in suffering when we are punished for doing wrong.

Having observed "The Exhortation for Servants to be Subject to their Masters" – I Peter 2:18-20, now let us observe "The Example of the Sufferings of Christ" – I Peter 2:21-25.

II. The Example of the Sufferings of Christ – I Peter 2:21-25

Peter says that we as believers are called to follow Christ (v. 21). Peter uses Jesus Christ as

the Supreme model who suffered unjustly. Using Christ as the Supreme One who suffered, Peter says that Christ suffered sinlessly in verse 22, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth." Not only did He suffer sinlessly in verse 22, but in verse 23 He suffered silently! Jesus accepted injustice without retaliating, assured that God would vindicate Him (v. 23). Not only did He suffer sinlessly in verse 22, silently in verse 23, but He also suffered as our Supreme Substitute, verse 24. God used Jesus' death "so that we might die to sins and live unto righteousness" (v. 24).

We have been healed of the malady of sin by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. We were spiritually healed by the awesome sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ suffered a vicarious, substitutionary death for our sins.

Finally, in verse 25, not only has Christ provided salvation, but He also gives guidance and protection to those who commit themselves to His care.

Yes, Jesus Christ, the One who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, completely paid for our salvation. The hymn writer wrote:

Jesus Paid it All

*I hear the savior say
"Thy strength indeed is
small;
Child of weakness, watch
and pray
Find in me thine all in all."*

*Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain -
He washed it white as snow.*

May God Bless!

Continued Mint Page 1

guidance on how to handle transactions.

Some businesses rounded prices down to avoid shortchanging shoppers. Others pleaded with customers to bring exact change. The more creative among them gave out prizes, such as a free drink, in exchange for a pile of pennies.

"We have been advocating abolition of the penny for 30 years. But this is not the way we wanted it to go," Jeff Leonard of the National Association of Convenience Stores said last month.

Proponents of eliminating the coin cited cost

savings, speedier check-outs at cash registers and the fact that some countries have already eliminated their 1-cent coins.

Canada, for instance, stopped minting its penny in 2012.

Some banks began rationing supplies, a somewhat paradoxical result of the effort to address what many see as a glut of the coins. Over the last century, about half the coins made at mints in Philadelphia and Denver have been pennies.

But they cost far less to produce than the nickel, which costs nearly 14 cents to make. The diminutive dime, by comparison, costs less than 6 cents

to produce, and the quarter nearly 15 cents.

No matter their face value, collectors and historians consider them an important historical record. Frank Holt, an emeritus professor at the University of Houston who has studied the history of coins, laments the loss.

"We put mottoes on them and self-identifiers, and we decide — in the case of the United States — which dead persons are most important to us and should be commemorated," he said. "They reflect our politics, our religion, our art, our sense of ourselves, our ideals, our aspirations."

Black members of Congress: Rep. Green, Rep. Marc Veasey and Rep. Jasmine Crockett.

Texas Democrat Marc Veasey also spoke with Black Press USA on Capitol Hill.

"We won this round — obviously we have to go to the Supreme Court — that will move very quickly. We won't have to wait long for that, it will happen very fast," Veasey said walking through a Capitol Hill basement on his way to the House floor on November 18.

"It's like 2011 all over again. After we won that

one and there was blatant discrimination back then. This case was even more blatant. All the lies that were told on why they did redistricting," Veasey added.

"This decision will obviously be appealed," Rep. Bobby Scott of Virginia said after hearing the news on the Texas maps. "It will go directly to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court, when it feels like it, could act on a temporary basis. They could set aside the injunction or they could let it stand. The next Supreme Court decision could be soon. They have

a December 8 filing deadline," Rep. Scott pointed out.

The decision by the Supreme Court may or may not upset plans in other states that are set to change their congressional lines in reaction to what Texas Republicans did in August.

Or perhaps not: Democrats in Virginia, Maryland and California moved swiftly to make sure they are in position to counter redrawn congressional lines by Republicans who are tipping the scale ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

NURSERY RHYMES

(Solution will appear in November 27 edition)

ACROSS

- Type of haircut, pl.
- Tiny helper
- *What rain does in famous nursery rhyme
- What accomplices do
- Ring like a bell
- Sign of life
- Lascivious look
- Pretentiously artistic
- Tiny island
- *Bring her back! (2 words)
- Nicholas II of Russia, e.g.
- Inmate with life sentence
- *One for Sorrow (Two for ____)
- Melville's "Pequod," e.g.
- More fancy
- Request for tailor
- Encoded message
- Land measure
- Omit
- *Hush-a-bye, baby. ____ still"
- Take a base
- Hokkaido native
- Veal serving
- Beehive State native
- What Cupid did (2 words)
- *Tip me over!
- Lt.'s inferior
- Plant louse
- "Pay as you earn" tax system
- *How do your ears wobble? (3 words)
- Sacha Cohen's middle name
- Render speechless
- Medley
- Apathetic
- Not tanned
- Nearly
- Bird's groomer
- It's open to interpretation
- #57 Down, pl.

