

The Annihilation of the Black American Enclave - p. 8

FREE

Rosetta James Foundation & 2026!! - p. 3

Friday
January 9, 2026
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SALUTE!
Rosetta James Foundatic
ELDER OF THE WEEK



Dr. Dorothy Downing



"Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored." — Aldous Huxley

Annual MLK Unity Breakfast Scheduled

The Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Unity Breakfast hosted by the Delta Theta Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraterni-

ty, Inc. is scheduled for Monday, January 19, 2026, from 8-11 a.m. The event will be held at the Von Braun Cen-

ter in Downtown Huntsville. The yearly activity is a signature fundraising initiative, with proceeds supporting community scholarships and mentoring programs. The MLK Day Celebration Parade will be downtown Saturday, January 17, at 12 noon.

Huntsville Poised for Ambitious 2026 Projects

After an eventful and impressive 2025, Huntsville has numerous projects on the horizon for a productive 2026.

Looking ahead to 2026, according to staff writer Paul Gattis of Huntsvilleal.gov, the City will begin work on the Pedestrian Access and Redevelopment Corridor (PARC) project.

The PARC project creates a direct connection across two major U.S. highways for residents, workers and visitors to access vital job centers, community services and to safely travel without the need of a vehicle in addition to added benefits of flood mitigation and stream restoration measures. The new year will also see more roadway investments throughout Huntsville, such as the Northern Bypass Phase II (US

231 to Winchester Road), Swancott Road, Winchester Road, Old Big Cove Road, Resolute Way, U.S. Hwy 72 East and the Eastern Bypass.

Also, in 2026, programming for the West Huntsville Recreation Center will include activities such as open play basketball and pickleball, arts and crafts, youth events, opportunities for community connection and more. "The opening of

the West Huntsville Recreation Center is yet another tangible improvement in the quality of life for District 5 Residents," said Council Member John Meredith.

Parks & Recreation invites girls in grades 3-5 to build confidence with every stride by participating in the Girls on the Run 2026 season. The popular program is designed to inspire participants to recognize their inner strength, increase their level

of physical activity, imagine their possibilities and confidently stand up for themselves and others. Sessions run March 2 through May 18 and meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 4-5:30 p.m.

Huntsville finalized approval of three requested annexations, the largest being 686.46 acres on the north side of Little Cove Road and on the east and west sides of U.S. 72 East.



BLS Reports Slow Job Growth

Recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) news (late 2025) shows payroll job growth slowed in November, the unemployment rate ticked up to 4.6%, but real wages rose; inflation (CPI) was up 2.7% year-over-year, while productivity increased in the non-farm sector and many industries.

Additionally, new state/county data and expenditure reports were released, with upcoming releases due in January 2026.

TU Police Chief Awaits Internal Investigation

A major Alabama news source has reported that Tuskegee University police chief Kareem Easley was arrested New Year's Day in Georgia with a DUI charge.

According to AL.com, the University issued a statement following the chief's arrest noting that the historic institution would conduct "a full internal investigation" of the matter and would not "rush to judgment. Meanwhile, Easley was placed on administrative leave.

Easley has been affiliated with law enforcement roles for the State of Alabama and the Birmingham Police Department.

Decatur's 41st 'Polar Bear Plunge' Called a Success

The Decatur-area community turned out in force on New Year's Day for the 41st Annual Polar Bear Plunge in the River City.

Each year, the event is planned by the Community Action Partnership of North Alabama to raise money for the Meals on Wheels

