



POSITIVE-INSPIRATIONAL-EDUCATIONAL

TVW's Saintjones Pens Provocative **FIRST NOVEL** - p. 9 **FREE**



GLORIA B: In a Blink of an Eye - p. 5



Friday

April 4, 2025

Vol. 11, No. 31

ValleyWeeklyllc.com



BIG KICKOFF FOR JUNE KICKBALL - p. 10

SALUTE!
Rosetta James Foundation
ELDER OF THE WEEK



Dr. Razi Hassan

"The time is always right to do what is right." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

'The People's Patch' Power Stroll Scheduled May 3

The People's Patch Power Stroll, in conjunction with the 100 Alabama Miles Challenge, will take place at The People's Patch Community Farm on May 3, at 3701 Meridian Street.

The 100 Alabama Miles Challenge

urges Alabamians to walk, run, hike, bike, swim, paddle, ride, or roll with family and friends for 100 miles each year. The program encourages participants to get their miles in by visiting Alabama's beautiful

parcs, nature preserves, and rivers.

The People Patch is a 25-acre community farm established in North Huntsville in 2024.

"With rows of planted potatoes and newly established walking trails,

the People's Patch is the perfect place to enjoy nature while getting your steps in," said Commissioner Violet Edwards.

"Our state has over 5,000 miles of trails that offer fantastic experiences

for all Alabamians to have fun and be active," said Brian Rushing, the program's coordinator.

There is no Power Stroll registration; however, register at 100alabamamiles.org for the challenge.

TARCOG to Hold Annual Senior "Rodeo Roundup" at A&M

TARCOG's 38th Annual Senior Fun Fest will have a western Rodeo Roundup theme.

Senior Fun Fest tickets went on sale April 1 for an event

scheduled for Tuesday, **May 13**, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Alabama A&M **Agribition Center** at 4921 Moores Mill Road in Huntsville.

It's going to be a

fun-filled day for up to 1,500 seniors from DeKalb, Jackson, Limestone, Madison and Marshall counties, said Sheila Dessau-Ivey, TARCOG's director

of aging programs. Senior Fun Fest is sponsored yearly by TARCOG and the Madison County Commission.

Advance tickets are \$5 (thru

May 2) and may be purchased at any county senior centers or at the TARCOG Office. For more info, all TARCOG at (256) 830-0818.

Local Environmentalist TIME 2025 Earth Award Recipient



Time has named Alabama resident Dr. Catherine Coleman Flowers one of its six recipients of its 2025 Earth Awards. Other awardees are actor Rainn Wilson;

former U.S. Sen. Bill Frist; Jay Inslee, the co-founder of the U.S. Climate Alliance; Ghanaian Chef Selassie Atadika; and billionaire philanthropist Michael Bloomberg.

This prestigious recognition is an

acknowledgement of Dr. Flowers' contribution to global efforts to serve communities that are endangered due to climate change and environmental challenges.

A native of Lowndes County,

Dr. Flowers has been addressing the need for clean water there for more than 20 years.

The MacArthur Fellow founded CREEJ in 2019. It is headquartered in Huntsville, Ala.

OUC Hosting Prostate Cancer Seminar

The Oakwood University Church (OUC) Health Ministry will host a brunch and learn seminar on prostate cancer on Sunday, April 13, at 10 a.m. at the OUC Family Life Center, 5500 Adventist Boulevard, Huntsville, Ala.

The seminar will increase awareness and educate men and their spouses and families on

"the value of proactively getting knowledge about prostate cancer," according

cancer exams, testing, and early detection. A meal will be served.

The program is free, but registration is required. Register by emailing damcelhaney@comcast.net.



to organizers of the event.

Guest physicians will provide attendees with essential information about the importance of regular prostate

For additional information, interested persons may also contact Patti Conwell at (256) 714-3822 or e-mail communication@oucsda.org.

The Valley Weekly

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Valley Weekly Washington One Minute



by Ron Hamm

Here are the latest top issues and events in Washington:

1. CONGRESS. The Senate and House are in session. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), who opposes proxy voting on the House floor that was previously permitted during the COVID-19 pandemic, will likely seek to block a discharge petition by GOP Rep. Anna Paulina Luna (R-FL) that would have allowed proxy voting for new and expectant mothers and their spouses. The House will also vote on a bill aimed at prohibiting nationwide injunctions by federal judges, which is an effort to preempt a more aggressive GOP backbencher initiative to impeach U.S. District Judge James Boasberg, who has made rulings that have angered the President regarding deportations and the recent Signal app controversy.

2. SIGNAL CHAT SCANDAL. On Wednesday, Senate Armed Services Committee Chair Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Democratic Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-RI) sent a letter to the Defense Department's acting inspector general demanding more information about a March 11 Signal group chat on which Vice President Vance, National Security Advisor Waltz, Defense Secretary Hegseth and other senior administration officials apparently discussed classified information pertaining to military operations against the Houthis in Yemen. On Thursday, U.S.