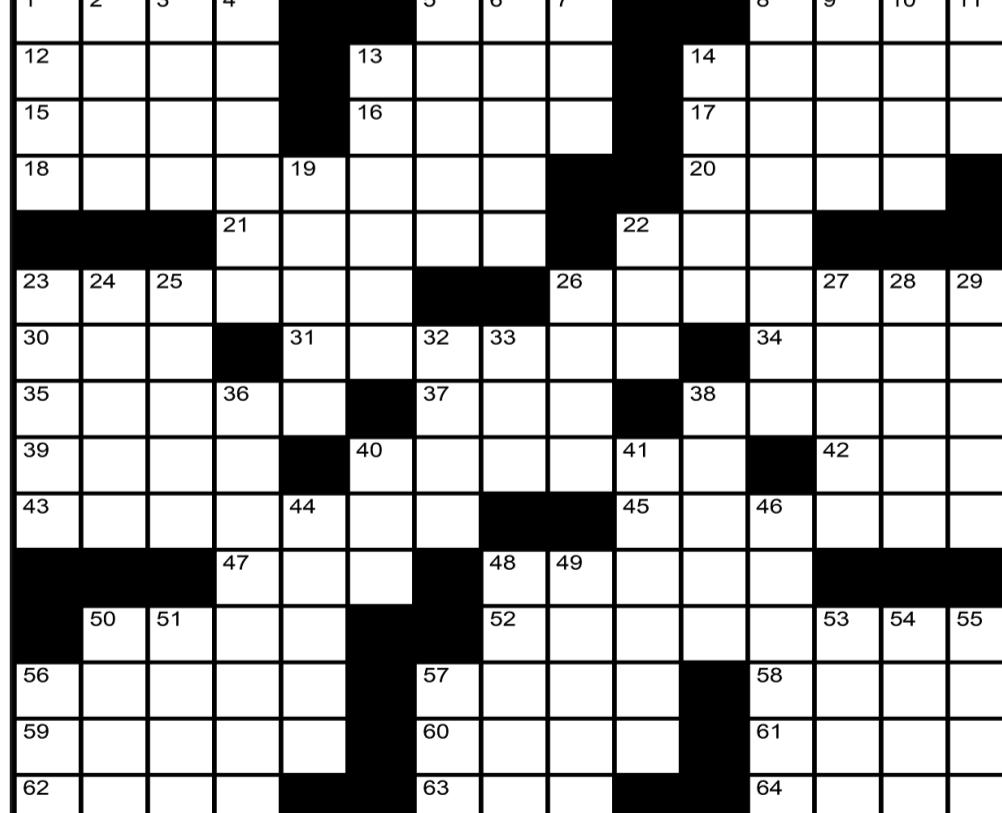
DOWN

- It's soothing
- Do as directed
- British Broadcasting Corporation, colloquially
- Take a leisurely walk
- Chill-inducing
- Procrastinator's word
- *What the old lady swallowed
- *She's been to London to visit the Queen
- Paella pot
- ____-friendly
- Expose to moisture
- One way to cook fish
- Mountain climber's spike
- Brother's daughter
- *Who stole the cookie from the cookie ____?
- Semolina source
- Sunny prefix
- Kind of acid
- Perceive by touch
- Frost over (2 words)
- One of the Muses
- Find new tenant
- *What Jack Horner pulled out
- Not miss
- * ____ of ___, he had ten thousand men
- Beer garden mug
- Post-Soviet Union alliance, acr.
- C2H6, flammable gas
- With regard to, archaic
- Software plug-ins
- Rose oil
- Young chicken
- Window glass
- Geometric calculation
- Buy and resell
- Baltic capital
- Sounds of amazement
- Baby's apron
- Self-care resort

