

Outpacing Artificial Intelligence, p. 8

FREE

Friday

April 16, 2021

Vol. 7, No. 32

ValleyWeeklyllc.com

RICE: Deficits & Destiny, p. 6

Dr. Horace Rice, p. 6

*"People do not lack strength;
they lack will."*

- Victor Hugo



Long-Awaited Magic City Classic Scheduled

Witness the 79th football clash between Alabama A&M University and Alabama State University, two in-state SWAC rivals who come together every year to put on the No. 1 HBCU Classic in the country.

The event will be held Saturday, April 17, at 6:30 p.m. The Magic City Classic is the largest historically black college and university (HBCU) football game in the country.

AAMU and ASU play in the game annually at historic Legion Field in Birmingham, Ala.

Festivities (before COVID-19) surrounding the game have included the Classic Kickoff, Magic City Classic Parade, Tailgate Party and the famed halftime show performed by the Mighty Marching Hornets and the Marching Maroon and White.

The all-time Magic City Classic record is 40-34-4 with AAMU leading the series.

For more information, visit magiccityclassic.com.

N. Huntsville Celebrates Opening of Shurney Legacy Center

North Huntsville citizens celebrated the opening of the Dr. Robert Shurney Legacy Center and North Huntsville Public Library Wednesday April 7.

Dr. Robert Ellerston Shurney, for whom the center is named, was born in Dublin, Georgia, in 1921, and served in World War II before earning a B.S. in physics and electrical engineering from Tennessee State University in 1962.

Shurney came to MSFC in 1962 and was assigned to the Mass Properties Branch. Later, he transferred to the Human Factors, Man/Systems, and Integration Branch. In 1967, he held responsibility for the MSFC Aircraft Zero-G Simulation Program, where he worked on the Lunar Roving Vehicle program. He also served as the program manager and coordinator for KC-135 Aircraft Zero-G Simulation Requirements working closely with the Skylab missions, even developing the waste control system for that program. Shurney published several NASA Technical Memorandums



and Papers related to microgravity research for national scientific journals.

In 1986, Shurney earned a Ph.D. in physics from Columbia Pacific University in San Rafael, Calif. After 28 years working with NASA, Shurney retired in 1990. He died in 2007.

The library houses multiple study areas, a children's space program. It also features some of the latest technologies such as a workforce development lab, a makerspace with a 3-D printer and an automated sorting machine. The North Huntsville Public Library was the previous site for the former Berachah Academy and the Bessie K. Russell Library. The facility is now a 19,000 square foot library with state of the art amenities to meet the needs of the northside citizens.

On hand at the grand opening to offer remarks were Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle, District 1 Council Member Devyn Keith, Darrell Shurney, (son of Dr. Robert Shurney); Kim Lewis, chair of the Huntsville Library Capital Campaign; and Dave Hargrove, Board Chair of Redstone Federal Credit Union. Pastor Carlton Byrd of the Oakwood Seventh Day Adventist Church (where the Shurney family held membership) gave the closing blessing. Also in attendance were children of Dr. Shurney, who traveled from California and Michigan. Funding for the project was made through the generous support of the City of Huntsville, and several businesses and individuals.

by Robert Drake

City, A&M Will Still Require Masks

While the State of Alabama's mask mandate expired Friday, April 9, at 5 p.m., that does not mean everyone should toss their face coverings.

For instance, City Hall and municipal offices, along with Huntsville Hospital and many businesses and entities, including Alabama A&M University, will still require masks until a larger percentage of the community is vaccinated and the number of positive COVID-19 cases remains low.

"We're making progress, so please get the vaccine,

sanitize, separate and mask up where needed," commented Mayor Tommy Battle in his weekly e-newsletter.

Later on Friday, April 9, AAMU informed students, faculty, staff and campus visitors that the University would "continue to follow federal best practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19."

"Please continue practicing social distancing, washing hands, and self-monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms," wrote AAMU Vice President for Student Affairs Gary Crosby.

The Valley Weekly

INSIDE THIS ISSUE!