District Judge James Boasberg ordered the administration to preserve chats that senior officials conducted on the Signal messaging app, in response to a lawsuit alleging that the app's automatic delete function left the messages at risk of being destroyed in violation of the Federal Records Act.

3. EXECUTIVE BRANCH. Last Wednesday, the President announced that he plans to impose an additional 25% tariff on \$406 billion in imported cars, light trucks, and auto parts, hitting key trading partners Mexico, Canada, South Korea, Japan and Germany, beginning on Thursday (April 3). Autos imported from Canada and Mexico would be taxed based on the amount of non-U.S. content in the vehicle. The President also announced that on Wednesday (April 2) the U.S. will impose new reciprocal tariffs on all countries, contradicting earlier statements by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and White House economic advisor Kevin Hassett that only 10 to 15 countries would face reciprocal tariffs. Last Thursday, the President abruptly withdrew the nomination of Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) to be Ambassador to the U.N., saying that it was more important for her to stay in the House and maintain the GOP's 218-213 majority. Last Thursday, the President signed another executive order aimed at what he labeled "rogue law

firms," by banning mega-firm Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP from federal contracts and prohibiting access to government buildings. Reportedly, previously targeted firms Paul Weiss and Skadden Arps have negotiated deals with the White House to take themselves off the target list in exchange for ending diversity policies and pledging tens of millions of dollars in pro bono work for conservative causes.

4. FEDERAL JOB CUTS. The Washington Post reported on Thursday that, according to an internal White House memo, federal officials are preparing for agencies to cut between 8 and 50% of their employees as part of the administration push to shrink the 2.3-million federal workforce. The cuts vary widely among agencies, with a 33% cut at the IRS, 28% at the National Science Foundation, 25% cut at the Interior Department, and 2% at the Defense Department (with the White House staff exempt from cuts).

5. SUPREME COURT. At oral arguments on Monday, the court will take up a tax dispute between the State of Wisconsin and the social service organization Catholic Charities, which sued when Wisconsin denied the group's application for an exemption from a state unemployment tax that the state gives to churches, religious schools, and some religious groups. Last Friday, the administration asked the court to allow it to enforce a March 15 executive order that directs government officials to quickly remove, without a hearing, noncitizens who are designated as members of a Venezuelan gang under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798. Earlier this month, U.S. District Judge James Boasberg barred the federal government from removing any of

the alleged gang members, or anyone else, under the 18th-century law that until now has only been invoked during wartime (and most recently over 80 years ago). On Wednesday, the court in a 7-2 vote (with only Thomas and Alito dissenting) upheld a Biden-era rule regulating "ghost guns" that are assembled from kits and are unserialized and untraceable.

6. STUDENT LOANS. On March 26, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) reopened online applications for income-driven repayment (IDR) plans and federal student loan consolidation after a temporary pause. The pause was initiated to align with a recent injunction from the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals, which halted aspects of the Biden Administration's Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) Plan. The injunction impacted the online application forms,

necessitating revisions to comply with the court's ruling and temporarily rendering the application unavailable online. During the downtime, borrowers maintained the option to submit paper loan consolidation applications. The updated online application now allows borrowers to apply for Income-Based Repayment (IBR), Pay As You Earn (PAYE), and Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR) Plans. The Department of Education emphasized that the revised forms are compliant with current legal requirements, restoring online access for borrowers to manage their federal student loan repayment options.

7. FEBRUARY INFLATION REPORT. Markets fell sharply on Friday after the Commerce Department released data showing an unexpectedly steep increase in consumer prices for February. The personal

consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rose 2.5% over the past year, while the core index (excluding food and energy prices) surged to a hotter-than-expected 2.8%. On a monthly basis, the PCE index advanced by 0.3%, and core PCE increased by 0.4%. Additionally, the University of Michigan announced that its consumer sentiment index fell for the third consecutive month in March, with Republicans joining independents and Democrats in expressing increasingly negative expectations for their personal finances, business conditions, unemployment, and inflation.

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ON THIS DAY

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr., a leader of the American civil rights movement, was assassinated while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, where he had traveled to support a strike by the city's sanitation workers.

- National Park Service

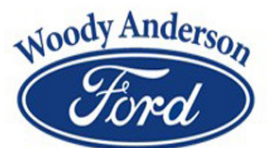


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The Valley Weekly

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Editorial: A Literary Debut that Demands Attention

For more than a decade, our esteemed Senior Editor, Jerome Saintjones, has been a guiding voice at this newspaper, shaping the stories that matter most to our community. Today, we proudly celebrate him not for his work behind the scenes, but for his bold and thought-provoking literary debut. His novel, *The Chinaberry Tree*, published by Stillman Hill Press [New York], is an unflinching exploration of the African-American experience—one that demands attention, conversation, and reflection. With a publication date of April 11th, *The Chinaberry Tree* might help us discover a passion for reading again!

Saintjones' novel follows the journey of a white professor at a historically Black college in a small Southern town. Through his obsessive fascination with Black culture and Black women, the professor finds himself drawn to The Chinaberry Tree, a local bar that becomes his window into a world both near and distant from his own. There, he befriends patrons and overhears conversations that reveal deeply personal, often painful, accounts of navigating the American experience as Black men and women. The professor stands at the threshold—engaged yet an outsider, intrigued yet uncertain of his place.