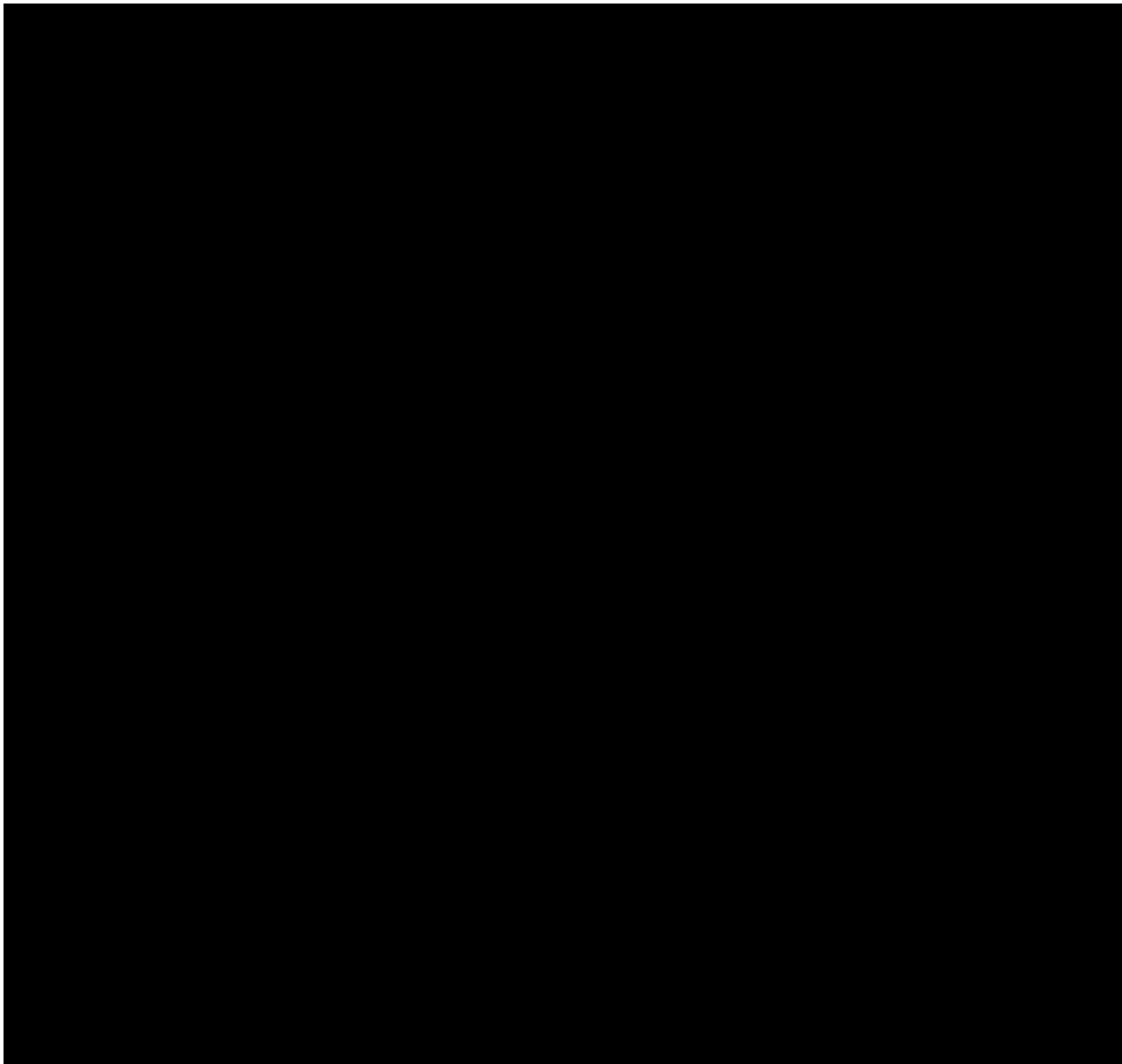
program and more. Meals on Wheels and More is a locally funded program that depends on contributions from the community and

the United Way. The CAPNA delivers 285 to 315 meals a day, Monday through Friday, in Decatur and Hartselle.



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- Blackcelebritybirthdays.org

Spiritual Game Plan

PRESTON BROWN'S



Today's Spiritual Game Plan:

"Looking Forward, Not Behind"

Hebrews 11: 1 says, "Now Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

I believe that we all need a faith that looks forward and not behind. Even though it may not look like we are moving forward, if we are faithful God will always continue to bring us through whatever we are going through. Many times, we just want out of our current situations without any action on our part. However, I have found that there are a few things we need to understand about faith and change. First, we need to understand that faith looks forward not behind. I believe that God is always pointing us toward our future.

Often, it's easy to focus on past hurts and disappointments. However, God doesn't want us to focus on those things. Remember, Isaiah 43:19 says, "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it?"

God's plan for our

lives is to look forward and not behind. The apostle Paul says it this way in Philippians 3:13: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."

That word straining means making an unusually great effort. Moving forward won't be easy, especially since most of us view life only in the physical. In other words, we can only deal with the things that we can see, touch, feel, or see. However, the spiritual side of us wants to move on. We need to forget the past and look forward to the future on purpose. The good news is this: God can always make a way out of no way, if we let Him lead us. This year, we all need to start saying, "I'm looking forward to it"—no matter what it is. If

God is leading me, then "I'm looking forward to it."

