

Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but today is a gift.
That's why it's called the present.

- Bil Keane



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SERVING THE BLACK COMMUNITY WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR SINCE 1947

September 7 - 13, 2023

HEALTH

New COVID-19 Variant, "Pirola," Raises Concerns Amidst Ongoing Crises

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent@StacyBrownMedia

Amidst a news cycle that now routinely features wildfires, former president indictments, and extreme weather events, the world is grappling with the resurgence of COVID-19 as a new and concerning variant, BA.2.86, emerges. This variant, informally dubbed "Pirola," has ignited alarm among public health experts due to its substantial spike protein mutations.

Dr. Scott Roberts, an infectious diseases special-

ist at Yale Medicine, warned that Pirola exhibits over 30 spike protein mutations compared to the previously dominant XBB.1.5 variant in the United States. The spike protein is critical for the virus's entry into human cells, and such a high number of mutations raises red flags. In an online Yale Medicine article, Dr. Roberts compared the the mutation count to the shift

Continue **Pirola** Page 3

Essay: Fifth Ward, Houston, 1952 — One Girl's Story

In this excerpt from her new memoir, "Up Home," Ruth J. Simmons recalls moving to Houston at age 6 from rural East Texas. She would go on to serve as president of Smith College, Brown University and Prairie View A&M.

BY RUTH J. SIMMONS/The Texas Tribune



Family photo taken in May 1957 in Houston. Photo Credit: Courtesy of Ruth Simmons

This essay is an excerpt from Ruth J. Simmons' memoir "Up Home: One Girl's Journey," published today by Random House. Simmons, born in 1945 in Daly, East Texas, the youngest of 12 children of sharecroppers, served as president of Smith College (1995-2001), Brown University (2001-12) and Prairie View A&M (2012-23). Watch the Tribune's Q&A with Simmons on her new book. On September 23 in Austin, she will speak at The Texas Tribune Festival on a panel about race and higher education, and sign copies of her book.

In the summer of 1952, we piled our few belongings into my brother-in-law's pickup truck and moved 111 miles south to Houston. Latexo had been a happy place for me, a place of starting school, finding friendship outside my family, and beginning to discover what I wanted for my future. Mentors like my elementary school teacher in Grapeland, Miss Ida Mae Henderson — in school, church, and the community — introduced me to an idea

of how different life could be for Blacks, even with the limitations of enforced segregation. Moving to Houston disrupted for a time my growing comfort with these new experiences and people. I had never visited my older siblings in the city and felt anxious about this faraway place.

I imagine that my fun-loving, gregarious father, Isaac Stubblefield, looked forward to the move to a

Continue **Ruth** Page 2

Today marks 5 years since Botham Jean's murder in Dallas

By FOX 4 Staff
Published September 6, 2023 9:12AM

DALLAS - Family and friends of a man shot and killed by a Dallas police officer five years ago today are encouraging people to spread acts of service and kindness in his honor.

Botham Jean died on Sept. 6, 2018.

Former Dallas police officer Amber Guyger

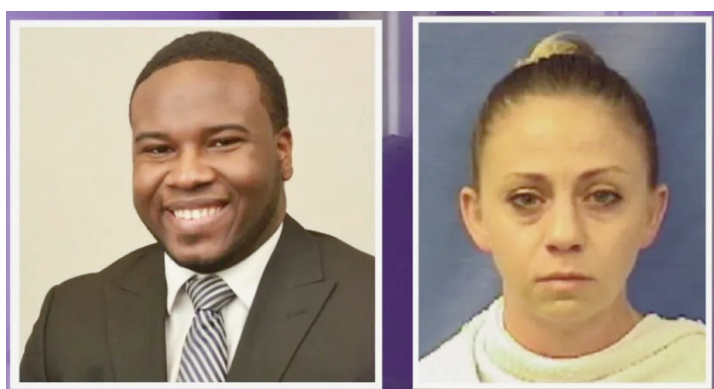


Photo Credit: Screenshot FOX4 News

shot him after walking into his apartment, believing it was her own.

Guyger is now serving a 10-year prison sentence for the murder.

Jean's sister, Allisa Charles-Findley, released a book this week detailing her healing process over the past five years.

Public Utility Commission of Texas Secures \$540,513 in Refunds and Bill Credits for Texas Consumers in Fiscal Year 2023

Austin, Texas — The Public Utility Commission of Texas secured refunds and bill credits of \$540,513 for Texas electric, water and telecommunications consumers in fiscal year 2023 (Sept. 2022 — Aug. 2023). The

agency's Consumer Protection Division (CPD) team of 23 employees assisted 11,559 consumers who submitted informal complaints related to billing or other issues across the three industries the PUCT regulates.