Statepoint Crossword Puzzle

Theme: NURSERY RHYMES

CROSSWORD



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Consumer Cellular

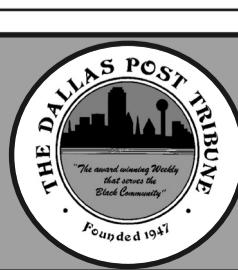
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the "Oldest Black-Owned Newspaper" serving North Texas




SPORTS/NEWS PAGE

7 Day Weather Forecast for DFW

Thursday, Nov. 20



H - 77°

L - 64°



H - 77°

L - 55°

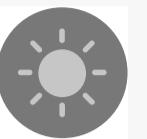
Friday, Nov. 21



H - 77°

L - 55°

Saturday, Nov. 22



H - 73°

L - 56°

Sunday, Nov. 23



H - 72°

L - 60°

Monday, Nov. 24



H - 71°

L - 57°

Tuesday, Nov. 25



H - 68°

L - 53°

Wednesday, Nov. 26



H - 67°

L - 49°

Continued Justice Page 1

again accused, arrested and put on house arrest for 17 months before being exonerated after a witness retracted her statement.

Gardner said his faith in God and the support of his family and friends have made him stronger, convincing him that he needed to do something to help others who have undergone or continue to face similar experiences of injustice.

"I was given a second chance twice and I'm grateful, but I never allowed it to make me bitter," he said. "Being in prison for so long taught me patience and I realized that I had to forgive those who knowingly sought my conviction. That wasn't easy, but I knew that anger, like cancer, would only rot and destroy me from within if I allowed it."

Today, Gardner is a highly sought after motivational speaker who shares his testimony in prisons, at churches, and at business meetings across the U.S. He has also formed a non-profit, Gardner House LLC, as a means of providing support and resources to others wrongfully trapped within the prison industrial complex.

"I knew that I had to sound the alarm because it's clear to me that America does not want Black men to succeed," he said. "I see it as an attack on Blackness and we need to be more aware so we can fight the evil forces that seek our demise. The success we achieved during the Civil Rights Movement now stands in jeopardy and it's not by chance but by design."

A report by the National Registry of Exonerations found that Black individuals are about seven times more likely to be wrongfully convicted of serious crimes than White people.



Gardner, pictured with his wife, federal Judge Leslie Abrams Gardner, spent 27 years behind bars because of false testimony. (Photo courtesy Jimmie C. Gardner)

tionately affected by false accusations and wrongful convictions in the U.S. justice system, facing higher rates of police misconduct, racial bias in charging and sentencing, and wrongful convictions for drug crimes and murder compared to their White counterparts.

Historical examples, like the Scottsboro Boys and the case of Ronnie Long, illustrate the devastating impact of racial bias, which can be exacerbated by factors such as faulty eyewitness identifications, prosecutorial misconduct and inadequate legal representation.

Gardner said he hopes his foundation will support efforts led by organizations like the Innocence Project (<http://www.innocenceproject.org>) that have helped to free or exonerate people since 1992, nearly 60 percent of whom are Black.

"It cost me more than \$1 million to gain my release," he said. "I think a lot of it had to do with my family, specifically my wife, the Honorable Judge Leslie Abrams Gardner

being the chief U.S. district judge for the Middle District of Georgia, and my sister-in-law, former Georgia Congresswoman Stacey Abrams, who continues to fight against voter suppression.

"But I'm still here — we're still here. And no matter how far you fall, you can always get back up. Blacks stand on the shoulders of our ancestors who achieved greatness despite the odds against them. It's my duty to give back and to lend a hand for the next generation."

Jimmie C. Gardner (left), a former Chicago Cubs Minor League standout, has established a foundation to support those who, like him, were wrongfully convicted and eventually exonerated. Gardner, pictured with his wife, federal Judge Leslie Abrams Gardner, spent 27 years behind bars because

Black men are disproportionately affected by false accusations and wrongful convictions in the U.S. justice system, facing higher rates of police misconduct, racial bias in charging and sentencing, and wrongful convictions for drug crimes and murder compared to their White counterparts.

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DALLAS CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING OF FIFA WORLD CUP 2026™ VOLUNTEER CENTER

The FIFA Volunteer Center will be located at the Food and Fiber Pavilion at Fair Park

DALLAS (November 18, 2025) - The North Texas FWC Organizing Committee, in coordination with the City of Dallas, announced the grand opening of Dallas' FIFA World Cup 2026™ Volunteer Center at The Food and Fiber Pavilion at Fair Park, which will serve as the central hub for training and supporting volunteers in preparation for FIFA World Cup 2026™.