What makes *The Chinaberry Tree* particularly compelling is its fearless approach to complex racial and cultural dynamics. Saintjones does not shy away from

difficult questions or uncomfortable truths. Instead, he crafts a narrative that is as raw as it is eloquent, as unsettling as it is enlightening. This is not a story told through the lens of voyeurism, but rather one that acknowledges the limitations and consequences of observing from the outside.

For those who have followed Saintjones' work at this paper, his ability to illuminate truth with sharp clarity will come as no surprise. His dedication to storytelling, his passion for nuance, and his deep understanding of history and identity are all evident in his first novel. *The Chinaberry Tree* is not just a work of fiction—it is a conversation starter, a mirror held up to society, and a narrative that refuses to be ignored.

We invite our readers to support our colleague as he embarks on this exciting new chapter. More than that, we encourage you to read *The Chinaberry Tree* not just as a novel, but as an invitation to reflect on history, race, and the spaces we inhabit within those narratives.

Jerome Saintjones has long been a champion of stories that matter. Now, it is his turn to be heard. Let's listen.

Until next week,

Dorothy



APRIL 4 - MAYA ANGELOU - Maya Angelou (born Marguerite Annie Johnson) was an American poet, singer, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and is credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees. Angelou is best known for her series of seven autobiographies, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), tells of her life up to the age of 17 and brought her international recognition and acclaim.



- BlackCelebrityBirthdays.org

THE VALLEY WEEKLY
**VALLEY
DEATHS**



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Funeral service for **MR. THADDEUS "JEFF ROY" STEWART SR.** (b. 1992) will be Sunday, April 6, at Douglas Tabernacle Primitive Baptist Church, 1429 Calvary Street, NW, Huntsville, Ala., at 2 p.m.

Funeral services will be announced at a later date for **MS. MARQUELLE IVEY** (b. 1973); **MR. PAUL "P. B." BRADFORD** (b. 1951); **MS. ANN POOLE** (b. 1941).

NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME

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(256) 539-8189 - www.nelmsmemorial.net

Funeral services will be announced later for **MR. LARRY COWAN** (b. 1957); **MR. THERMAN M. JEFFERSON** (b. 1957); **MR. GREGORY CRUTCHER** (b. 1981); and **MS. EDNA FAYE JEFFERSON** (b. 1958).

Funeral service for **MR. MICHAEL D. WILLIAMS** (b. 1955) was on Saturday, March 29, at Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church with Pastor O. Wendell Davis, officiating.

Funeral service for **MR. JOE WILLIE ROBINSON** (b. 1966) was Friday, March 28, in the Nelms Memorial Chapel.

ROYAL FUNERAL HOME

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Funeral services will be announced at a later date for **MRS. ROBBIN CLAYBROOK** (b. 1956) and **MR. JOHN S. MOORE** (b. 1930).

Funeral service will be held for **MRS. GWENDOLYN JOAN JONES** (b. 1941) on Saturday, April 5, at Royal Chapel of Memories with Dr. Randy B. Kelley officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. FLORINE MCCURDY JORDAN** (b. 1937) was Tuesday, April 1, at Royal Chapel of Memories with Reverend Debra McGlathery Holden officiating.

Funeral service for **MS. JACQUELINE TONEY** (b. 1963) was Sunday, March 30, 2025, at Taylor's Chapel Church, 3100 Stringfield Road NW, Huntsville, Ala., with Pastor Allen Sanders officiating.

Funeral service for **MRS. DOROTHY J. LOCKETT** (b. 1946) was Sunday, March 30, at Syler Tabernacle, 904 Oakwood Ave NW, Huntsville, Ala., with Pastor Billy Jones officiating.

The Valley Weekly
**Spiritual
Game Plan**
PRESTON BROWN'S



Today's Spiritual Game Plan: "Anxious for Nothing"

Philippians 4:7 says, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

We all worry about things from time to time, but it will get us nowhere. Worry will cloud your mind and keep you from making the decisions that you need to make right now, in the present.