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EDITORIAL PAGE

Will The Former President's Co-defendants Need To Start Go Fund Me Accounts For Their Trials?

By James B. Ewers Jr. Ed.D.



James B. Ewers Jr. Ed.D.

The Republican waters are raging these days. They seem to be at high tide depending upon your perspective. It appears the Trump supporters don't have life jackets. Their power, once found, is now lost.

Eighteen co-defendants plus Donald Trump have now been formally charged in Fulton County Georgia. Their mug shots were taken and are in the public square for all to see.

As this unfolds, if you are a Republican, what are you thinking? The leading candidate for your party's nomination is facing both federal and state charges.

How can you defend him? Your words and rationale are empty. They

have no standing. Are you embarrassed yet? Like me, you know what is at stake. Mr. Trump may have some in the GOP believing him however I believe silently many are beginning to leave him.

Let's zero in on Trump and the other 18 who are charged with numerous counts and what the future holds for them.

Like most Americans, they know that the rule of law applies to them, too. The District Attorney of Fulton County, Fani Willis gave them a deadline in order to come in and be formally booked. They complied.

While Mr. Trump boarded his private airplane with his usual bravado, he followed the rules and was in Atlanta prior to the deadline.

All had to post bonds in order not to go to jail. There was one defendant, Harrison William Prescott Floyd who didn't post bond and ended up spending some time in the Fulton County jail. Mr. Floyd, according to reports is African American and is a part of the group, Black Voices

for Trump.

Mr. Floyd spent some days in jail before being released last week after posting a bond which was \$100,000.00.

He is also accused of assaulting an FBI agent in Maryland some months ago. That case is also related to his support of Donald Trump.

The dates for these trials will be coming up during the coming months. The trial for Kenneth Chesebro will begin on October 23rd as he wanted a speedy trial. He is charged with seven felony counts. I believe Mr. Chesebro thought that the prosecution would not be ready. He was wrong.

Another reason for him wanting a speedy trial was to disassociate himself with Donald Trump. He realizes, maybe too late now, that being connected to Donald Trump is simply bad business. These are my opinions.

As these cases unfold, I wouldn't be too surprised to see some co-defendants provide damaging evidence against Mr. Trump. Why? At the end of the day, nobody wants to go to

jail. Just ask Ethan Nordean and Dominic Pezzola, both members of the Proud Boys.

Nordean was sentenced to 18 years in prison and Pezzola was sentenced to 10 years in prison. More of these Trump supporters will be sending some time behind bars soon.

Trump cares nothing about them or anyone connected to his nefarious and questionable ways. Now, it is every man and every woman for themselves. They will get no special favors from him.

Defendants will need lots of money for their defense. Is Trump going to give them any of his money? We know the answer to that question. It is a resounding no!

If you are a Trump ally or foot soldier in any way, get ready to start a Go Fund Me effort. Go Fund Me for the political destruction and torment that I find myself in these days. Go Fund Me for the poor decision-making that has affected my family and me. Finally, Go Fund Me because I thought Mr. Trump was going to fund me.

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Continued Ruth Page 1

large city, but my mother, Fannie Campbell, would have been apprehensive, filled with concerns about how the move would affect her youngest children. In spite of the harsh working conditions, meager pay, trenchant segregation, and minimal services afforded the Black community in the Grapeland area, we managed to have a life that, by virtue of our ignorance of the severity of its deprivation and the company of so many Blacks who shared our state, was satisfying on many levels. Our extended family in Grapeland added to our comfort, for few things tamed our inclination to be anxious better than the presence of scores of relatives nearby. Now we would have to start over without the secure embrace of the Stubblefields and my mother's clans, the Campbells and the Johnsons. The fact that the help and guidance of my brothers and sister already in the Houston area awaited us was my only comfort.

In 1952, Houston was already a brash, ambitious city, aspiring to be the center of commerce for the Southwest. With its appetite for growth and prosperity, the Texas identity, already much mythologized,

extended across all segments of the state's population, including Blacks and Hispanics. Blacks, too, sported cowboy boots and ten-gallon hats, listened to country music, and spoke Black dialect with a noticeable country twang. The meal of choice was Texas bar-b-que with potato salad and beans, and there never seemed to be quite enough of it in spite of every Black father aspiring to master the art of smoking the meats to tender perfection.

Despite a few big-city refinements brought by a growing array of cultural institutions, Houston proudly cultivated stereotypical Texas roughness and indifference to northern ways. However, Black Houstonians, even those proudly steeped in the cowboy tradition, accepted that their brand of Texas swag was still tempered by the constraints of segregation and discrimination. Their lives remained separate and unequal.