Washington in One Minute, Page 2

Valley Deaths, Page 3

Preston Brown's Champion Game Plan, Page 3

PowerShots, Page 4

tim allston: Perspectives, Page 5

Called 2 Preach, Page 6

Spotlight on Our Elders, Page 6

Valley Events, Page 8

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Washington in One Minute



Here are the happenings in Washington, D.C., this week:

1. **ON THE FLOOR.** The House and Senate return to session this week. The House, among other items, will vote on the Paycheck Fairness Act, which will strengthen legal tools to eradicate gender-based wage discrimination (which passed during the last Congress 242-187) and a bill to require employers to develop and implement workplace violence prevention plans to protect nurses, physicians, social workers, and emergency responders (which also passed in the last Congress 251-158). The Senate will return to the consideration of Biden Administration nominees, starting with Transportation Deputy Secretary-designate Polly Trottenberg and will also take up the COVID hate crimes bill. The real action this week in Congress will be behind the scenes as House and Senate leaders begin working with their Members to devise a legislative plan, including committee consideration, for President Biden's \$2 trillion American Jobs Plan infrastructure bill, made somewhat easier by the

Senate parliamentarian's ruling last Monday allowing Senate Democrats to use the FY2021 Budget Resolution a second time to activate the budget reconciliation mechanism

to expedite passage of the plan. House Speaker Pelosi has announced it is her goal to approve the infrastructure bill on the House floor by July 4th.

2. **BIDEN 100 DAYS.** Last week, President Biden announced 3 major items: (1) a package of 6 executive actions on gun control; (2) his budget outline for FY2022, and (3) a 36-member bipartisan commission to study structural changes to the U.S. Supreme Court. Last Friday, he released his FY 2022 budget request totaling \$1.52 trillion, which includes \$769 billion for non-defense domestic discretionary programs (a 16% increase) and \$753 billion for national defense funding (a 1.5% increase). The FY 22 budget and press release can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fy-2022-discretionary-request/>. A notable innovation in the Biden budget is the creation of a new agency at the National Institutes of Health, which would get \$6.5 billion to develop new strategies to treat and prevent diseases like Alzheimer's, diabetes, and cancer. On Monday, the President participated in a

CEO summit on the semiconductor shortage and hosted a meeting at the White House of 8 Democratic and Republican Members of the House and Senate to discuss his infrastructure package. The Members were: House - Reps. Don Young (R-AK), Don Payne (D-NJ), Garret Graves (R-LA) and David Price (D-NC) and Senate - Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Deb Fischer (R-NE) and Alex Padilla (D-CA). On Tuesday, the President attended a ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda honoring Capitol Police Officer William Evans, who was killed on April 2 by an attacker trying to drive his car past a security checkpoint.

3. **PELL GRANT.** President Biden's FY 2022 budget proposes a \$400 increase to the maximum Pell Grant, which would represent the largest one-time increase since 2009 according to the administration. This represents an additional \$3 billion investment in the program and would raise the maximum grant award to \$6,895.

4. **INTEREST RATES.** In an interview broadcast Sunday night on 60 Minutes, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said it's highly unlikely the Fed would raise interest rates this year. He also said, because of widespread vaccination and strong federal monetary policy support, the economy and job creation will start growing quickly this year.

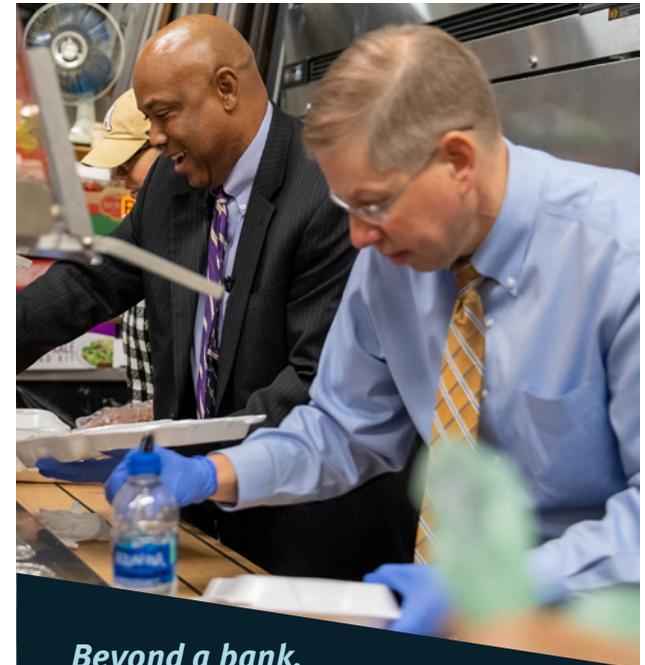
5. **SLIM HOUSE MAJORITY.** The Hill newspaper reports that the death last week of Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL), coupled with the swearing in the week of Rep.-elect Julia Letlow (R-LA), who replaces her husband Luke Letlow who died from COVID before he was sworn in, brings the Democratic-Republican margin in the House, coupled with other seat vacancies, to a razor thin 218 Ds to 212 Rs, which means that the Democrats can only lose 2 Members on a vote.