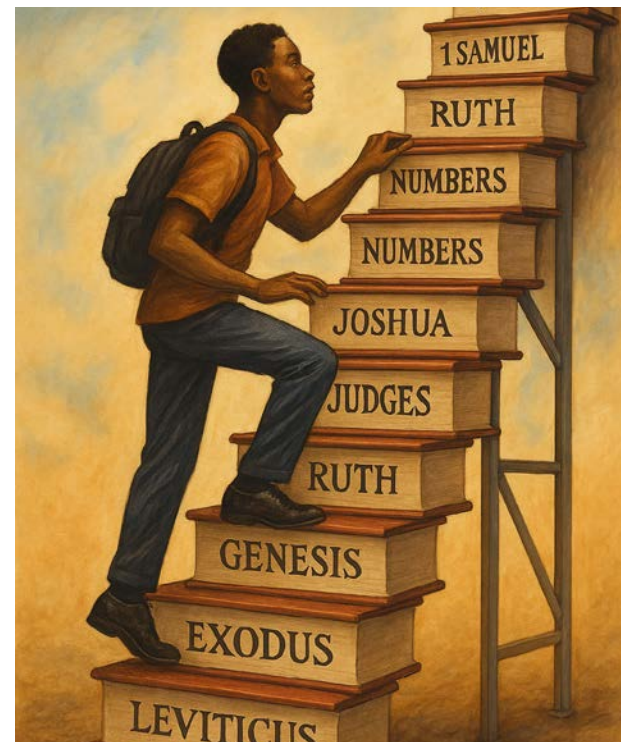
Worry does absolutely no good. It does not solve your problems; in fact, it could actually increase your problems. So the thing we need to start doing is to replace our worries with prayer. You see, a healthy mind is not a confused mind. If we are "in touch" with God, we won't be confused. God is not the author of confusion.

If we want to hear from God, we need to keep our minds in a peaceful state, and to do this we have to pay attention to our thoughts. Today, what thoughts are weighing you down? It's time that we all realized that the enemy doesn't

want your stuff; the enemy wants your peace. Prayer: Dear God, help us to replace our worries with prayers and thanksgiving.


Question: Do you allow the worries of life to upset the peace that God has provided for you? What can you do about it?

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 Purpose for
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Is Andrew Cuomo the 21st Century's "Comeback Kid 2.0"— Or Just a "Clout Chaser"?

"For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief."

- Proverbs 24:16

In 2021, Andrew Cuomo resigned as three-term Governor of New York amid sexual misconduct allegations. His fall was swift—just a year after winning an Emmy for his COVID leadership briefings and landing a book deal on crisis management.



Now, he's testing a political return. On March 1, PBS.org reported that Former Gov. Cuomo announces run for New York City mayor, aiming for a political comeback | PBS News - armed with an \$8-million war chest and frontrunner status. But the question is:

Comeback—or Ego Trip 2.0?

Cuomo's return lacks what true comebacks require: **contrition**. He hasn't publicly acknowledged wrong, taken ownership, or demonstrated personal change. Instead, he's simply reappearing—repackaged.

As I teach in my **Ego-holism Recovering (EHR)** leadership model:

Ego unchecked = trust unearned.

Trust unearned = comeback unlikely.

Cuomo exemplifies what I call "**ego-holism**"—the addiction to self above truth, team, or trust. His pattern: image-first leadership, delayed accountability, and dismissal of critics. And now, an attempt at resurrection without repentance.

Reputation Repair without Relationship Repair?

This moment highlights **Step #3** of my A-SILVERPATH leadership framework for emerging leaders: "**I**" = **Identify opportunities where others only see problems**.

But real leaders identify opportunities to **heal, serve, and restore**—not just rebrand. Cuomo's seeing opportunity, yes—but only for himself. He's seeking **reputation repair** without **relationship repair**.

That's not comeback leadership. That's **opportunism**.

A Bill Clinton do-over?

Governor Bill Clinton was once dubbed "The Comeback Kid" in 1992, when following sexual misconduct and draft dodging allegations, and losing the first Democratic primary contest in Iowa, he bounced back in the New Hampshire primary. But he paired his comeback with public remorse. Cuomo skips the humility—and hopes we skip the memory.

Silver-Mettle Leaders—those who lead from the middle—understand this: The spotlight may reveal you, but it's your work in the shadows that redeems you.

Let Cuomo's story be a mirror, not a model. And may we all detox ego, before ego detonates.



Tim Allston

Leadership Player-Coach & Four-time
Amazon Best-Selling Author
"Leading from the Middle"

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Email Address: leadingfromthemiddle.tim@gmail.com

Millennial Moment

by
Gloria B. Caldwell

In a Blink of an Eye ...

Life unfolds at lightning speed—sometimes it feels surreal. One moment you're contemplating dinner plans, and the next, you find yourself in an unpredictable whirlwind you never saw coming. This ebb and flow of life can often lead us into situations that feel completely out of our control. So, what do you do when faced with chaos? How do you navigate through the uncontrollable?



The answer is simple: Control what you can control. Life will inevitably throw curveballs; as long as you're breathing, unexpected turns are inevitable. The key lies in your responses and reactions. You have a choice: you can either lose your cool or take a step back to assess your circumstances and options. Yes, some options may seem less than ideal, but every challenge has a purpose.

Perhaps that illness is a lesson in resilience. That

exhaustion could be a signal for a much-needed break, prompting reflection. A breakup may invite you to reevaluate your desires, encouraging self-love and compassion towards others. Each circumstance calls for introspection and accountability.

Once you let go of what you cannot change, you'll find peace in the under-

standing that situations can shift in the blink of an eye. As long as you're still breathing, there's potential for life to align with your dreams. So, hang in there. Control what you can control and Lace Up! Let's Go!

God loves you, and so do I.