Arriving in Fifth Ward from the fields of Houston County, we expected little. One of six wards, the area just two miles from downtown Houston had been settled by freedmen following the Civil War. The community bounded by Lyons

Avenue, Liberty Road, Lockwood Drive, and Jensen Drive was by 1952 a busy settlement of modest wooden houses arrayed helter-skelter on lots of varying sizes. It was difficult to apprehend an organizing principle in the area. Bounded by those four main arteries, the residents had developed food stores, churches, funeral homes, juke joints, and other essential services wherever space could be found. Two elementary schools, a junior high school, and a high school offered enrollment to the neighborhood's children, who could, for the most part, walk to one of these institutions. In segregated Houston, all Fifth Ward residents were Black, making the area feel like a much larger version of the Murray Farm in Grapeland. There was little governmental effort to afford residents the necessities that other communities took for granted. Health care had been nonexistent until five years earlier, when private donors and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception decided to build a hospital to serve the area. Saint Elizabeth's Hospital stood handsomely on Lyons Avenue, joining E. O. Smith Junior High School as one

of the two most distinguished looking buildings in the entire ward.

As sharecroppers and farmers migrated to Fifth Ward in the '40s and '50s, the area began to earn a reputation for the more outrageous misdeeds of some of its denizens. Many of the new arrivals were so poor that they had to live communally. Dotted the erratic, unzoned grid of this area were mostly small shotgun-type houses with little appeal beyond the shelter they afforded. Combined with the shabbiness of some houses and the open ditches that ran along the streets, the neighborhood had a look of neglect that I noticed even as a six-year-old. It was fitting, then, that the Southern Pacific Railroad would build a large train yard in the area, completing the sense that "anything goes" in Fifth Ward.

My oldest brother and sister, Elbert and Atherine, having married twin siblings, Erma Mae and Herman Hicks, had initially purchased a house together to facilitate their move to Houston. They lived in that home until they could build separate houses on the lot. After they settled in these

Continue Ruth Page 4

RELIGIOUS/NEWS

PAUL'S ILLUMINATING PRAYER FOR THE SAINTS

EPHESIANS 1:15-23



By Rev. Johnny Calvin Smith

After the grand Apostle Paul conveyed to these saints the awesome salvation that they possessed, he prayed for their spiritual illumination of their great salvation. He wanted the saints to really understand what they possessed in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:15-23 may be outlined as follows: I. The Believers' Great Calling of God – Ephesians 1:15-18; II. The Great Power of God that Believers Possess – Ephesians 1:19-23.

I. The Believers' Great Calling of God –

Ephesians 1:15-18

There are two prayers for saints recorded in Ephesians; one is in Ephesians 3:14-19 and the other one is found in our text – Ephesians 1:15-23. From the very first time that Paul heard of their faith and love (v. 15), he prayed for them unceasingly (v. 16). His concern was that they might actually understand all that was theirs. Although they possessed it all at the moment of salvation, apparently, they did not fully understand the consummate

potential of their inheritance.

Brothers and Sisters, we possess a wealth of blessings in Jesus Christ. These believers needed the "spirit of wisdom and revelation" imparted to them to understand the full import of their inheritance (v. 17). As a result of the Holy Spirit's granting the "spirit of wisdom and revelation" (v. 17), the believers' understanding is enlightened (v. 18). Paul wanted or desired that these believers might "know what is the hope of His

calling" (v. 18). God had called these saints to Himself. In fact, all who ever came to Him in faith have been called first by Him. Paul also desired that these believers would know by experience "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (v.18). The more God's people are enlightened by the Spirit, the more they come to understand all they possess in Christ. Our inheritance is beyond our finite comprehension!

II. The Great Power of God that Believers Possess

– Ephesians 1:19-23

Paul continued to pray in verse 19 that the believers would know: "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." Paul desired that they might know God's power by experiencing its workings. After praying that the believers might experience an outgrowth of God's power, Paul pointed to the power that raised Christ from the dead.

Proof that the Father accepted the finished work of His Son is to be found in

His raising Him from the dead. Also, after Christ was raised from the dead, He was seated "at His (God's) own right Hand in the heavenly places" with exalted power (vv. 20-21). Because of Christ's finished work and its acceptance by the Father, Christ became the "Head over all things to the church." The church is the body of Christ that began after the death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ (vv. 22-23).

May God Bless!

Dangers and deaths around Black pregnancies in Texas seen as a "completely preventable" health crisis

Despite a vast array of health resources, Black infants in Harris County are about twice as likely to die before their first birthday as those from other racial groups.

Continued **Black** August 31, 2023

BY SANDY WEST, KFF HEALTH NEWS



Hill's twins, though premature, are now preschoolers. "I believe God — and the high-risk doctor — saved my twins," she says.

