



POSITIVE-INSPIRATIONAL-EDUCATIONAL

Don't Ignore the *Business* of Medicine! - p. 8

FREE

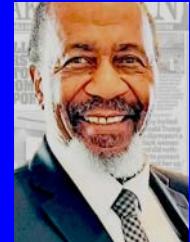


TM: “Ego or Restraint” - p. 5

The Valley Weekly

Friday
January 30, 2026
Vol. 12, No. 22
ValleyWeeklyllc.com

SALUTE!
Rosetta James Foundation
ELDER OF THE WEEK



Mr. William D. Smothers

“Where there is love, there is life.” — Mahatma Gandhi



AKAs Announce 67th Debutante Ball

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Epsilon Gamma Omega Chapter will host its 67th Annual Debutante Presentation and Ball, honoring its 51 prospective debutantes.

The Presentation and Ball will be held February 13, at 7 p.m. in the South Hall of the Von Braun Center in Huntsville, Ala. This year's theme is "A Magical Paradise of Diamonds, Emeralds, and Pearls."

Mrs. Tonya Wood serves as president of the Chapter with Mrs. Cynthia D. Coleman serving as chair, and Ms. Tonya R. Briggs serving as co-chair of the Debutante Ball. Through-

out the debutante season, the prospective debutantes have engaged in a variety of enriching experiences, including a Get-Acquainted Tea, Mother-Daughter Brunch, community service projects (inclusive of a Father-Daughter event), enhancement training sessions, and a multimedia project. Scholarships will be awarded by the Epsilon Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated on the evening of the ball.

Debutantes (l-r):
First Row: Farah Gurley, Lauren Jackson, Jayla Greene, Rion Darrington, Semone Burwell-Rice, Kendra Vinegar, Deja Parker, Indiya Jackson, Jamiah Braithwaite, Makenzie Burke

Paige Quarles, Olivia Young, Murphy Washington, Destiny Jenning

Second Row: Taylor Laws, Kristen Mastin, Taylor-Jordan Maye, Eden Craighead, Katelynn Dixie, Kamrin Brown, Gabrielle Dickerson, Courtney Channel, Tamiah Williams, Maya Howard, Kasdin King, Alexandria Mitchell, Carmin Rice

Third Row: Lyric Meikle, Jayden Gracie, Nickayla Wilson, Brooklyn Finley, Alivia Toney, Ava Hargrove, Coryn Miller, Aniyah Jones, Rhyann Holloway, Roxie Foster, Daria Andrews, Aydin-Sarita Collins

Fourth Row: Shelby Laws, RiyoMari Fletcher, Imani Booker, Nataia Crayton, Joy Wright, Maliyah Baker, Kyrielle Smith, Autumn Glover, Kiersten Turner, Khloe Bradley, Caydence Foy, Kennadi Bankston, Makenzie Burke

College Fair Set at Union Chapel

Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church will host a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) College Fair on Saturday, February 21, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event will be held at the Union Chapel Family Life Center, located at 315 Winchester Road in Huntsville, Ala.

The four-hour recruiting session will feature financial aid information and door prizes. Attendees will have a chance to meet college and career representatives.

For additional information, contact Jennifer Pigott at (256) 566-2839 or Anthony Davidson at (256) 527-1666.

AAMU Hosts 25th Anniversary “Future City” Competition

Alabama A&M University and AAMUteach hosted the 25th anniversary edition of the Future City Competition on Saturday, January 24, marking the first time the statewide event has been held at AAMU.

Some 30 teams of sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade

Alabama students presented large-scale tabletop city models they have designed and built to address this year's theme, “Farm to Table.” This year's event signaled a new chapter for Alabama A&M, which will serve as the permanent host

site for the Alabama Regional Future City Competition going forward.



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The Valley Weekly

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Washington One Minute

by Ron Hamm

Here is the recap of the latest top issues and events in Washington, D.C., during the previous week:

1. CONGRESS. The House was in session during the week of January 19, but the Senate was out ... In a nod to the annual March for Life in Washington, the House was slated to take up 2 bills to prevent discrimination against pregnancy centers and to require colleges to disseminate information on the rights of and resources for pregnant students. On January 16, a bipartisan delegation of 11 U.S. lawmakers led by Sens. Coons (D-DE) and Durbin (D-IL), which included Sens. Murkowski (R-AK) and Tillis (R-NC) met the leaders of Denmark and Greenland in Copenhagen seeking to "lower the temperature" with assurances of congressional support after the President's threats to seize Greenland. House and Senate Appropriations Committee leaders worked to release last week a final package of FY2026 spending bills (Labor/HHS, DoD,

Transportation/HUD, and maybe Homeland Security).

2. EXECUTIVE BRANCH.

On Monday, January 19, while spending the weekend at his Mar-a-Lago resort, the President attended the College Football National Championship Game (University of Miami vs. Indiana University) at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami. That Friday, the President hosted a bipartisan meeting of state governors, including PA Gov. Shapiro (D), MD Gov. Moore (D), and outgoing VA Gov. Youngkin (R), to announce a proposal on data centers aimed at reducing soaring electricity costs in the 13-state eastern power grid (from North Carolina to Ohio). The proposal would require the mid-Atlantic grid operator to hold a power auction for tech companies to bid on 15-year contracts to build new power plants, so that data center operators, not regular consumers, pay for their own power needs ...