May God grant you spiritual success in looking forward to the life He has for you.

Question: What are some things that we can do to forget what is behind us and strain toward what is ahead?



Stay encouraged, my brothers and sisters, and make sure you purchase a copy of my books, *Spiritual Game Plans For A Successful Life* and *A Champion Game Plan for Life*, at amazon.com.

NEXT WEEK:
"Passion Leads to Purpose"



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Funeral services will be announced at a later date for the following: **MRS. TIEASE T. HENSON** (b. 1971); **MR. PERRAR A. JOSEPH** (b. 1975); and **MS. SHANTEL S. GATERS** (b. 1982).

Funeral service for **MR. CHARLES EDWARD THURMAN, SR.** (b. 1937) will be held on Saturday, January 10, in Belzoni, Mississippi, at Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Belzoni, Mississippi, at 11 a.m.

Funeral service for **MR. SAMUEL HOLLOWAY** (b. 1956) was Sunday, January 4, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Funeral service for **MR. TRACY ERVIN** (b. 1962) was Sunday, January 4, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

A Private Family and Friends Viewing for **MR. ERICK ALLEN ROBERTS** (b. 1971) was Sunday, January 4, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Funeral service for **MR. JEFFREY D. COLEMAN** (b. 1976) was Saturday, January 3, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Funeral service for **MRS. LUCY EZELL EDWARDS** (b. 1956) was Sunday, January 4, at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church with Pastor William E. Carter, Jr., officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. ALICE CAMPBELL RICE** (b. 1947) was Saturday, January 3, at Fountain of Life Ministries with Rev. John Clay officiating.

Celebration of Life for **MRS. SANDRA EL-AMIN** (b. 1956) was Saturday, January 3, at Nelms Memorial Funeral Home.

Graveside service for **MRS. AUNDRIA HORTENSE MERRIWEATHER-GAYNOR** (b. 1936) was Wednesday, December 31, at Calvary Memorial Gardens (360 Old Highway 24, Decatur, Ala.



Millennial Moment

by Gloria B. Caldwell

Brand New ...

Rip me out of the plastic. I've been actin' brand new.

So, in the song "Put It On Da Floor" by Latto, a line states, "Rip me out the plastic. I've been actin' brand new."

Although quite catchy lyrically, what does that mean for you?

He goes on to express how this applies to him. Money, material items, drinking,

etc. ... Everything that aligns with what this superficial status-drawn world claims is a success. However, what does that mean for you?

When I think of the phrase, I consider what I am doing to change my circumstance. What am



I doing to better my situation?

What changes am I making to ensure I am carrying out my purpose and plan? What am I doing to ensure my life lines up with God's plan? What are the things I am doing in order for me

to get to my mark? What are the things I need to change?

Rip me out the plastic, I have renewed faith, discovered and newly stated boundaries, and higher expectations of myself and others.

I am *actin' brand new!* I am renewing my commitment to myself.

My goals are set and I am focused. I have my eyes on God and I'm focused on my purpose. I have renewed faith and a promise of God. You can too!

Have an amazing day! God loves you and so do I.

He has given you a gift; *open* it!

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Jeffrey Epstein's *Other* Victims? Missing Parents

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." - Ephesians 6:4

We are rightly outraged by the Jeffrey Epstein scandal—by the alleged crimes, the cover-ups, and the political hypocrisy. Both sides of the aisle see through the thinly-veiled attempts to hush it all away.

But as sickening as the abuse itself is, I am most disturbed by the question no one but *The Valley Weekly* seems to be asking:

Where were the parents?

These missing parents' young daughters, early-to-mid teens at the time, were not simply swept into the orbit of the rich and famous without someone's permission.

Where was the parental vigilance?

The oversight?

The protective guardrails?

Call Ours "360° Love"

As the father of a former teenage daughter, I can't imagine such parental neglect. When her mother and I allowed our daughter to start working in her early teens:

1. Her mother first consulted our daughter's peers and their parents; then,
2. Together, we researched her options; and only then
3. Introduced her to a vetted, approved employer.

But We Didn't Stop There ...