Photo Credit:

Brandon Thibodeaux for KFF Health News

In 2013, Houstonian Kay Matthews was running a successful catering business when she lost the daughter she'd named Troya eight months and three weeks into pregnancy.

Matthews hadn't felt well — she'd been sluggish and tired — for several days, but her doctor told her not to worry. Not long afterward, she woke up realizing something was terribly wrong. She passed out after calling 911. When she woke up, she was in the emergency room.

None of the medical staffers would talk to her, she said. She had no idea what was happening, no one was answering her questions, and she started having a panic attack.

"It kind of felt like I was watching myself lose everything," she recalled. She said the nurse seemed

annoyed with her questions and demeanor and gave her a sedative. "When I woke up, I did not have a baby."

Matthews recalled one staffer insinuating that she and her partner couldn't afford to pay the bill, even though she was a financially stable business owner, and he had a well-paying job as a truck driver.

She said hospital staffers showed minimal compassion after she lost Troya. They seemed to dismiss her grief, she said. It was the first time she could remember feeling as if she was treated callously because she is Black.

"There was no respect at all, like zero respect or compassion," said Matthews, who has since founded the Shades of Blue Project, a Houston nonprofit focused on improving maternal mental health, primarily for Black patients.

To help combat these high mortality rates in Harris County, Robinson created a maternal child and health office and launched a home-visit pilot program to connect prenatal and postpartum patients with resources such as housing assistance, medical care, and social services. Limited access to healthy food and recreational activities are barriers to healthy pregnancy outcomes. Studies have also shown a connection between evictions and infant mortality.

For Hill, not having

insurance was also likely a factor. While pregnant, Hill said, she had had just a single visit at a community health center before her miscarriage. She was working multiple jobs as a college student and did not have employer-provided medical coverage. She was not yet approved for Medicaid, the state-federal program for people with low incomes or disabilities.

Texas has the nation's highest uninsured rate, with nearly 5 million Texans — or 20% of those younger than 65 — lacking coverage, said Anne Dunkelberg, a senior fellow with Every Texan, a nonprofit research and advocacy institute focused on equity in public policy. While non-Hispanic Black Texans have a slightly better rate — 17% — than that overall state level, it's still higher than the 12% rate for non-Hispanic white Texans, according to census data. Health experts fear that many more people are losing insurance coverage as covid-19 pandemic protections end for Medicaid.

Without full coverage, those who are pregnant may avoid seeking care, meaning they skip being seen in the critical first trimester, said Fatimah Lalani, medical director at Houston's Hope Clinic.

Texas had the lowest percentage of mothers receiving early prenatal care in the nation in 2020, according to the state's

2021 Healthy Texas Mothers and Babies Databook, and non-Hispanic Black moms and babies were less likely to receive first-trimester care than other racial and ethnic groups. Babies born without prenatal care were three times as likely to have a low birth weight and five times as likely to die as those whose mothers had care.

If Hill's miscarriage reflects how the system failed her, the birth of her twins two years later demonstrates how appropriate support has the potential to change outcomes.

With Medicaid coverage from the beginning of her second pregnancy, Hill saw a high-risk pregnancy specialist. Diagnosed early with what's called an incompetent cervix, Hill was consistently seen, monitored, and treated. She also was put on bed rest for her entire pregnancy.

She had an emergency cesarean section at 34 weeks, and both babies spent two weeks in neonatal intensive care. Today, her premature twins are 3 years old.

"I believe God — and the high-risk doctor — saved my twins," she said.

This article originally appeared in The Texas Tribune at <https://www.texastribune.org/2023/08/29/texas-maternal-mortality-black-women/>.

Continued **Pirola** Page 1

from the Delta to the Omicron variant in 2021, which caused a significant surge in cases due to its immune evasion capabilities.

What's particularly concerning is that Pirola has been detected in at least six countries, and these cases appear unrelated. Experts said that suggests undetected community transmission and international spread, sparking concerns of a potential resurgence.

According to medical experts, BA.2.86 is a designated variant of Omicron, a variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for COVID-19. BA.2.86 stems from BA.2, a previously circulating Omicron subvariant. The variant was first identified in Denmark in late July and made its way to the United States in August. Knowing that cases aren't linked indicates broader circulation, significantly as COVID-19 surveillance has waned, medical experts asserted.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that current COVID-19 tests and medications, such as Paxlovid, Veklury, and Lagevrio, seem effective against Pirola. However, Pirola may be more adept at infecting individuals who have had COVID-19 or have been vaccinated. There isn't any current evidence that it causes more severe illness.

The increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations in the U.S. is attributed to XBB lineage viruses rather than mutations in Pirola raises concerns about its potential to bypass immunity from natural infection or vaccination.