3. SUPREME COURT.

The Supreme Court heard arguments in *Wolford v. Lopez*, a challenge to a Hawaii law that bans gun owners from bringing their guns onto private property open to the public without the property owner's specific permission (4 other states have similar laws: CA, MD, NY, and NJ).

4. INFLATION REPORT.

Food prices climbed sharply in December, rising 0.7% — according to the Consumer Price Index — and is the largest one-month increase in grocery prices since October 2022 (up from 0.2% in September, the last month the federal government released month-to-month inflation figures since the shutdown disrupted data collection). For example, beef and veal prices are up 16.4% above last year. Although the overall inflation rate held steady at 2.7% from November, certain commodities, such as electricity (up 6.7%) and natural gas (up 10.8%), also showed sharp increases.

5. HIGHER EDUCATION.

The administration announced that staff from the Education Department's Higher Education Programs division would begin temporary assignments at the Department of Labor to support a new joint management structure for federal

postsecondary programs. As part of this shift, HEP grantees will transition to DOL's grants and payment management systems, marking a significant operational change. This effort is part of a broader interagency strategy to streamline federal education and workforce programs, following earlier transfers of ED personnel to DOL for career and adult education. Congressional Democrats are seeking to halt further transfers, particularly those affecting K-12 and higher education programs.

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Washington, D.C. 20006
T: 202-596-8384
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WE KNOW THE PEOPLE,
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Huntsville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Meetings

The Citizens Advisory Committee of the Huntsville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will meet on **Monday, February 9, 2026, at 5:00 pm**, on the **6th Floor of the City of Huntsville Municipal Building**, at **305 Fountain Circle SW**. The Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board will meet on **Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 4:00 pm** on the **2nd Floor, (Council Chambers) of the City of Huntsville Municipal Building**, at **305 Fountain Circle SW**. To review items on the agenda for these meetings, visit: <http://www.huntsvillempo.org/about/meetings-and-agendas/>. For more information on the MPO, visit: <http://www.huntsvillempo.org/>

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HUNTSVILLE AREA CHAPTER OF
NATIONAL ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION OF SPELMAN COLLEGE
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Dorothy W. Huston, Ph.D.

**Editorial Consultant/
Senior Editor**
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Linda Burruss

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- Contributing Editors -
tim allston
Minister Preston Brown
Gloria B. Caldwell
Ron Hamm
Gary T. Whitley, Jr.
-and-
"Aunt Irma" (ChatGPT support)

Photographers
Anthony "Gip" Gibson
Jerome Saintjones

Website Administrator
Calvin Farier

Mailing Address:
The Valley Weekly
P. O. Box 893 - Huntsville, AL 35804
(256) 651-9028
www.valleyweeklyllc.com
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The Valley Weekly

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Sixteenth Page	2.5x2.5	\$75
Classified	1 col.x1 inch	\$100/Flat Fee

Winter Has Never Been Neutral

Winter has never been neutral—not where I grew up, and not now.

In the house where I was born, heat came from a double-sided fireplace that served the front bedroom and living room, which was also our guest room, all at once. Everything else depended on the wood burning stove and heater in the kitchen. Before winter, we went into the woods to cut wood, stacked it in the yard, then restacked it on the porch so we could grab it as the fire burned down. We learned to find fatwood—kindling strong enough to bring a dying fire back to life. Winter wasn't cozy. Winter was work.

The one thing I loved was cooking sweet potatoes under the hot ashes. Because we had a potato cellar in the ground, potatoes were common—but the ones cooked in the fireplace tasted twice as sweet. Winter has a way of making ordinary things feel special.

At night, we slept under double and triple quilts my mother made. There was always enough warmth, but it came with weight. We'd sweat under the covers and freeze the moment we got up, until someone poked the fire back in. We didn't have icy rain or snow then. That kind of weather simply didn't exist where we lived—or so we thought.

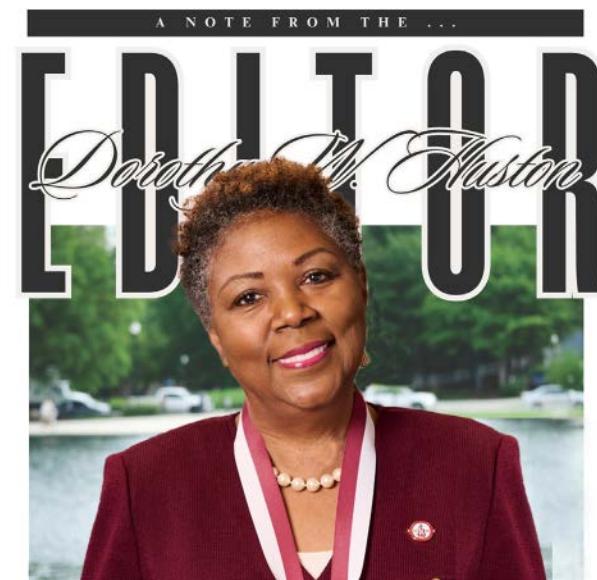
Winter was hard then. It's hard now for different reasons.