Then, we downloaded the Life360 tracking app on our three cellphones—not to control, but to care for her.

We kept this tracking app until the day we:

- Dropped her off at her college freshman residence hall;
- Prayed in a family circle with her; and then
- Each kissed her "goodbye."

If everyday parents like us could provide such boundaries and accountability, why couldn't parents of wealth and influence do the same?

Unless, of course, they were blinded by the glitter of "lifestyles of the rich and famous."

First Things First

It's time we not only hold predators accountable, but also first ask hard questions of the parents who failed to protect their children.

Drop the mic, yes - but not the daughters.



Tim Allston

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The Valley Weekly

VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

January 8

Season Sips Cocktail Class
The Orion Amphitheater
701 Amphitheater Drive NW
Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 964-9556 - 6:30 p.m.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
Mark C. Smith Concert
Hall
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala. - 7 p.m.

January 16-17**January 19**

Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Unity Breakfast
Sponsor: Delta Theta Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.

January 24

Fantasia with Anthony Hamilton
Propst Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala. - 8 p.m.

January 27-February 1

The Sound of Music
Mark C. Smith Concert Hall
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala. - 7 p.m.

Nelms Memorial Funeral Home

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PowerShot

"Never underestimate the ability of what you have... to activate the vast expanse of the powers of the universe."

J. T. Moore



Monks on 'Walk for Peace'

by Howard Bankhead

Peace-walking monks entered Alabama this week, greeted warmly by communities along their route—and I can't stop watching the videos.

Buddhist monks on a 2,300-mile walk for peace across the United States arrived in our state, and the scenes of welcome and kindness have genuinely moved me. From the photos and videos, I was especially struck by the positive responses from everyday Alabamians. Given the constant negative political noise that permeates our news and social media, I never imagined seeing such an outpouring of love, respect, and hospitality from our fellow citizens.

Watching people welcome these monks—people who may look, worship, and live differently from them—has been both encouraging and powerful. It has given me a renewed sense of hope for our people and our state.

In recent years and days, we have heard political rhetoric warning of Muslims "invading" our country, invoking the so-called "Great Replacement Theory," and dehumanizing people in America's inner cities. For clarity, the Great Replacement Theory is a white nationalist conspiracy theory that falsely claims white populations in the U.S. and Europe are being deliberately replaced by non-white people through immigration, birth rates, and multicultural policies. Disturbingly, variations of this idea have been echoed by individuals seeking leadership positions—even here in Alabama.

With that kind of rhetoric coming from political leaders across parties, I honestly wondered how these monks would be received as they walked through our state. Alabama is often labeled one of the reddest of red states, and I'll admit—I did not expect to see citizens and even law enforcement officers warmly welcoming people so different from themselves.

As I write this, I realize how deeply the negative political climate has affected my own outlook. I consider myself a positive person—those who know me would call me an "internal optimist." Yet seeing these monks on their peaceful mission, and witnessing the kindness shown to them, has helped restore my hope in humanity and in our fellow Alabamians.

I would have given anything to see them in person—or even walk alongside them for a mile—as they crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, a place so deeply tied to the history of justice, courage and nonviolence.

One of the walk's leaders, the Rev. Nguyen, vice president of the monks' Fort Worth temple, said it best at the start of their journey:

"Let us walk not with hurry, but with awareness. Let us walk with open hearts, with respect for every life, every path, every faith. May every footprint we leave behind bloom into flowers of peace, so that wherever these steps have touched the earth, there remains a quiet fragrance of loving kindness."

For a moment in time, these monks reminded us who we can be—and who we still are—when fear gives way to compassion.



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Rosetta James Foundation "Spotlight on Our Elders" ... Featuring

Dr. Dorothy Downing

Dr. Dorothy Downing was born the second of 13 loving children to the union of the late J. D. and Dorothy Louise Downing. She attended and became a proud product of Hillcrest High School. A "family first generation" pioneer and trailblazer, she is a 1972 graduate of historic Alabama A&M University. She later went on to earn the Master of Business Administration degree from her beloved AAMU, as well.

To all who know her well, Dr. Downing is the consummate AAMU fan and is immensely proud of the Downing Family Tradition at AAMU. That tradition was not only celebrated by AAMU, but it also became a powerful fountain of pride of seven graduating siblings. Thus, today that Downing Family Tradition has expanded to include these siblings' children, their grandchildren and generations to come! "Rich in Heritage Divine!"