Dr. Roberts emphasized that ongoing studies would reveal the true nature of Pirola's threat. The unprecedented number of mutations in Pirola is remi-

niscient of significant shifts seen in other respiratory viruses, such as the 2009 swine flu. However, he noted that these variants sometimes fade away without causing a significant impact.

The critical question now is whether Pirola will follow the explosive growth pattern of Omicron or fade away, as everyone hopes. As of August 30, the CDC has identified Pirola in at least four U.S. states through samples from individuals or wastewater.

Some regions have reinstated mask mandates in response to the spike in COVID-19 cases. Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, New York, is among the institutions requiring masks in clinical areas to protect patients and staff. The CDC reports a nearly 19% increase in weekly new COVID-19 hospitalizations in the U.S., marking the sixth consecutive week of rising admissions.

The arrival of new COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax in mid-September is expected to offer robust protection against variants. Until then, experts stress that masking remains a crucial tool for safeguarding against COVID-19, even for individuals with normal risk levels, depending on their location and contacts.

Dr. Stephen Thomas of the Upstate Medical University in Syracuse told NPR that the facility has reverted to mandating masks.

"We wanted to, No. 1, protect our patients, and, No. 2, protect the men and women who work in our facility, and take care of them," Thomas told NPR. "So, we implemented universal masking for staff, visitors, and patients only in clinical areas. So, we're a university. We're large. We have a lot of non-clinical regions.



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Quinn Minute

Nursery Rhyme Re-visit

By Rix Quinn

As I get older, I try to learn something every day. That's not always possible, because some days I just watch reruns.

I'm not alone in this mission. My friend Lucas spent months trying to read deeper meanings into old nursery rhymes.

For instance, "Incy Wincy Spider climbed up the water spout. Down came the rain, and washed the spider out. Out came the sun, and dried up all the rain. And Incy Wincy Spider climbed up the spout again."

Lucas claims this is about perseverance. Spider is determined to get to the top.

My question is: Why would this arachnid keep re-climbing? Thirst? Higher quality insects to trap at the top? Better access to the web?

Here's one of my favorites: "A wise old owl sat in an oak. The more he heard, the less he spoke. The less he spoke the more he heard. Why aren't we all like that wise old bird?"

Seriously, this is great advice. Yesterday in the

cafeteria, I listened. Here's what I heard.

Two older golfers discussed a particularly difficult sand trap. At the next table, a group of ten gathered to hear their company's income report.

Then, amidst this drudgery, two twenty-somethings sitting next to me - obviously dating - talked about their upcoming weekend in detail.

Much like the owl, for the first two conversations I didn't give a hoot.

But that last dialog was so spicy I fell out of my chair trying to hear. But I

just told the couple I had a balance problem.

Want another nursery song? "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands. If you're happy and you know it, and you really want to show it, if you're happy and you know it clap your hands."

I tried this walking downtown last Saturday. Any time I suddenly felt happy, I started clapping.

This attracted two other clappers with alternative rhythms, a harmonica player, a juggler, and a dog that walked on its back legs.

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Continued Ruth Page 2

new homes, the original property was available for a succession of relatives transitioning to the larger city.

The house we moved into sat on a lot with residences housing family members who had moved to Houston earlier. It was common to jostle more than one house on a lot with little space between them, and that was the circumstance of 4513 1/2 Lee Street. Elbert and his family lived in a five-room house at 4513 Lee Street; my brothers Wilford, Albert, Ruben, and Clarence lived in a rooming house next door; and my parents and us four remaining girls moved into Atherine's former house, in the rear of Elbert's house. Elbert's brother-in-law, Floyd Hicks (another of Erma Mae's brothers) lived on the other side of the rooming house. This compound arrangement was typical of the way many Blacks were able to move to cities.

Continue Part 2
 Ruth -9/14/23

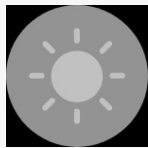


SPORTS/NEWS PAGE

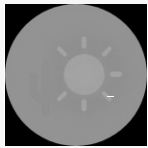


7 Day Weather Forecast for DFW

Thursday, Sept. 7

H - 104°
L - 86°

Friday, Sept. 8

H - 106°
L - 81°

Saturday, Sept. 9

H - 97°
L - 78°

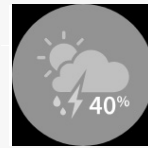
Sunday, Sept. 10

H - 95°
L - 76°

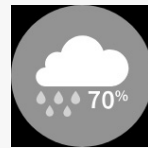
Monday, Sept. 11

H - 92°
L - 74°

Tuesday, Sept. 12

H - 87°
L - 74°

Wednesday, Sept. 13

H - 87°
L - 74°

NBA Superstar Stephen Curry and Wife Ayesha Launch \$50 Million+ Initiative to Transform Oakland Schools

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent@StacyBrownMedia

NBA superstar Stephen Curry and his philanthropic partner and wife, Ayesha Curry, have announced a groundbreaking initiative to transform the educational landscape in their beloved adopted hometown of Oakland. The dynamic duo's Eat. Learn. Play. foundation has unveiled an ambitious plan to raise and invest over \$50 million in additional support and resources for Oakland students by the academic year 2026.