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

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The Valley Weekly

VALLEY EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

April 3-5
Comedian
"Henry Cho: The Empty Nest Tour"
Huntsville Levity Live
2012 Memorial Parkway SW
Huntsville, Ala.
Time: Varies

April 5
2025 STEAMposium
Sponsors: 100 Black Men of Greater Huntsville, Inc., in partnership with the Greater Huntsville Chapter of the Links, Inc., the National Society of Black Engineers Professionals North Alabama Chapter, and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women (Huntsville)
Calhoun Community College (Wynn Drive, Huntsville)
8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Tangled String Proudly Presents
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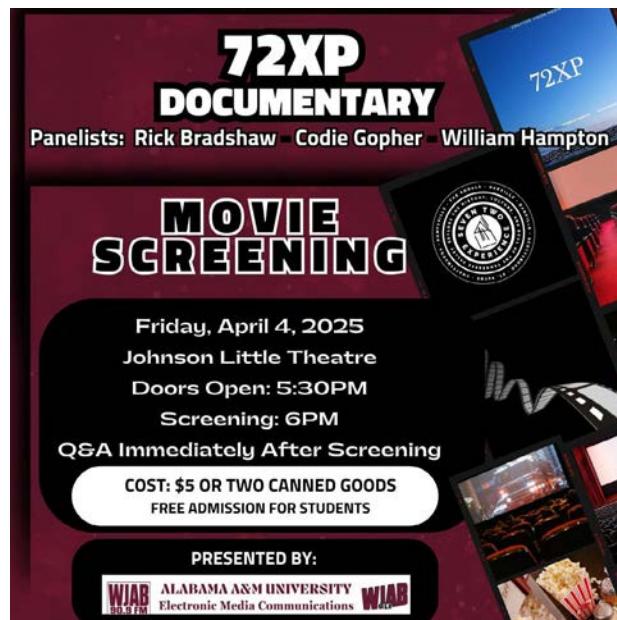
Danny Davis Studio RR7 of Tangle String Studios
Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment
2211 Seminole Drive SW
Huntsville, Ala.
7:30-9 p.m.

April 7
Girls on the Run
Fern Bell Recreation Center

107A Sanders Road
Huntsville, Ala.
4-5:30 p.m.

April 8
"Chicago Stepping"
Ballroom
Robert "Bob" Harrison
Senior Wellness and Advocacy Center
6156 Pulaski Pike NW
Huntsville, Ala. - (256) 519-2040
4 p.m.

April 9
Comedians
"Levity Live Open Mic Competition"
Huntsville Levity Live
2012 Memorial Parkway SW
Huntsville, Ala.
7 p.m.



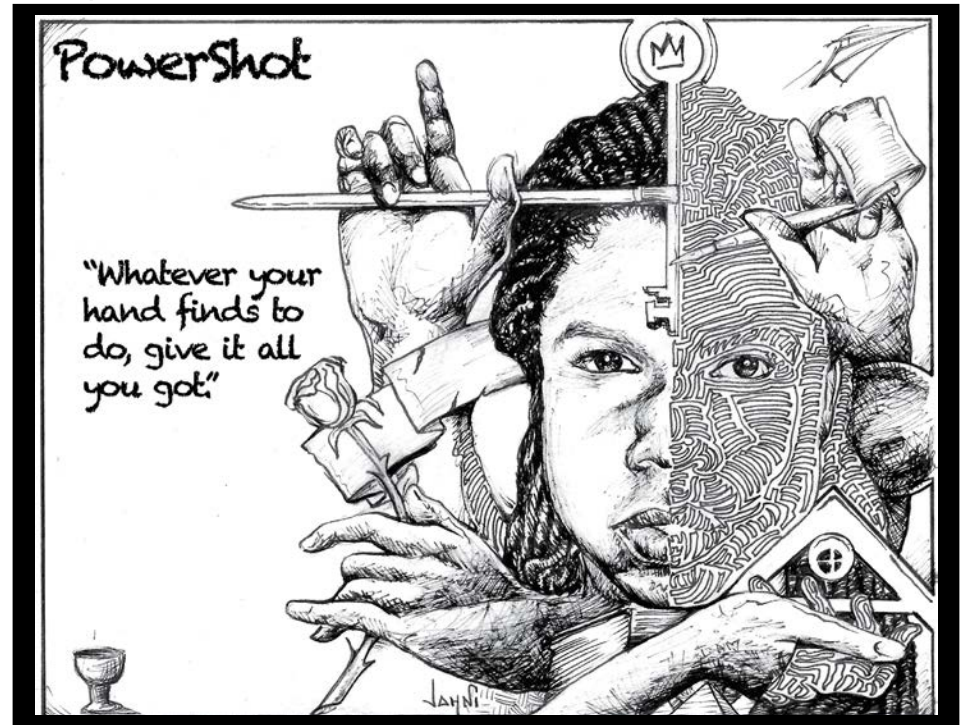
72XP DOCUMENTARY
Panelists: Rick Bradshaw - Codie Gopher - William Hampton