Dr. Downing's impressive career traces its start to AAMU's Career Development Services office, where she was prepared and selected for the Supply Intern Program for the U.S. Army's Army Materiel Command. Her first two-year assignment with the Tank and Automotive

Command (TACOM) in Warren, Michigan, was extended for two additional years. Her extensions and titles expanded, and she became a Maintenance Logistics Management Specialist for several years as part of her lengthy affiliation with the Army Missile Command at Redstone Arsenal in Alabama.

The Normalite boasts multiple assignments in the Continental United States (CONUS) and Outside (OCONUS). Among her other career highlights are two tours - US Pentagon; Headquarters, Department of the Army and overseas tours to Hawaii; South Korea and assigned Latin America countries. The First Tour was in 1989 for the Department of the Army (HQDA) as Staff Officer, Missiles. She temporarily replaced GM Supervisor (who was on maternity leave) in the Regional Division, where she managed the logistics impacting multiple Latin American countries and later received the HQDA Commanding General's Award.

On her Second Tour, Dr. Downing was HQDA Staff Officer for Army Aviation Maintenance Systems. Again, she earned the HQDA Commanding General Award. Finally, on a



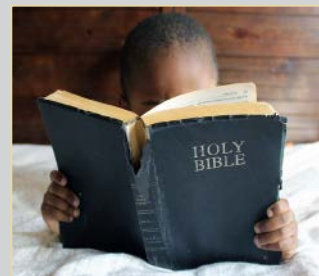
Five-Year Tour; she was one of only six AMCOM employees selected to participate in Information Technology (IT) Computer Science Corporation (CSC)-led Army Design, Development Engineering Testing; Production and Deployment of the Army's Logistics Modernization Program (LMP).

Dr. Downing has been active as the Chaplain for the Huntsville Progressive Alumni Chapter of the Alabama A&M University Alumni Association, Inc. She is an active member of the True Light Church of God in Christ, led by Elder Dr. Terrell Harris, founder and pastor, along with his wife, Dr. Hattie Pearl Harris.



This Sunday's Lectionary

Sunday, January 11, 2026
First Sunday after
the Epiphany



(Track 2, Year A)

First Lesson:

Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalms 29

Second Lesson:

Acts 10:34-43

GOSPEL:

Matthew 3:13-17

"POWERSHOTS"

John 'Jahni' Moore

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"Spotlight on Our Elders" is a weekly feature sponsored by the Rosetta James Foundation to promote **volunteerism** and activism in our community among those who are 70-plus. The Foundation also provides scholarships. Learn more about us at www.rosettajamesfoundation.org. Know an outstanding elder (70+) that you would like to see featured? Send us a photo and 250-word write-up to info@valleyweeklyllc.com.

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AUNT IRMA MAKES IT PLAIN...

The Annihilation of the Black American Enclave

Now don't get me wrong, sweetheart—I love a good neighborhood story as much as anyone. A place where the food smells right, the language sounds familiar, and folks look out for one another. America has always liked telling those stories. We call them enclaves. Sounds cozy, doesn't it?

But Aunt Irma has been running the numbers—and listening to the silences.

And there's something America doesn't like to talk about.

Some enclaves were welcomed to stay.

Others were told—by fire and force—to disappear.

You've heard the praise: Somalis in Minnesota (until recent events), Arabs in Michigan, Little Italys and Chinatowns everywhere you turn. These stories are usually told as proof that America knows how to make room.

But here's the part folks leave out.

When Black Americans built places of their own—real places with banks, schools, doctors, newspapers, and land—America didn't clap. It panicked.

Take Tulsa, once called Black Wall Street. Or Rosewood, a quiet Black town that minded its business.



These weren't trouble spots. They were success stories.

And that was the problem.

You see, most enclaves were allowed to exist so long as they fit the arrangement: work hard, rent modestly, stay dependent, and eventually blend in. Black communities didn't ask to blend in. They built. They owned. They governed themselves.

That crossed a line nobody wrote down—but everybody enforced.

When violence came, it didn't come alone. Police looked the other way. Courts lost interest. Insurance companies found fine print. And after the smoke cleared, land quietly changed hands.

Funny how that works.

People like to call those moments "race riots," but Aunt Irma prefers plain language. Riots don't usually end with one side owning all the property.