At the heart of the initiative is a commitment to improving Oakland public schools to provide a brighter future for generations of students. The Curry's said they are determined to ensure that all Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) students receive essential resources, including nutritious meals, literacy support, enhanced schoolyards, and youth sports opportunities. The Curry's have pledged to cover 100% of the foundation's administrative and

fundraising costs, guaranteeing that every dollar raised goes directly back into the community through the foundation's programs.

The OUSD schools, which serve as the epicenter of the foundation's mission, are expected to see maximum impact from this initiative, benefiting nearly 35,000 students in their daily lives. Working alongside dedicated community partners, Eat. Learn. Play. plans to deliver tangible results for Oakland students while advocating for systemic changes to uplift youth throughout the community.

"When we launched Eat. Learn. Play. in 2019, we saw the tremendous need that existed in our adopted hometown of Oakland and set out to use our platform and resources to work to unlock the full potential of the kids in our community," The Curry's said in a statement. "Over the years, we've been inspired by the impact that happens when a community

comes together to make a change, and we are now further invested to meet Oakland kids where they are each and every day, to transform their school experience and create lasting change for generations to come."

The foundation boasts a remarkable track record across its three pillars. It has raised over \$47 million, delivered more than 25 million meals, invested \$6 million in literacy resources, and revitalized 12 school and community play spaces.

"We often say 'it takes a village' when it comes to improving the lives of children and families," said Chris Helfrich, CEO of Eat. Learn. Play. "This expanded approach and partnership with OUSD reflect how our community partners are coming together to ensure all Oakland students have access to quality school meals throughout the year. Additionally, we are doing what we can to help make sure all Oakland elementary

students have the support and resources to become proficient readers."

One of the central pillars of the initiative is transforming the school food system to provide healthy, high-quality meals to students. The foundation pledges to make substantial investments over the next three years to ensure that Oakland students can access nutritious meals. That includes support for OUSD's Central Kitchen, Education Center, and Instructional Garden & Farm (The Center) to provide over 6 million healthy, scratch-cooked school meals annually.

"Children across Oakland are playing on amazing, revamped schoolyards thanks to the investments made by Stephen and Ayesha Curry and Eat. Learn. Play," Superintendent Kyla Johnson-Trammell expressed. "This partnership has been a godsend for OUSD, as far too many outdoor play spaces need reno-



Photo Credit: NNPA Files

vation. And now we know that this extraordinary partnership is just beginning."

In addition to school meals, the Curry's said their foundation is committed to enhancing OUSD elementary and middle school cafeterias to be engaging and dignified spaces where stu-

dents can eat, learn, and socialize. The foundation's mobile resource center will continue to provide nutritious meals and culturally affirming books to Oakland youth and their families.

Homelessness, Housing and The Real Solution

By: Dr. John E. Warren, Publisher
San Diego Voice & Viewpoint Newspaper

There is much discussion today about homelessness. To his credit, President Biden has increased the amounts of the housing subsidies for the second time in his administration in an effort to encourage more landlords to provide more rental housing.

In California alone, it is reported that there are more than 160,000 homeless people on our streets, including families, and that number is growing each day for one simple reason: a lack of strong renter protection laws and the greed on the part of landlords and developers. While we applaud the major steps taken by the City of San Diego in its recent passage and implementation of its Renters Protection Ordinance and strong efforts to get people off the streets and into housing, the problem continues to outgrow the assistance because of one simple but often undiscussed reason: landlord greed.

It's the landlords in our city and state that have

raised rents to the point of making housing almost unobtainable. The rental increases and the deposit requirements outpace the income of many families and individuals seeking housing. The increases in rents since the moratorium on evictions during the pandemic suggest a pattern of attempting to make up for lost time during the eviction freeze.

In the midst of this crisis, there are more and more high rise apartments being built and sitting empty in San Diego while people live on the streets outside of these structures. Let it be known that not all those people are drug addicts, mentally ill, or criminals.

But enough of the problem. Now for some solutions.