MOVIE SCREENING

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"Forgiveness is not an occasional act,
it is a constant attitude."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



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

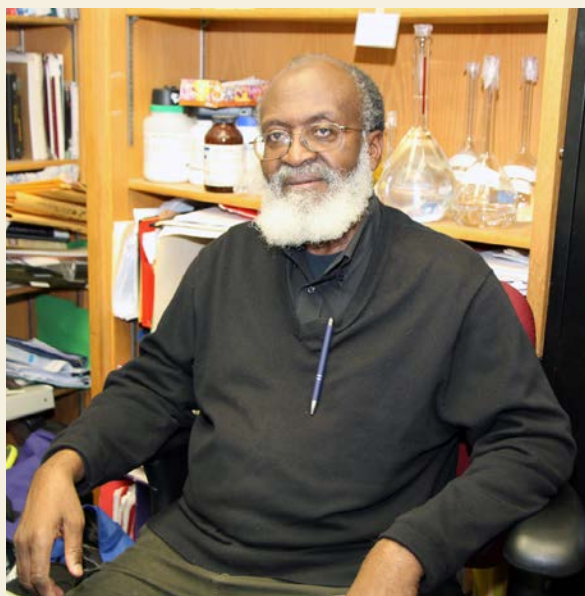
Dr. Razi Hassan

Dr. Razi (Bobby Blockum) Hassan is a native of Birmingham, Ala., where he was educated in the public school system before pursuing his post-secondary education in chemistry and mathematics at Knoxville College (Tenn.). He studied physical chemistry at Princeton University before eventually settling at New York University, where he earned the Ph.D. degree in theoretical chemistry.

Hassan devoted some 25 years as community organizer with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), registering African-American voters in Arkansas and Mississippi in the mid-1960s.

During those eventful years, he also helped to organize a credit union and school for dropouts in Trenton, N.J. At the onset of the 1970s, Hassan organized food co-ops, a community literacy program and another school for high school dropouts as part of his service at the Harlem Mosque in New York. Moreover, from 1990-97, he was counselor, GED instructor and Imam (minister) at Limestone Correctional Facility in Alabama.

Hassan concurrently directed a tutorial center for mathematics and



chemistry in Huntsville, Ala., from 1993-98.

The educator was affiliated with Alabama A&M University for over 25 years, primarily as an associate professor of chemistry at Alabama A&M University and director of the chemistry and mathematics tutorial center.

In 2004, Hassan led a team of AAMU students on a NASA-sponsored rocket launch competition in Manchester, Tenn. However, the goal at that time was two miles (more than 10,000 feet). A Proteus rocket, fondly named "Butch" after the school mascot, reached 1.8 miles, falling short of rival UAH, which achieved 1.9 miles. However, the UAH rocket was not successfully

retrieved. This led to an overall win by the AAMU team.

Additionally, Hassan has managed numerous government programs with aggregate budgets exceeding \$12 million in his capacity as a project director or co-director, coordinator, budget manager or principal investigator.

His numerous affiliations include American Chemical Society; an advocate for the homeless through the First Stop organization; National Conference For Community Justice (NCCJ), Board Member; Interfaith Mission Service (IMS); leader of a local mosque; Assistant Iman, W.D. Muhammad Muslim Center; and many others.

"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

Sunday, April 6, 2025

Fifth Sunday

in

Lent



(Track 2, Year C)

First Lesson:

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalms 126

Second Lesson:

Philippians 3:4b-14

GOSPEL:

John 12:1-8



Come Discover
the Magic on
the Mountain!

No matter what time of year you explore Burritt on the Mountain, there is something delightful and new to see. And no matter how young – or old – you are, there is something for you on the Mountain! If you've never visited, you're in for a treat. If it's been awhile, what are you waiting for? Come on up and let the Magic begin!

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OPEN: April-October: Tuesday - Saturday: 9 am - 5 pm & Sunday: noon - 5pm
November-March: Tuesday - Saturday: 10am - 4pm & Sunday: noon - 4pm

NOTES OF A NATIVE SON

Taking the Stand

by afroblastik [John 'Jahmi' Moore]



Last week while sitting in my studio working on a red clay piece, the words of an artist mentor came to me. He had talked at length with me on the unique nature of my work and ended with, "Nobody has the connection to this material like you do. Nobody is doing this." The real vote of confidence was when he requested to trade a piece of work. Knowing the price points of his work, that gesture proved that he also recognized the value of mine.

When I looked around me at the array of red clay values, alchemy comes to mind. I'm not just painting with a substance. This material is imbued with the blood of our ancestors. I am painting with an iron-rich life substance - a conductor in the highest order. That is golden. My mind then turned to an often overlooked detail in the legendary story of David and Goliath. David, the shepherd boy, had honed

his skill on the hillsides near his family's home. He had forged his will out there in solitude where no one else could see. He had built his confidence, his faith muscles in the crucible of time and the elements where he was alone guarding and caretaking for sheep. Before David stepped onto any battlefield, before he took up his sling, before he walked up on a giant that punked seasoned warriors—he made sure his actual compensation was clear. All the accolades, awards, and pats on the back aside. He was making sure he was getting paid.