2026™, while also aiming to educate all volunteers about the history of the FIFA World Cup™ and the impact and role Dallas and the North Texas region will play in 2026 and beyond.

Beginning today and over the coming weeks ahead, an expected 15,000 applicants are expected to attend Volunteer Team Tryouts in person at the Food and Fiber Pavilion in

hopes of becoming one of 6,100 volunteers for Dallas and the North Texas region — the second-largest pool of volunteers required by any Host City.

"Dallas is gearing up to take the spotlight on the global stage with the World Cup next year, and our volunteers are essential to making this event a success," said Dallas Mayor Eric L. Johnson. "Dallas's community-focused vol-

unteer spirit is unmatched, and I'm excited to see our volunteers serve as outstanding Dallas ambassadors as we showcase our renowned Texas hospitality to the world."

In coordination with FIFA, the North Texas FWC Organizing Committee has developed a volunteer strategy tailored to Dallas' unique tournament footprint - including nine matches, a semifinal, the scale of the city's FIFA Fan Festival™ - to fill key areas and roles with volunteers. Once selected, volunteers will be placed in a role which could range from Accreditation, Ceremonies, Fan and Guest Operations, Language Services and Host City Ambassadors, to name a few, with role offers being sent out between January and March 2026.



Made with PosterMyWall.com



Statepoint Crossword Puzzle

Solution: November 13 ~ THANKSGIVING



Dallas Bar Association

Dallas Lawyers Answer Legal Questions via E-Clinic

Volunteer attorneys will answer legal questions at no cost from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Wednesdays in December, via a LegalLine E-Clinic, sponsored by the Dallas Bar Association.

To participate, complete the online form found here <https://tinyurl.com/DBALegalLine> for the upcoming LegalLine. This month's LegalLine E-Clinics are **December 3, December 10, and December 17, between 4:00-8:00 p.m.** A volunteer attorney will call the participant to provide up to 15 minutes of free legal advice for your legal issue. **Space is limited.** Registration will close at Noon on the Tuesday prior.

Please note that the volunteer attorney will remain anonymous. Participants should watch for a call from an unknown number that should be labeled "No Caller ID" or something similar. No attorney-client relationship will be established. We cannot guarantee that the attorney will speak any language other than English. Individuals may also receive referrals to local, legal, or social service agencies.

For legal assistance any time, contact the DBA's Lawyer Referral Service at www.dallasbar.org/index.cfm?pg=LawyerReferralService.

My Day

Veteran's Day Overtime: The Bravest Generation

By Dr. J. Ester Davis



2. James Scott USMC (Retired)



3. General Richard Dix, US Army (Retired)



#1. Lt. Colonel Clyde Orr (Retired)

Photo #1. A Living Legend. A Distinguished Career

Lt. Colonel Clyde Orr (Retired) is a hero living among us. He is a dedicated member of New Hope Baptist Church, Dallas. In my first interview with him after church one Sunday about five years ago, he was masterful in his accounting of his days in service for our country. Included in his days as an instructor for the United States Army was a student we all know now as General Colin Powell. And he remembered the 'young man'.

We thank you for your service. We are so grateful. God's richest blessings continue.

#2. James Scott USMC

(Retired), spent 28 years as an active duty Marine. He was very proud of his days as a champion wrestler on the Marine Corps' Wrestling Team. He and his family had endless memories of their duty station and time stationed in Hawaii and his days as a Drill Instructor, Parrish Island, North Carolina. A proud family man, the Scotts had eight(8)children and a joyous marriage of at least (4)decades. In 2015, I was the honored speaker at the Black Marine Reunion held in Reno, Nevada, and a blogger for their network.

#3. This is one of my all-time favorite stories.

General Richard Dix, US Army (Retired), was highly and fondly remem-

bered by soldiers who came home from one of the recent wars. The VA Hospital, Dallas, is reportedly one of the largest and best hospitals in the nation. A group of soldiers invited General Dix to stop in Dallas for a brief visit. He was actually on his way somewhere else. I was asked to set up a simple, timely schedule for his visit. I was profoundly and absolutely naïve about the necessary protocol, plus duties and details attached to a black General-in-Uniform. I am using the word 'black' because we do not see many of them in person. This "General" received high marks and praise reports from his fellow men and women in uniform. The date and time finally ar-

rived. Everything was in order. The entourage proceeded to the floors where he would be visiting with some of the soldiers. Meanwhile, on the main floor, a lady approached me asking how long "this General Dix" has been in the building. Her request was for us to detain the General while she went to obtain her husband from "dialysis". She finished with '....my husband cannot miss this'. And he did not. To this day, I have no idea who this couple was.