First, there is a need to inventory the building permits that have been issued and that are about to be issued for apartment and condo structures in San Diego and all cities with a homelessness or "unshel-

tered people" issue. Only then will we have an idea of the number of available units existing and under construction. Second, there is a need to look at who is building those units. Most of these projects are being done by deep pocket investors. While there are some agreements on mixed use of these projects with some set aside for mixed income housing, there is a need for improvement and strengthening such requirements. Third, the use of credit information and deposits must be tightened up including how evictions on the records of potential renters are handled by prospective landlords.

For example, we know that when the Moratorium on evictions was lifted following the pandemic, many landlords implemented pending evictions. That part on the records of people seeking new housing can not be overcome without some interceding legislation noting the circumstances behind the eviction



Dr. John E. Warren

itself. Many of these issues must be looked at from local, state and federal legislative levels. These efforts, plus the dollars being put into housing will make a difference and produce some real results.

Politicians will not do this on their own. Too many are captives of the "Kryptonite" of wealthy contributors.

These efforts will have to come from the grassroots level of "We the People" with some organized efforts before such people become homeless themselves. Where will you be involved?

Parkland workforce development programs build future healthcare leaders

Manager/employee duo prime example of education at work

DALLAS – It was a moment, and later a manager, that changed the course of Oralia Cortina-Jimenez's life.

The moment was when she gave birth to her daughter in the old Parkland Memorial Hospital while still very young herself.

"I was a young mom, scared out of my mind and the labor and delivery nurses were so kind and gentle. They made me feel safe," recalls Cortina-Jimenez. "Not one time did I feel judged by them. I felt well taken care of. Since that day, I told myself I would work here one day and do what these wonderful nurses do!"

In 2007, the long road to fulfilling that self-promise began when Cortina-

Jimenez was hired as a Parkland Health Medical Assistant, her first full-time job. Seven years later with the desire to continue her education still tugging, Cortina-Jimenez took advantage of Parkland's Education at Work program which offers pre-paid tuition, books and lab reimbursement support for full-time Parkland employees pursuing their associate degree at Dallas College.

With her plate now extremely full of parenting, work and school, the manager who also changed the course of her life enters the story. Cortina-Jimenez became a Parkland Medical Interpreter. Her new supervisor was Language

Continue Leaders Page 6



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Continued **Leaders** Page 5

Services Manager Hugo Castellanos.

"My boss is the kindest, most helpful, most respectful, intelligent, and most hard-working individual I have ever met, and he understands what it is like to be a full-time student and have a full-time job," said Cortina-Jimenez of Castellanos, who plans to retire next year after 32 years at Parkland.

Castellanos knows a thing or two about working full-time while also pursuing an education. He worked at Parkland, served in the U.S. Navy Active Reserve, and earned his Master of Business in Healthcare Administration all at the same time.

"I experienced how difficult it was to balance work, school and family, and had to sacrifice a lot. When one of my employees makes the decision to go back to school, we have a meeting/counseling session," said Castellanos. "I explain that it will be a challenge, and if that's really what they want, then, do not quit. From time to time, we will meet again, and I offer my encouragement, despite all the stress they are experiencing. The best part is, I do get invited to their graduations, and it is one of my proudest moments to see they made it!"

"Hugo is not only a great

manager but an excellent mentor as well," said Cortina-Jimenez. "He wants to see you achieve your goals and dreams. He goes above and beyond to help us students without compromising patient care."

The trail Castellanos has blazed for Cortina-Jimenez and numerous other Parkland employees began in April of 1992 when he was hired as a Parkland Language Assistant/Patient Representative while also raising a family and still serving in the U.S. Navy Reserves. Soon, he added education to his own full plate by earning his Master's in Business and Healthcare Administration.

Over the course of his three decades at Parkland, Castellanos not only mentored countless medical interpreters, but he also implemented training for new hires in the complicated, technical art of medical interpretation. He was also instrumental in implementing a unique practice at Parkland. Medical interpreters now routinely respond to all Code Blue resuscitation emergencies and Code FAST stroke emergencies in the hospital just in case their language skills can help save a life.

But if you ask Cortina-Jimenez and Castellanos' many other employees through the years, they will tell you that his mentorship and unwavering support of