Three times, as the story goes, David asked what would be given to the man who defeated Goliath. Not once. Not twice. Three times. This wasn't arrogance. It wasn't greed. It was an understanding of the value of what he carried: a combination of skill, will, and confidence (faith) that made him uniquely



capable of achieving what no one else would or could. David didn't assume he

would be taken care of just because he was doing the right thing or doing a good

job. He ensured that what he brought to the table was recognized and would be rewarded accordingly.

Yet, in creative fields—and in life—many of us fail to take this stance. We discount ourselves to get the commission, the job, to be liked, to gain acceptance, or simply because we fear that if we demand our worth, we'll be passed over. All too often we take far less than we should, shrinking our worth. The reality is this: the world will treat us with the value we place upon ourselves. Oprah Winfrey sealed her bid as the queen of daytime talkshows. Jay-Z is not just a businessman, he is a business man. K.Dot made it clear for all time: They not like us. David used his sling and not the king's sword, shield, or armor. Use what **you** have in order to do what **you** do. Preparation in skill, will, and confidence sets the foundation for success, but declaring your value is

what ensures you receive it.

"In business as in life -- You don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate."

- Chester L. Karrass

Skill is the ability—honed, tested, and proven. Will is the internal drive—the persistence to see things through despite the size of the opposition, the odds. Faith is the confidence that your preparation will meet the opportunity. The sum total of these three should be your value, your worth, not just in theory but in real dollars and sense. Yes, I did mean sense. So, the next time you step to an opportunity, ask yourself: Am I walking in with phenomenal skill, relentless will, and unbreakable faith? And just as important—am I making sure that my value is recognized before I take the first step? David's victory wasn't just about courage. It was about knowing his worth. Ours should be, too.

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“The Chinaberry Tree” Ends Senior Editor’s Decades-Long Dream Project

After decades of delaying his most passionate project, the more than 30-year director of public relations at Alabama A&M University has completed his first novel, *The Chinaberry Tree*, which will be available worldwide upon its April 11, 2025, publication date or via pre-order.

Jerome Saintjones, only recently retired from AAMU following 32 years of service, also received the Ed.S. degree in higher education administration from that historically black college. He earlier served a decade working in public relations at Tuskegee University, his Alma Mater. During that period, he completed a master’s degree in higher education administration at Auburn University. It

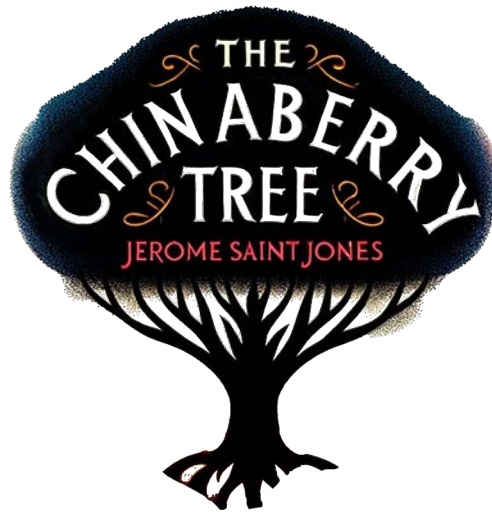
was only after retirement that he completed the dream he had held deep within for years.

“I’d be the first to admit that *The Chinaberry Tree* isn’t for everyone,” said Saintjones, “but it is keenly important to me that the book comes across as immensely engaging, even if sometimes crude, provocative and unapologetic. That’s primarily been the world as I’ve seen it and I, in turn, have held no punches; there’s no tactful P.R. guy smoothing things over.”

The 250-page book opens with the stream-of-consciousness meltdown of Arnold Giovanni, a white professor



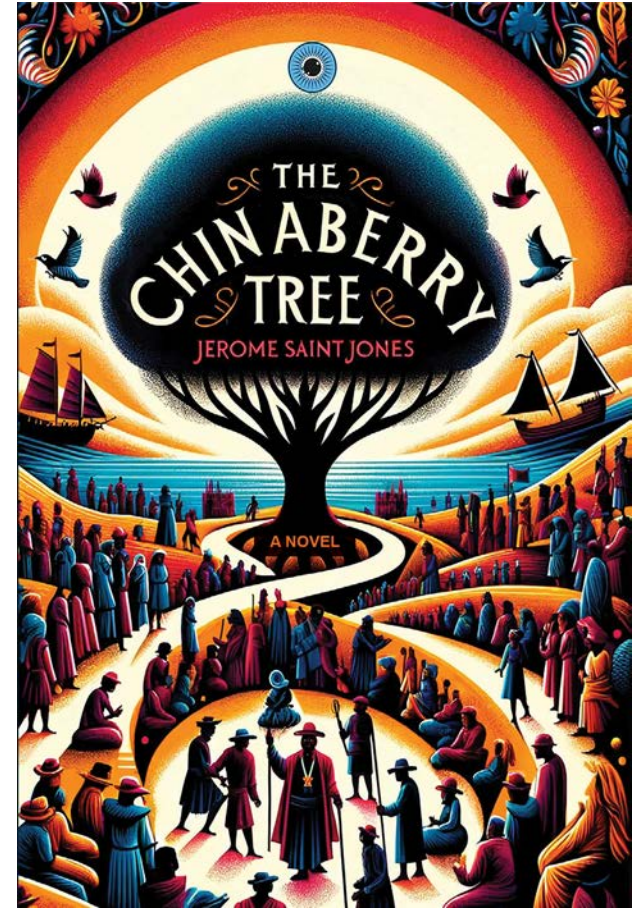
at a black college in a small Southern town.