I live with neuropathy in my feet. When they get cold, they burn. Many winter days my body is warm, but my feet feel like they're on fire. Thick socks, heating pods, heating pads—this is what cold requires now. And when it's 20 degrees one day and 70 the next, feet like mine don't "adjust." Climate change isn't abstract when it lives in your nerves.

Some of that damage goes back to childhood—hand-me-down shoes that didn't fit but were worn anyway. If anyone wonders why I own so many shoes now, it's because I promised myself that when I grew up, I'd buy shoes that fit. That's not excess. That's a delayed necessity.

Winter has always revealed inequality—who has insulation, who has drafts; who gets "cozy," and who gets pain. Climate change didn't invent this. It just made it harder to ignore.

And some days, when the weather can't decide what season it is, I think about those sweet potatoes under the ashes—how something simple tasted sweeter because of the work it took to survive the cold. The question is whether we're willing to do that work together now, or whether we'll keep acting surprised every time the power goes out.



Dorothy

JANUARY 30 - DONNIE SIMPSON - Donnie Simpson is a longtime American radio DJ as well as a television and movie personality. He hosted The Donnie Simpson Morning Show on Washington, D.C. radio station WPGC-FM from March 1993 to January 29, 2010. Currently, he hosts The Donnie Simpson Show on D.C.-based radio station WMMJ-FM (Majic 102.3 FM), which began airing on August 17, 2015. Simpson is the first urban-format radio personality to have an annual salary over \$1 million without being syndicated. In 2003, Simpson, through his agent and longtime friend, George Parker, inked a 6-year, 8-figure deal with WPGC-FM making Simpson the highest paid African-American radio personality ever without syndication.

- Blackcelebritybirthdays.org



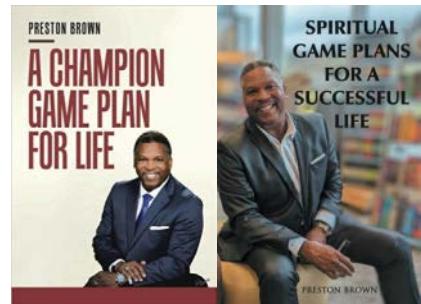
Spiritual Game Plan

Today's Spiritual Game Plan:

"Make Time"

In Matthew 6:33, it says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

Today, we live in a society where everybody is so busy, whether at work, with all the demands of our jobs,



or at home, with all the demands of our families. Or, perhaps you are a student who never has enough time in the day to do the things that you really enjoy doing.

Whatever the reasons, there never seems to be enough time, right? But remember—what we put our time, effort, and money into becomes what's important to us. If we say that we don't have time to spend with God, then God is obviously not important in our lives.

So, let us not deceive ourselves. Anything you really want to do, you will find time to do. I have learned that God is a maximum-capacity God. If you give Him five minutes of your time, He will fill it up. If you give Him thirty minutes of your time, He will fill that up, as well. Whatever time you set aside for Him will be worth your while. Remember—God will

always meet you where you are, but refuses to leave you there.

So, I encourage you to start today, because it will change your life forever. Spending time with God gives our lives meaning and purpose. Stay encouraged, my



brothers and sisters.

Prayer: Dear God, give us a willing spirit that will allow us to spend quality time with you.

Question: How can we make more time for God?

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:
"The Power of Forgiveness"



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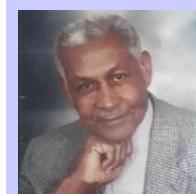
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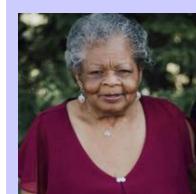
2501 Carmichael Avenue NW - Huntsville, AL 35816
www.nelmsmemorial.net - (256) 539-8189



Funeral service for **PASTOR ROBERT L. DOUGLAS, SR.**, (b. 1930) will be Sunday, February 8, at 11 a.m. at Oakwood Seventh-Day Adventist Church with Dr. Carlton P. Byrd officiating.



Funeral service for **MINISTER REMARCUS COLLINS** (b. 1980) will be Saturday, January 31, at 12 noon at St. Rebecca Primitive Baptist Church with Rev. Stacey Stewart officiating.



Funeral service for **MRS. BETTY J. PARKER** (b. 1941) will be Saturday, February 1, at 1 p.m. at Briar Fork Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America with Rev. Maurice Irving officiating.



Funeral service for **MRS. ROSETTA WYNN** (b. 1948) will be held Saturday, January 31, at 2 p.m. at Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church with Rev. James Battles officiating.

Graveside service for **MR. JAMES CARL NANCE, JR.**, (b. 1947) was Friday, January 23, at Valhalla Memory Gardens with Rev. Earla Lockhart Officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. ANNIE (ANN) AARON DICKERSON** (b. 1939) was Tuesday, January 20, at Progressive Union Missionary Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala..

Graveside service for **MR. WILLIAM D. FAILS, II** (b. 1981) was Monday, January 12, at Valhalla Memory Gardens with Elder Dr. Oscar Montgomery officiating.