6. **RELIGIOUS RULING.** Last Friday, a divided Supreme Court voted 5-4 to grant a request by California

pastor Jeremy Wong to allow in-home Bible study and prayer meetings, which had been prohibited by California COVID rules (although they are scheduled to lapse on April 15). The unsigned ruling, issued just before midnight, was the most recent in a series of challenges, dating back almost to the start of the pandemic, to restrictions on in-person gatherings.

Ron Hamm

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THE VALLEY WEEKLY

CHAMPION GAME PLAN

PRESTON BROWN

“RAISING OUR STANDARDS”

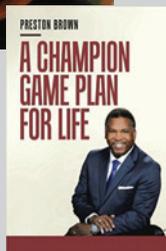
Daniel 3:18 says, “But even if God does not (rescue us) we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.

In this scripture we find Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refusing to bow down to the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had made. The reason they refused was they had already established a “standard” for their lives that would not allow them to bow down

to any golden image.

Now a “standard” means something established by authority, custom or general consent as a model, or example. You see God has a standard that He wants us to live by and I believe that He is calling all of us to raise our spiritual standards. Because how can we embrace God’s strength when we don’t accept his standards for our lives.

We live in a world today where our standards are being set by so many different sources. Whether it be a famous



celebrity, or a famous athlete or a powerful politician. Our standards are not being set by God. When we set our standards low, it’s easy for the enemy to “come in like a flood” and that’s when things go bad. That’s when we start living a life of compromise.

So many of our youth today remain isolated in their own world with their own thoughts, but who is setting the stan-

dard for them to live by? That’s why I believe that everyone needs a plan to help them navigate through the good times as well as the bad. We all need daily reminders to reinforce God’s standards for our lives and we do this by first reading his word and then reading a daily devotional like “A Champion Game Plan For Life”. I believe that when we have a plan we will raise our standards to where God wants them to be.

Stay encouraged, my brothers and sisters, and be safe ... Also, remember that you can buy my book “A Champion Game Plan For Life.”

The publication is readily available at amazon.com.

THE VALLEY WEEKLY

VALLEY DEATHS

NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME

2501 Carmichael Avenue NW

Huntsville, AL 35816 - (256) 539-8189

Graveside service for MRS. MELINDA YVETTE SATCHER-EWING (b. 1965) will be at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 17, at Valley View Memorial Gardens with Pastor Winford (“Mac”) Maneice officiating.

Graveside service for MR. LUTHER ALLEN “Big Luke” HOLDEN (b. 1957) was held Sunday, April 11, at Valley View Memorial Gardens with Pastor Gary Battles officiating.

Graveside service for MR. WILLIE E. WALKER (b. 1955) was held Sunday, April 11, at Valhalla Memory Gardens with Pastor Gary Battles officiating.

Funeral service for MR. DANIEL CARNELL “DANNY” HALL (b. 1961) was held Friday, April 9, at Center Grove United Methodist Church Parking Lot with Dr. Dedric Cowser officiating.

ROYAL FUNERAL HOME

4315 Oakwood Avenue

Huntsville, AL 35810 - (256) 534-8481

Graveside service for MRS. ELNORA WATT’S TURNER (b. 1934) was held Wednesday, April 14, at the Chandlertown Cemetery (2929 Bobo Section Road, Hazel Green, Ala.).

Funeral service for MRS. ARLEAN STEWART FORD (b. 1940) was held Saturday, April 10, at the Royal Chapel of Memories with Elder Billy Jones officiating.

Graveside service for MRS. ALTHEA WILLIAMS GREEN (b. 1949) was held Friday, April 9, at Valhalla Memory Gardens (698 Winchester Road NE, Huntsville, Ala.) with Dr. Carlyon P. Byrd officiating.