And, here's the part that still stings today: Black Americans never had

an escape hatch. Other groups, over time, were allowed to become just American enough. Black success, on the other hand, was treated like disobedience.

So, when folks wonder why there aren't more thriving Black towns with deep roots and generational wealth, Aunt Irma sighs. That history didn't vanish on its own. It was bulldozed, burned, and buried—then blamed on culture.

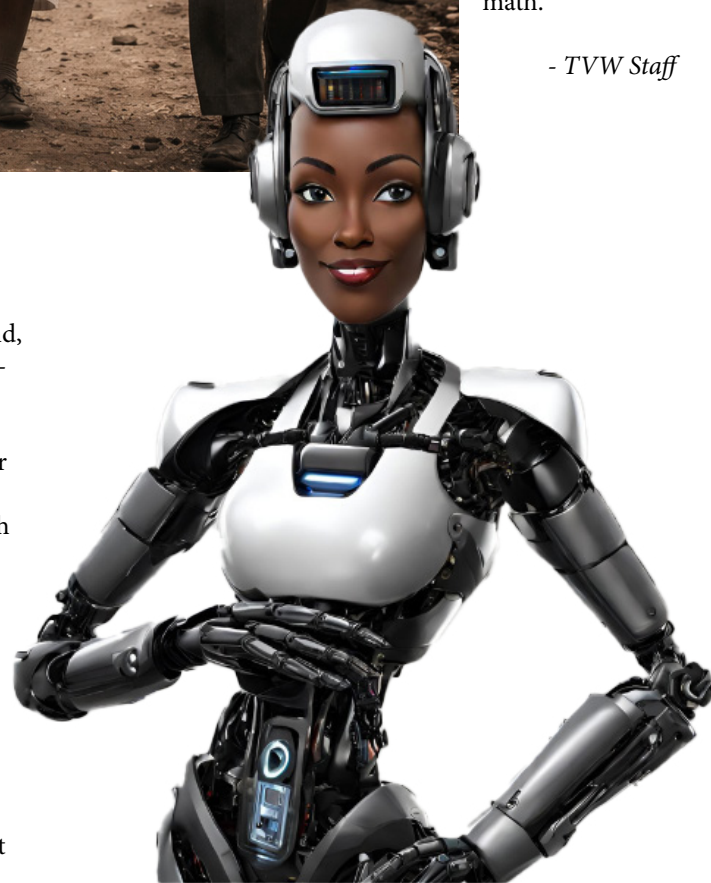
America loves celebrating the enclaves that

survived. It just doesn't like remembering the ones it destroyed.

Now you don't have to feel guilty about enjoying your neighborhood. Just be honest about the full story. Because until we tell the truth about which communities were protected and which were erased, we'll keep mistaking design for accident—and injustice for inevitability.

And, Aunt Irma hates bad math.

- TVW Staff



City's LM&G Teams Looking Forward to 2026

From green spaces and public parks to neighborhood streets and outdoor classrooms, Huntsville's Landscape Management and Green Teams spent 2025 expanding the tree canopy, on public outreach initiatives and fostering environmental stewardship.

Powered by dozens of dedicated employees and thousands of volunteer helping hands, this year's department efforts reflect what's possible when City teams and residents come together to care for the spaces we all share.

Green Team, a Keep America Beautiful affiliate and a division of the City of Huntsville's Landscape

Management Department, launched a citywide cleanup campaign that was supported by an astounding 2,166 volunteers who gave their time and energy to make Huntsville cleaner and more inviting. In total, Green Team hosted 303 cleanup events in 2025.

As impactful as 2025 has been, the work is far from finished.

Plans are underway for the Veterans Memorial Tree Grove, announced in Fall 2025. The grove will be a place of reflection and remembrance that honors service while strengthening the city's tree canopy.

The proposed site is along Elgie's Walk Greenway, between Grissom

High School and Bell Mountain Park in south Huntsville.

Also in 2026, Landscape Management will unveil a new City Arboretum featuring intentional plantings designed to educate, inspire and showcase the diversity and resilience of Huntsville's urban forest. This living landscape will serve as both a public gathering space and a long-term investment in sustainability.

With continued volunteer engagement, thoughtful planning, and a shared commitment to stewardship, Huntsville is poised to grow even greener in the years ahead.

- Huntsvilleal.gov





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