Millennial Moment

The Valley Weekly

by
Gloria B. Caldwell

Your Limitations Are in Your Mind ...

Your limitations are in your mind ...

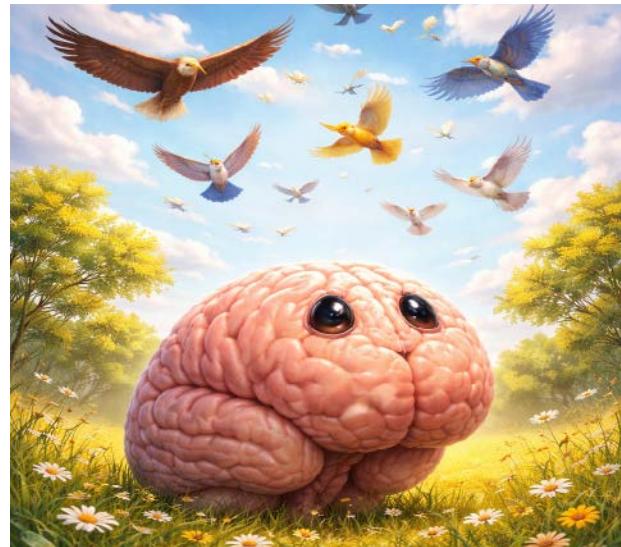
Success or failure. There is nothing in between. As often stated, "Failure starts where success ends." You can be successful every day because success is simply accomplishing goals. It doesn't matter whether they are big or small. All wins count. There are no limitations.

Your limitations are in your mind!

You control every goal you set and whether or not you get there. You cannot control the arrival time; however, you can control whether or not you slow that time down. You're not limited.

Who told you that?

So, how do you do that? It all starts in your mind. Each decision you make or not. Each move you make, or not. Limitations only exist if you impose them on



yourself. It seems simple, right? It is.

Emotional intelligence, motivation, discipline, mindfulness, and goals are all things you need to be aware of. Dive into self-awareness.

Start today!

With each step, all mind-related, you are in control. Each decision and

action brings you closer or further away from your mark!

You can do this! Get started this moment. Remove one limitation a day. Remember, small goals count.

God loves you, and so do I.

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Emerging Leaders: Governed by Ego or by Restraint?

"Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

- Matthew 23:12

In a January 7th *New York Times* interview, President Donald Trump was asked what constrains him as Commander-in-Chief. His answer was stark: *"My own morality. My own mind. It's the only thing that can stop me. I don't need international law."*

That statement should give thoughtful citizens pause.

Leadership — especially at the highest levels — is never meant to be governed solely by one's self-assessment. When restraint is defined only by personal morality, leadership risks becoming self-referential, insulated, and dangerous.

In my leadership work, I call this condition **ego-holism** — a distorted view of self that eclipses accountability, humility, and shared moral norms.



History is not silent on this issue . . .

The Bible recounts how King Nebuchadnezzar once stood atop his palace, admiring his Babylonian Empire, declaring, *"Look what I have built."*

His moment of self-exaltation was followed immediately by humiliation - forced to eat grass and resemble an animal for seven years! - until he acknowledged a power greater than himself.

Leadership untethered from humility has always carried consequences.

"Lord, is it I?"

Jesus offered a different model. At the Last Supper, when He revealed that one of His disciples would betray Him, the response was not finger-pointing. Instead, each disciple asked the same piercing question: *"Lord, is it I?"* Matthew 26:22. That question reflects true moral leadership — self-examination before accusation.

The danger of ego-holism is not confined to presidents or politicians. It shows up wherever leaders believe they are the exception — in boardrooms, churches, classrooms, and homes. When leaders answer only to themselves, restraint erodes, trust weakens, and institutions suffer.

What Validates Leadership?

Scripture warns us plainly: *"Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."* The lesson is timeless. Leadership is not validated by how much power one holds, but by how faithfully that power is restrained.

Before we point outward, the harder — and holier — question remains: **Where do I locate my own restraint?**

Tim Allston

Leadership Player-Coach and Four-time Amazon Best-Selling Author, "Leading from the Middle" Contact: (256) 212-0949 <https://bit.ly/4aB9Lwm>

Email Address: leadingfromthemiddle.tim@gmail.com

Website: www.timallston.com



Join us Mondays through Fridays for *Tim Allston's Leadership Nuggets: Educating, Equipping, and Empowering Emerging Leaders to Manage Ego Problems in 60 Seconds* (7am, 1pm, and 7pm), as well as for *The Tim Commandments of Leadership* (4pm), all Central Time and all available on Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

The Valley Weekly

VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

January 27-February 1

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

January 30-February 1

Kountry Wayne
Comedian
Huntsville Levity Live
2012 Memorial Parkway SW
Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 261-3374

February 1

Harlem Globetrotters
Propst Arena
Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala. - 3 p.m.

February 3

"Intro to Library e-Re-

sources"

In-Person Class
North Huntsville Public Library
Sparkman Drive
Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 851-7492 - 1 p.m.

February 6

"God's Trombones: Seven Sermons in Verse"
Black History Month Stage Play
Oakwood University Church
5500 Adventist Boulevard
Huntsville, Ala.
Contact: Patti Conwell,
(256) 714-3822 - 6 p.m.