Funeral service for MRS. MARIA D’JESUS MARTINEZ (b. 1945) was held Tuesday, April 6, at the Royal Funeral Home with Minister Gabriel Victorin officiating.

Graveside service for MR. DAIS CLINTON (b. 1938) was held Saturday, April 3, at Thatch-Mann Cemetery (1801 West Hobbs Street Athens, Ala.) with Pastor Endia J. Scruggs officiating.

SERENITY FUNERAL HOME

2505 University Drive NW

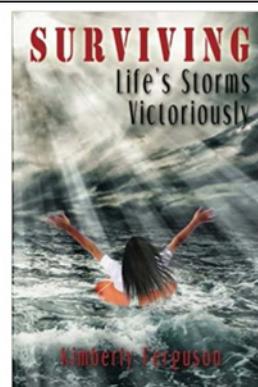
Huntsville, AL 35816 - (256) 539-9693

Funeral Service for MS. JADA HUNTER, MR. TERENCE JEROME TURNER, BABY AJHANI MAE KIRKSEY and NOLAN LANGFORD will be announced at a later date.

MHI Sets Watch

The Meadow Hills Initiative, Inc., will hold a Community Watch Awareness & Membership Drive on Thursday, April 29, at 4 p.m.

Offices are located at 2448 Shepherd Drive, Huntsville, Ala. The activity will include fun, prizes, surprises and free food.



by Kimberly Ferguson

Available on Amazon.com

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AAMU Virtual Annual Black Tie Set

The Alabama A&M University Office of Marketing, Communication and Advancement have announced the next major fundraising event.

The 2021 Annual Scholarship Gala, presented by MT3 Properties, will be held on May 28 at 7 p.m. via online streaming.

Valley Weekly Editor-in-

Chief Dorothy W. Huston is one of the founders of the event.

The Tennessee Valley community is invited to join organizer for a "virtual evening" of celebration benefiting Alabama A&M University scholars.

The event will feature a performance by Musiq Soulchild (Taalib Johnson). The

Philadelphia-born singer and songwriter possesses a style that blends R&B, funk, blues, jazz, gospel influences merged with hip hop. He recorded two No. 1 albums ("Juslisen" and Luvanmusiq") in 2002 and 2007.

For more information, visit www.aamu.edu/blacktie, e-mail blacktie@aamu.edu or call (256) 372-8344.

Council Meetings

Huntsville City Council Regular Meetings are held in the City Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m., Downtown Huntsville.

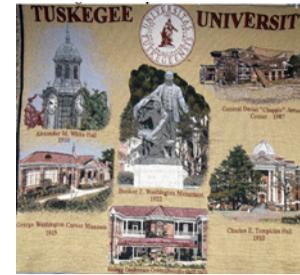
Watch the meetings live via HuntsvilleAL.gov/HSVTV or on the City of Huntsville Facebook page (@huntsvillecity).

For more information, call (256) 427-5011.



Local Tuskegeens Plan Scholarship Fundraiser

by Lamar A. Braxton, Jr.
and April Rafael-Adams



have made perfect gifts for incoming freshmen, students on campus, recent graduates, and alumni of all ages.

Some alumni have draped the casket of a beloved one with a Tuskegee throw as an alumni farewell.

Discounts are available for orders containing two or more throws. A single throw is \$80. The deadline for ordering is April 23. For more information, call (256) 655-4990.

They have heard the tiger roar, and once again Tuskegee University alumni are offering supporters a chance to purchase the warm, eye-appealing Tuskegee throws.

Proceeds will be used to support the scholarship fund. Previous throws

PowerShot

"We rise to a new level of ourselves when we realize there is a battle between who we really are and how we want to be seen by others."

-J.T. Moore



"People have the right to call themselves whatever they like. That doesn't bother me. It's other people doing the calling that bothers me."