Thank you, America and.... Beyond for your fellowship. And to publishers for this opportunity.

EsterDavis2000@gmail.com

program especially sought to support small and minority farmers, who often face greater obstacles than their counterparts.

Facing Fire and Funding Cuts, Farmer Fights to Save His Land

\$20 million integrated capital fund to help Black farmers scale their operations and economic and social impact.

"With folks, like farmer Dave, they need support relative to marketing, branding, as well as financial and production support because they have to grow based on demand," said Marcellin. "As far as the Black Farmers Fund, we provide those levels of technical assistance to help them identify some of these challenges and areas of need so that they can understand their business better and figure out what they need to focus on to optimize their growth potential."

BFF ultimately provided Haughton with a grant that helped him save both his farm and home. He was also able to buy new equipment and hire a few part-time workers.

However, in August 2025, a fire ravaged his home—destroying part of the house, ruining personal belongings and supplies and flooding the basement. Haughton has set up a GoFundMe to help him with recovery.

Despite the struggles he's encountered, Haughton remains committed to being a farmer. It's been in his blood since growing up on a 14-acre farm in Jamaica.

"Farmers are heroes, and farmers feed heroes," said Haughton. "We face the most challenging times, whether it's climate change or the market falling. I wish that the federal government or even some of these financial institutions wouldn't just look at us but help us."

Plant-Based Diets Reduce High Blood Pressure, Prostate Cancer, Heart Disease, and More

Plant Based Diets Reduce High Blood Pressure, Prostate Cancer, Heart Disease, and More

THE AFRO — Animal protein and fast foods as a norm in your diet means that animal fat, preservatives, salt, chemicals and who knows what are also norms in your diet. A five-dollar value meal can buy a week's worth of healthy beans, rice, and greens without fatback and pork. You don't have to buy something; you have to stop buying animal protein. A plant-based diet will do the following:

- Reverse and prevent diseases and conditions that particularly plague communities of color and poor communities
- Make unaffordable medical attention and medical treatment largely unnecessary
- Give you better health
- Give you a better quality of life
- Give you a longer life

The opinions expressed in this commentary are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the AFRO.

Fourth graders explore future medical careers at Otto Fridia's new innovation lab

By Molly Schrader



Photo Credit: The HUB

In Otto M. Fridia Elementary School's innovation lab, fourth graders aren't just playing pretend; they're diagnosing patients, fitting casts, and discovering medical careers.

"We plan to use the lab as a part of our strategy to create an environment where curiosity drives the lesson," Christofor Stephens, principal, said. "Students will walk in excited, and walk out talking about what they experienced. It gives them space to take risks, try new ideas, and see learning come alive in ways that are hands-on, joyful, and meaningful."

Through a partnership with United to Learn and STEMscapes Collab &

Play Spaces, the lab invites students to take on roles such as surgeon, physical therapist, receptionist, and clinic staff.

Equipped with real casts, anatomy models, stationary bikes, exam tables, X-rays, and medical supplies, it provides students with the opportunity to interact with, examine, and explore the tools of the medical field.

Students can also engage in collaborative problem-solving and communication exercises using custom lab coats, clipboards with scenarios, and a fully stocked receptionist area with phones, a cash register, and time math manipulatives.

The innovation lab also serves as an early bridge

into the district's Pathways in Technology learning model. Through P-TECH, students can earn a high school diploma and up to 60 hours of college credit at no cost, providing them with a head start in medical and other STEM careers.

Fridia's feeder pattern campus, South Oak Cliff High School, offers opportunities in technology and business, and now Fridia students have a space where they can begin developing their own unique skillsets. The lab mirrors the types of learning environments they'll experience in high school and beyond.

The lab helps students

picture themselves in roles they've only heard of, such as doctors, nurses, technicians, and engineers, Stephens said.

For him, as an alum of both Fridia and South Oak Cliff High School, this project is a personal one.

"By the time they get to SOC, students won't just be familiar with STEM, they'll be ready to thrive," Stephens said. "We want them to build confidence, see themselves as problem-solvers, and understand that careers in health and science are not distant dreams; they're real possibilities for their future. This is the legacy of learning that we want our Longhorns to experience."

Continued Page 1