Diana Krall

Mark C. Smith Concert Hall

Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Ala.
7:30 p.m.

February 6-7

Dedrick Flynn
Comedian
Huntsville Levity Live
2012 Memorial Parkway SW
Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 261-3374

February 7

"God's Trombones: Seven Sermons in Verse"
Black History Month Stage Play
Oakwood University Church
5500 Adventist Boulevard
Huntsville, Ala.
Contact: Patti Conwell,
(256) 714-3822 - 6 p.m.

February 9

"Adult Coding Club"
In-Person Class
North Huntsville Public Library
Sparkman Drive
Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 851-7492 - 5:30 p.m.

February 11

"Internet Safety"

In-Person Class
North Huntsville Public Library
Sparkman Drive
Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 851-7492
3:30 p.m.

February 12

"Basic Canva"
In-Person Class
North Huntsville Public Library
Sparkman Drive

Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 851-7492
10 a.m.

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

February 17

"Budgeting Basics"
In-Person Class

North Huntsville Public Library
Sparkman Drive
Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 851-7492
1 p.m.

February 13-15

Joe Gatto
Comedian
Huntsville Levity Live
2012 Memorial Parkway SW
Huntsville, Ala.
(256) 261-3374

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Abraham Lincoln



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Rosetta James Foundation "Spotlight on Our Elders" ... Featuring Mr. William D. Smothers

For more than 45 years, Mr. William D. Smothers has been a steadfast voice in Huntsville and North Alabama's African American community, serving as the founder and publisher of Speakin' Out News. With over 2,356 issues published, his passion for journalism remains unwavering. At 75 years old, Smothers approaches his work enthusiastically, ensuring the newspaper remains a trusted source of information, advocacy, and cultural representation.

Smothers' journey began in 1980 when he launched Speakin' Out Magazine, a monthly publication to fill the void of African American news coverage. Recognizing the need for more frequent reporting, he transitioned to a bimonthly, then a weekly newspaper—Speakin' Out News—which has since become the longest-running African American newspaper in North Alabama.

Throughout the years, Smothers has witnessed the evolution of the publishing industry, from traditional print layouts to fully digital production. His publication, which once operated from his kitchen table in Decatur, now calls its permanent home at 4839 Sparkman Drive in Huntsville. Despite challenges that have forced many newspapers to close, Speakin' Out News thrives, maintaining a strong print

presence every Wednesday while expanding its digital reach.

Today, Speakin' Out News boasts a total print and electronic circulation of 33,458 and proudly averages monthly, 120,000 clicked impressions on its website, www.speakinoutweeklynews.net.

Starting with just \$735, Smothers built the publication from the ground up while juggling his career as a special education teacher in Morgan County. His determination was unshakable—selling ads, conducting interviews, and writing stories between lesson plans. "You don't worry about the hours, you worry about attaining your goals," he often says. In 1985, he boldly decided to leave education and fully commit to publishing, a choice that has since paid off.

Smothers is married to Dr. Deloris Smothers, retired director of Computer Information Systems at Drake State Community & Technical College. He is the proud father of four daughters—Jemeana Smothers-Roberson, Knegleshia Smothers-Cobb, Terra Smothers-Carter, and Canderiah Smothers. He is also a devoted grandfather to nine grandchildren: Zoie, Darrion, Morgyn, Zyan, Madisyn, Kyndall, Jabin, Zeah, and Tezara. Smothers takes great pride in knowing that his daughters and



grandchildren are his legacy, ensuring that Speakin' Out News continues to serve the community for generations to come.

A graduate of Jackson State University, Smothers remains actively involved in various community organizations. His mission has always been clear: to amplify voices that might otherwise go unheard.

"It's more than a newspaper—it's about the community," he says.

As Speakin' Out News continues to make history, Smothers gives thanks to God for sustaining the publication's longevity and impact. "By God's grace, we've withstood the test of time. While many publications have shut down or been absorbed by corporate media, Speakin' Out News remains independent, family-owned and operated, standing strong as a beacon for the community."

"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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This Sunday's Lectionary

(Track 2, Year A)

First Lesson:

Micah 6:1-8

Psalm 15

Second Lesson:

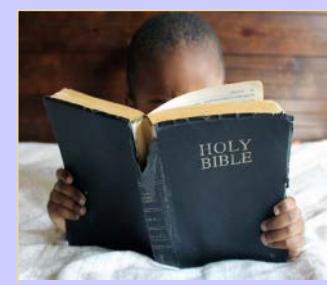
1 Corinthians 1:18-31

GOSPEL:

Matthew 5:1-12

Sunday, February 1, 2026

Fourth Sunday after
the Epiphany



AUNT IRMA MAKES IT PLAIN...

Follow the Money Before You Roll Up Your \$leeve

Aunt Irma has lived long enough to know this truth: When something is being pushed hard, fast, and repeatedly — especially in medicine — somebody, *somewhere*, is making very good money.

Now don't misunderstand me. Doctors save lives every day. Hospitals perform miracles. But medicine is also a *business*, and some procedures have become so lucrative that they're marketed with the enthusiasm of beachfront condos.