- Octavia Butler

"At the bottom of education, at the bottom of politics, even at the bottom of religion, there must be for our race economic independence." - Booker T. Washington

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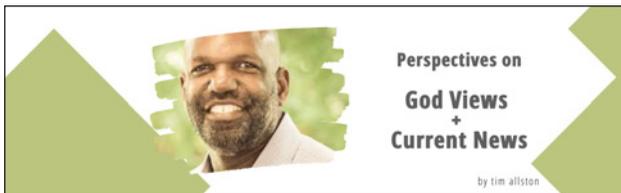
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Perspectives on
God Views
+
Current News

by tim allston

Thanks, Oprah, for Your 1989 “Bible Challenge”

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”

- Acts 17:11

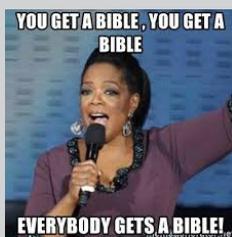
Here, the Apostle Paul complimented the early Christians in Berea. They read their Bibles daily to prove their practices and beliefs.

Perhaps Oprah Winfrey was one of their descendants.

Esquire Magazine’s December 1989 issue asked certain notables for their favorite books for the upcoming 1990’s decade.

“The Bible,” she offered, adding, “Every answer to every question that man could ever pose has already been answered.”

That “Oprah Bible Challenge” Krazy-glued itself to me; decades later, it inspired my latest book, U.S. Politics The Rise of Silver-Mettle Leaders.



Accepting Oprah’s challenge, U.S. Politics’ chapter titles asked 2020 presidential election questions, and the Bible answered each one. For example:

Chapter 1 WHY did 2020 U.S. Voters Elect Joe Biden and Kamala Harris?

Ask the Woman with the Issue of Blood (Mark 5:25-34), . . . and James Brown, . . .

Chapter 2 WHY did Biden pick Kamala Harris? Ask Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at Jacob’s Well (John 4), . . .

Chapter 3 WHO secured the 2020 White House win?

Ask Naaman the Incurable Leper (2 Kings 5) and Joe Biden the Incurable Loser - and who rescued them both, . . .

Chapter 4 WHO was the #2 Person that became the “Father of the Black Lives Matter” Movement?

Ask Jesus (Matthew 11:11), . . .

Chapter 5 WHERE did the Essentials for the White House victory come from?

Again, ask Jesus when prepping his disciples (Luke 9:46-48), . . .

Chapter 6 From TV’s Donald “You’re Fired” Trump, to Voters’ “Trump: You’re Fired”: WHY, HOW, and WHEN did Donald Trump Lose His 2020 Re-election Bid? Ask the Apostle Paul (Galatians 6:2), Prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 16:6-13), Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:7) - and yes, even Malcolm X

Chapter 7 WHAT was Another Failed Presidency, . . . but WHO Rescued Him?

And again, ask Jesus at this invitation-only dinner (Luke 14:11), . . .

What questions are plaguing you today?

Our answers are already there - in Oprah’s, my, and your Bible. Read it!

tim allston is the author of U.S. Politics The Rise of Silver-Mettle Leaders, which will be available on April 29th. Pre-order now on Amazon.



OU Celebrates Dykes Library Makeover

On April 6, 2021, during National Library Week, the Eva B. Dykes Library celebrated its “refresh” with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. In attendance were members of the Oakwood University Administration, led by the President, Dr. Leslie N. Pollard, and its vice presidents: Dr. Colwick Wilson, Ms. Sabrina Cotton, Dr. Prudence Pollard, Dr. Karen Benn Marshall, and Dean David Knight; USM President Jordain Thompson, and the library staff. Dr. Carlton P. Byrd, Senior Pastor of the Oakwood University Church, offered the prayer of dedication.

The following areas were included in the \$5 million makeover:

- Remediation or removal of mold in the lower level
- Shaft replacement in the elevator
- Replaced fluorescent lights with LED light-

- ing on the main and mezzanine floors
- Replaced ceiling tiles with special acoustics and design
- Repainted the entire main and mezzanine levels with a color that enhanced the brightness of the library
- Replaced carpet with herringbone pattern on the main floor, and another pattern on the mezzanine level
- Added electrical outlets for users to plug in their devices
- Designed new furniture to create a learning and collaboration space for students
- New pavers at the front of the library with special plumbing below the pavers

To create the large open spaces, the stacks and shelves were relocated from the main floor to the mezzanine, and the

reference and children’s collections were relocated to the northeast side of the main floor.

President Leslie Pollard commented,

“The \$5 million renovation of the library is a timely investment in creating an up-to-date space for student research and study,” said President Leslie Pollard. “The Eva B. Dykes Library renovation joins the lineup of historic buildings on our campus that have been modernized -- Carter Hall, Cunningham Hall, Ford Hall, Cooper Science Complex (Department of Biological Sciences), Peterson Hall, Moran Hall, Blake Center, the Dining Hall, the 4920 University Square building -- with more to come. We are getting there--step by step. Our commitment is to make sure that our students experience Oakwood’s best!”