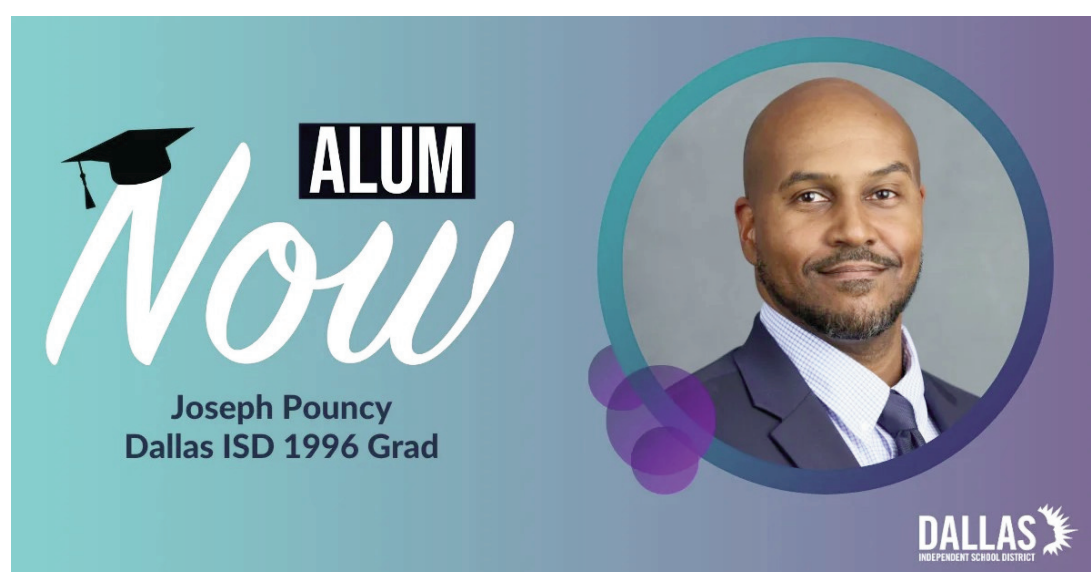
their continued education is what they will remember most. His support for Cortina-Jimenez continued in 2021 when she was named a recipient of Parkland's Reach for the Stars Nursing Scholarship. It covered the entire cost of her tuition and books for the Dallas College nursing program and helped her finally fulfill that promise she made to herself years earlier as a scared young mother in a Parkland hospital room.

"Without Parkland's education programs, I would not be where I am right now, which is starting my operating room nurse residency," said Cortina-Jimenez. "Thanks to the Education at Work Program and Reaching for the Stars scholarship, all I had to do was focus on school and not stress about the financial part of it. My manager Hugo was helpful regarding my nursing class schedule and clinical schedule, and his encouraging words and advice helped me achieve my dream."

Castellanos retired from the Navy in 2013 after 26 years of service, and while he now has his eye on his upcoming retirement from Parkland, Cortina-Jimenez is just beginning her nursing career with a new dream in mind.

"God willing, I will retire as a Parkland employee someday. Just like my boss."

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AlumNow Spotlight: Joseph Pouncy

BY THE HUB

The AlumNow series showcases former students' post-graduation successes.

We recently caught up with Joseph Pouncy who is the new principal at Skyline High School. Read about his educational journey at Dallas ISD and how his teachers impacted him to give back to his community.

What high school did you graduate from and what year did you graduate?

Skyline High School in 1996.

What are your responsibilities as a high school principal?

All things instructional, cultural, and community for Skyline High School. It's a job where you are tending to the flock in a lot of different ways and the flock are your adults, your students, your alumni. You're leading from the front in some cases, but knowing when to lead from the front and then also releasing and empowering the team, that's the take-away. If you're not with the people, if you're not in the trenches, if you're not doing the work, then you can't expect the results.

The tutelage that I try to give to my new administrative team is that you've got to be willing to get your hands dirty. Nothing is more important than getting kids where they need to be.

What are some career or personal highlights/accomplishments?

I've been a teacher and coach for a number of years and in a number of districts. I have been a middle school principal, high school assistant principal, assistant director, and high school principal over my career. I'm a two-time teacher in Dallas ISD at Bryan Adams High School and I've been a long-time coach. I felt like I looked everywhere for a job and a mentor called me from Forney ISD. Before I knew it, I was chasing kids and doing locker and bus duty. I went on to be an assistant principal and a principal at Forney ISD. There was an opportunity at Skyline in 2017 as an assistant principal.

What made your Dallas ISD education unique?

Diversity is the first

word that comes to mind when I think of my education at Dallas ISD. Each of my experiences in elementary, middle, and high school included all races and backgrounds, which proved to be very helpful in my professional life. Diversity and equity are key tenets of my experiences with Dallas ISD.

Who was your favorite Dallas ISD teacher or what was your favorite course?

Other than my mom, who is still an administrator (semi-retired) with Dallas ISD, my other influences included coaches such as Coach JD Mayo and Coach Robbie Birdwell. Even now I get to work with one of my middle school coaches who is on staff with me, Coach Danny Barentien.

What advice, if any, would you offer to students who are interested in your career field?

Be humble, and hungry. Never forget that people are human. Critical thinking is what sets those who know from those who know not. And never forget where you come from.

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