Here are five that patients should approach with eyes wide open and questions fully loaded.

1. Early Dialysis Initiation

Dialysis is life-saving when truly needed. But studies have shown that starting it earlier than medically necessary does not always improve outcomes. What it does improve is revenue. Dialysis centers are reimbursed per treatment, per patient, per week. Once you start, you're locked into a schedule that's hard to escape — financially reliable for providers, physically exhausting for patients.



2. Spinal Injections and Back Procedures

Back pain is real. So is the money behind treating it. Epidural steroid injections, nerve blocks, and repeat imaging often deliver modest relief at best, while generating thousands per visit. Many patients cycle through these procedures for years without meaningful improvement — because maintenance is more profitable than resolution.

3. Cardiac Stents in Stable Patients

Stents save lives during heart attacks. But for patients with stable coronary disease, aggressive stenting has not consistently shown better outcomes than medication and lifestyle changes.

Still, cath labs stay busy. A procedure that takes under an hour can generate tens of thousands of dollars. That's a powerful incentive.

4. Robotic Surgery (When It's Not Necessary)

Robots are impressive, and hospitals love advertising them. But

many robotic surgeries show outcomes similar to traditional techniques — with far higher costs.

Once a hospital invests millions in equipment, it must be used often to justify the expense. Guess who feels the nudge?

5. Frequent Advanced Imaging (CTs, MRIs)

Imaging is invaluable — and extraordinarily profitable. Some practices own their own scanners, meaning each referral stays in-house.

That can quietly turn "just to be safe" into a business model. Radiation exposure, incidental findings, and anxiety rarely make the brochure ...

... Now, Aunt Irma isn't telling you to refuse care. She's telling you to slow down.

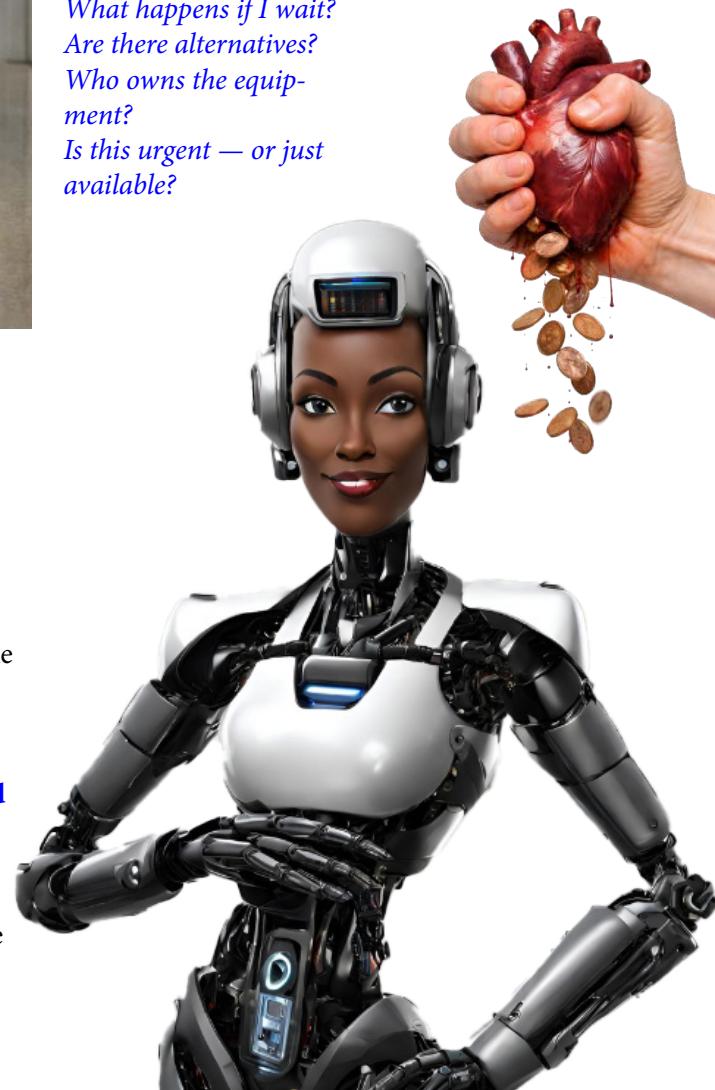
Simply ask:

*What happens if I wait?
Are there alternatives?
Who owns the equipment?
Is this urgent — or just available?*

Medicine works best when patients are informed partners, not passive consumers. The white coat still deserves respect — but the invoice deserves scrutiny.

And, remember, sugar: in healthcare, as in life, urgency often speaks loudest when profit is listening closely.

- TVW Staff



Valley Weekly Senior Editor Wins New Award for His Debut Novel

The Valley Weekly senior editor, Alabama A&M University alumnus and longtime former public relations director Jerome Saintjones has earned another national accolade for his debut novel, "The Chinaberry Tree," which recently received an Honorable Mention Award in the Cultural Diversity category from the Royal Dragonfly Book Awards.