Arnold has developed an obsessive fascination for black culture and ... black women. Through *The Chinaberry Tree*, the local bar, he has been able to befriend several patrons and even to eavesdrop on others. Like a sly, modern-day Chaucer, Arnold has retrieved revealing stories of their journeys through the American experience, while expertly being “in” the [black] world but not necessarily “of” that world.

On Judgment Day, however, a heated conversation ensues at *The Chinaberry Tree*, and Arnold too freely chirps in as one of the guys. This time, Bo Willie, the bar’s co-owner and a Vietnam vet often plagued by flashbacks, stops him in his tracks with a deceptively simple question.

But those few words launch the stream of consciousness tirade going on inside Arnold’s brain when the novel opens, spinning him across time dimensions. The “tales” that follow replay the intricacies of the several lives “colonized” by Arnold’s little journal in his personal quest to delve into an authentic black experience.



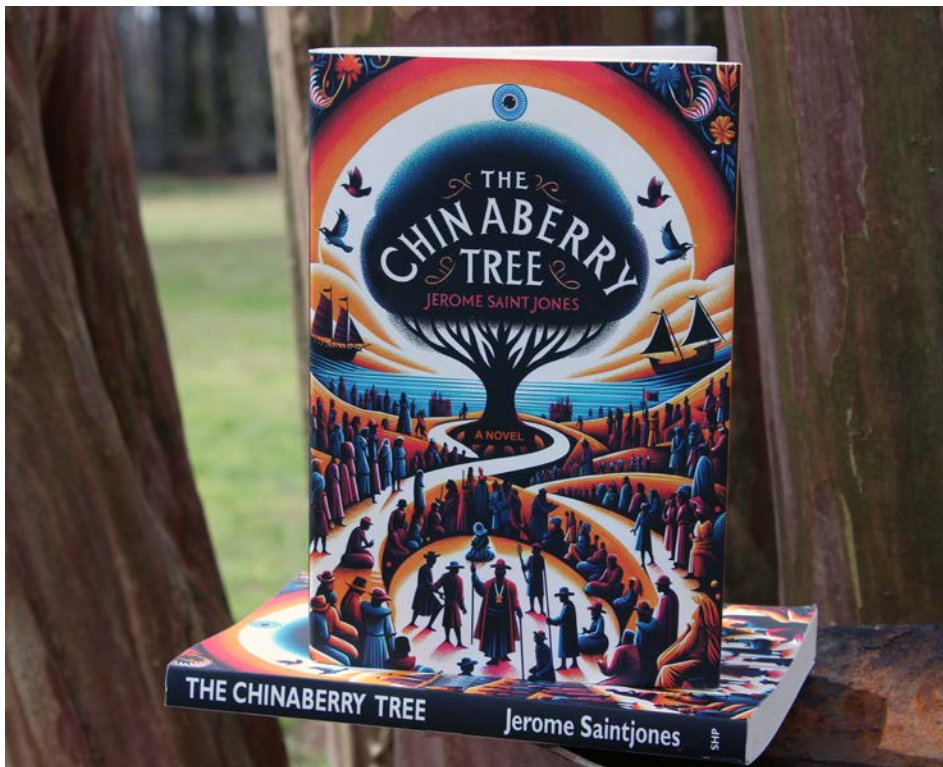
And, while he may have secured some points toward becoming a sanctioned part of the “we,” an imposter’s day of reckoning is upon him. Can he bounce back? Should he even try? It’s all an invaluable and timeless lesson about the human experience.

“*The Chinaberry Tree* likely covers every emotion possible,” Saintjones said, “and, at a time

when attention comes at a premium, I hope it will capture readers until the very last page.”

A native of Tuscaloosa, Ala., Saintjones is a graduate of each of Alabama’s three land-grant universities: Tuskegee, Auburn and Alabama A&M. He and his wife Marilyn, of Los Angeles, who once briefly served as secretary to civil rights icon and attorney Fred D. Gray, reside in Huntsville and have one daughter, Morgan.

For more info, visit thechinaberrytree2025.com, Amazon.com, your favorite book store or e-mail TheChinaberryTree@aol.com.



The Legacy Center/ASAP Kicks Off Plans for June Community Tournament

Calvary Hill Community Center - Huntsville, Ala. (Photos by J. Saintjones)

Thursday, March 27, 2025