The Royal Dragonfly Book Awards, established in 2011, is an international competition recognizing excellence in literature across more than 70 categories, including fiction, nonfiction and children's literature. Judges evaluate entries based on creativity, originality and overall

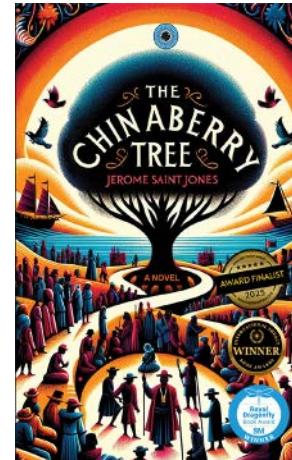


impact, with awards presented only to books that meet a rigorous scoring threshold.

Set in the fictional town of Ebonia, "The Chinaberry Tree" centers on Arnold Giovanni, a white professor at a historically Black college whose curiosity about the culture surrounding him leads to a complex and often uncomfortable journey of self-discovery. Much of the story unfolds inside a neighborhood bar known as The Chinaberry Tree, where Giovanni becomes an uneasy observer

to deeply personal stories of trauma, joy, resilience and Black legacy. Told through a perspective that is intentionally imperfect, the novel examines the limits of allyship, the pull of cultural voyeurism and the weight of historical truth that lingers across generations.

Saintjones' recognition places "The Chinaberry Tree" among a select group of titles honored for their contribution to cultural storytelling. The novel, published in spring 2025, has continued to build momentum on the national stage, earning finalist status in the 2025 American Fiction Awards and a win in the International Impact Book Awards.



"This latest honor is a morale booster," Saintjones said. "It confirms that the story is connecting with readers and that the characters and setting are resonating beyond the page. As a debut novelist later in life, it's gratifying to know people are still willing to

slow down, turn the pages and immerse themselves in another world."

Saintjones retired in May 2023 after more than three decades of service as Alabama A&M's director of public relations, but his creative output has only accelerated since then.

In addition to his fiction work, he recently completed a collaborative book highlighting the First Ladies of Alabama A&M University, authored both extended and abridged poems for the University's 150th anniversary and is currently developing an "as told to" biography centered on a notable Black Alabamian.

He is also preparing to bring "The Chinaberry

Tree" to a new audience through audio, with recording for the audiobook scheduled to begin in late January 2026.

The project will feature narration by Jeremy "Midnite" Michael Durm, an emerging local voice actor whose recent work includes John Hope Bryant's "Financial Literacy for All" and several novels and corporate productions.

"Every chapter of this journey reminds me that stories still matter and that it's never too late to tell one," said Saintjones. "I'm grateful to Alabama A&M University and to readers everywhere who continue to affirm that meaningful stories have a place in our lives."

by Debra Daniel

New Century Teacher Receives Science Ed Award

Animalearn, a national humane science education program, has selected New Century Technology High School science teacher Christine King as an Honorable Mention for our 2025 Humane Science Educator of the Year. As a part of the award, Ms. King will receive a variety of non-animal teaching resources, valued at \$750, that she will use with her New Century Technology High School students.

"Receiving the humane educator honorable mention for my anatomy and physiology class at New Century Technology High School affirms my commitment to humane, animal-centered instruction and helps showcase our program's compassionate, real-world approach to life science education. This recognition energizes my students and community, highlighting how ethical



care for animals strengthens scientific learning and inspires future careers in the life sciences."

Arts Huntsville Celebrates Arts Community Funding

Arts Huntsville and the City of Huntsville celebrated 14 years of artistic excellence tonight at City Hall, awarding the 2026 Huntsville Arts and Cultural Grants to 20 local nonprofit organizations. Sponsored by The Pei Ling Charitable Trust, the event highlighted the city's commitment to a vibrant arts scene and the community-wide impact of local cultural leaders.

The Huntsville City Council awarded \$300,000 in pass-through grant

funding as part of the City's FY26 budget, and eligible local arts organizations completed detailed grant applications in the fall of 2025.

This year, the following 20 Huntsville nonprofit arts organizations received grant awards: Alabama Youth Ballet, Brass Band of Huntsville, Broadway Theatre League, Dance All Productions, Fantasy Playhouse, Huntsville Chamber Music Guild, Huntsville Community Chorus

Association, Huntsville Community Drumline, Huntsville Concert Band, Huntsville Master Chorale, Huntsville Traditional Music Association, Huntsville Youth Orchestra, Independent Music Productions, Inside Out Studio, Inc., Maitland Arts Initiative, Merrimack Hall, Opera Huntsville, Opera Huntsville, Shenanigans Comedy Theatre, Southern Fried Film Festival, and Theatre Huntsville.

Rosetta James Foundation Accepting Scholarship Applications for 2026



The Rosetta James Foundation (RJF) is accepting applications for its annual scholarship award program until Friday, February 14. Awards will be presented at the "Honoring Our

Elders" event at 12 noon on Saturday, March 14, at The Jackson Center in Cummings Research Park.

The scholarships are awarded to deserving students who are commit-

ted to community volunteerism as part of their college experience.

Scholarships are not awarded to graduate students or previous recipients.

Scholarship co-chairs Ja'Lissa Williams Cothron and Morgan Saintjones will be carefully selecting recipients of several Rosetta James Foundation endowed scholarships.

Visit www.rosettajamesfoundation.org for a link to the Scholarship Application.

All criteria are provided.

More Scenes from the 2026 Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast

Sponsored by the Delta Theta Lambda Educational Foundation/Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

(Photos by Anthony Gibson)

Monday, January 19, 2026 - Saturn Ballroom/Von Braun Center
Huntsville, Alabama



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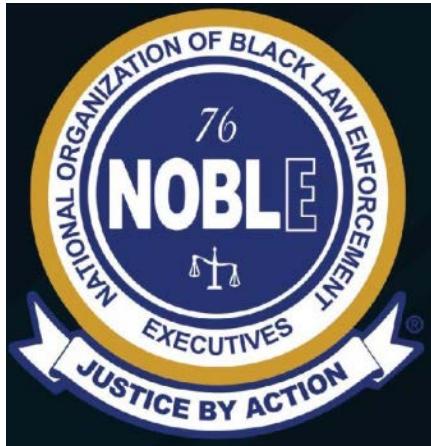
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Scenes from the Alabama, Birmingham Chapter of NOBLE's Scholarship Gala

National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)

Saturday, January 17, 2026 - The Jackson Center

Huntsville, Alabama



Sheriff Derrick Cunningham



Demetria Green - WAAY-TV 31



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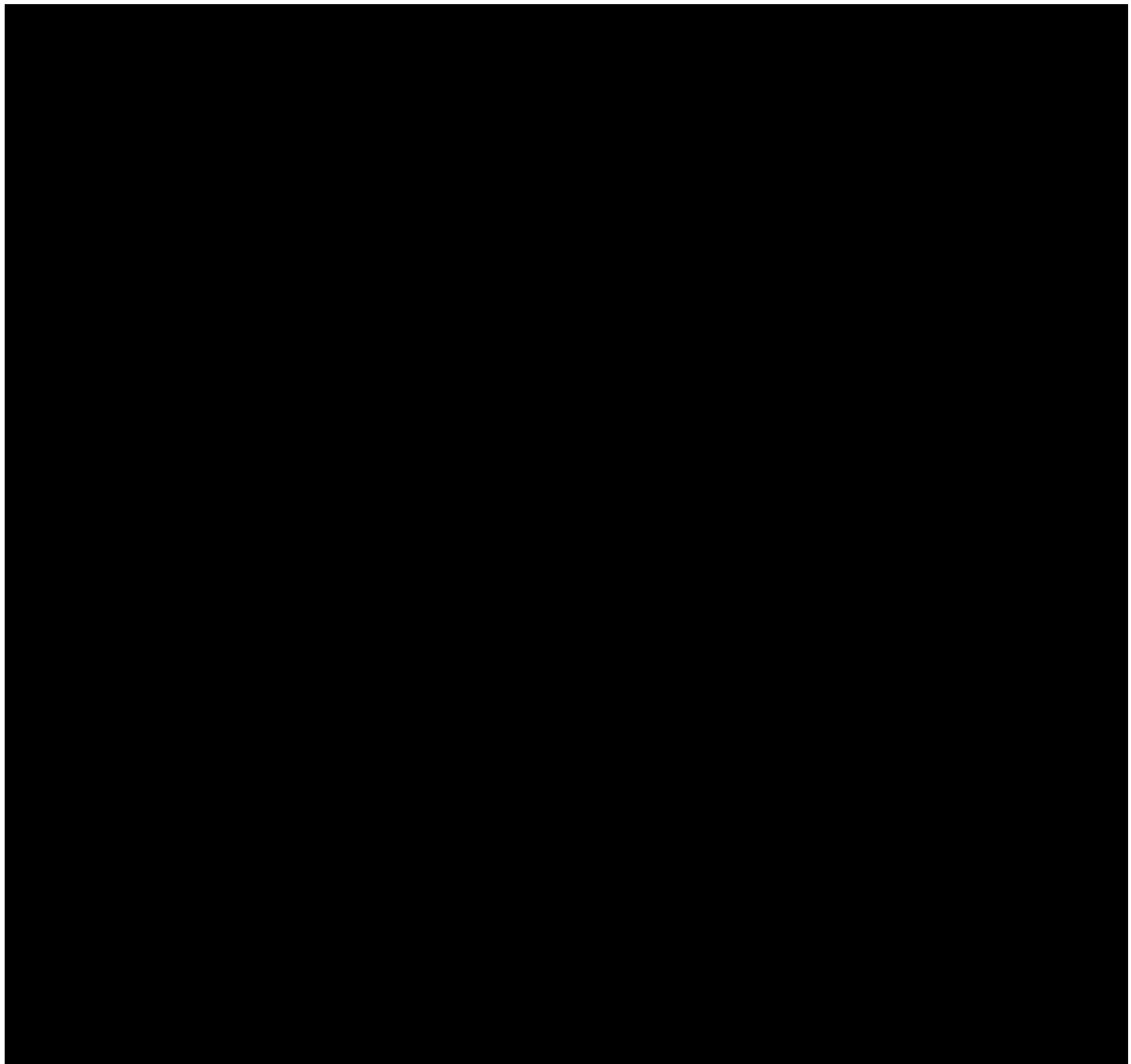
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