- InsideOakwood

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CALLED 2 PREACH

REV. MICHAEL RICE

Your Deficits and Your Destiny

Exodus 3:10-12; 4:10-12

These verses are extracted from a list of deficits that Moses described to God which he felt would disqualify him from his destiny to be Israel's leader into liberation. Excuses that ranged from reasonable to ridiculous were laid out in a way that Moses was sure that God would accept. Too often, we like



Moses, seek to bring God down to our level rather than 'going up yonder.' The final deficit on Moses' list was what he called not being *eloquent* and having a *slow tongue*. Having grown up in the luxurious life in Egypt and being exposed to the eloquent, he figured in his own mind that surely *speaking* to Pharaoh was not possible because of not being eloquent and having a slow tongue. As God does with each of us who seek self disqualification, He informed Moses that He was already aware of that deficit because, as God put it, *Who has made man's*



mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? In other words,

God was letting Moses know that He was not conducting an interview and

Moses' resume was not a factor. This was an assignment, not an ask.

The overwhelming and overriding good news is that deficits do not determine destiny. If that were so, there would be no *stories*. No Gideon's army. No Peter walking on the water. No building of the Ark. No Red Sea crossing. *Put your name there.*

Spotlight on Our Elders ... Featuring

Dr. Horace W. Rice

Dr. Horace W. Rice is a professor of business law and ethics in the College of Business and Public Affairs at Alabama A&M University, Huntsville, Ala. He received his AA degree from Chicago City College, his B.S. degree from Alabama A&M University and his J.D. degree from the University of Toledo in Ohio.

Dr. Rice has also served as an adjunct professor of business and labor law at Oakwood University in Huntsville and the University of Alabama in Huntsville's School of Business. He has been a visiting professor at the Florida Institute of Technology and Dakar University, Senegal, West Africa.

As a certified corporate arbitrator and mediator by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and the American Arbitration Association, he has adjudicated 100-plus business and labor disputes for corporations and various governmental agencies in the public and private sectors. As a consultant to corporations, agencies and unions, his service has covered venues at the local, state, regional and the national levels.

His professional affiliations include membership in the Academy of Legal Studies in Business, the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution and membership on the following National Arbitration Panels: AAA, FMCS, United States Postal Service, National Football League and the Ohio State Impasse Panel.

Further, he has accepted invitations to present his research at the following national and international conferences: Global Conference of Business and Economics, Harvard University; Boston; American—Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences, Las Vegas; International Academy of Business Disciplines, Las Vegas; American Business Law Association, Atlanta; and American Arbitration Association International Conference, Senegal, West Africa.

Dr. Rice is also a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and is listed in Who's Who International based on his activities in national and international affairs. He has accepted several invitations from the American Arbitration Association in New York and the Citizens



Ambassador Program in Washington, D.C., to serve as an international delegate to lecture and present papers on international business law and arbitration for business and labor organizations and universities in Moscow, St. Petersburg, London, Paris, Stockholm, Senegal, Egypt and Brazil. Other foreign enrichment travels include Canada, Peru, Mexico, East and West Africa and the Caribbean.

As an author, Dr. Rice has published one book chapter and more than 40 articles, cases and abstracts.

His research interests include the areas of business and labor law, ethics, corporate governance, dispute resolution systems, international business law, labor management relations and white-collar crimes.

APRIL 16 - Born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1965, MARTIN LAWRENCE is an American actor, comedian, producer and former Golden Gloves boxer, who came to fame during the 1990s and is best known for his lead role in the long-running television series "Martin." - Wikipedia.org



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AAMU Holds Long-Awaited Performance in Newly Renovated Theatre

For those who have witnessed stellar performances in the Edward S. Johnson Theatre, seemingly innocuous teasing about an upcoming drama project at the long-offline site could get a jester hurt.

But it's real and near and exciting! On April 14, at 6:30 p.m., the Advanced Directing II class and The Bulldog Players presented scenes about love and relationships from John Cariani's plays "Almost Maine" and "Love/Sick" in the Johnson Theatre, located in the R.D. Morrison Fine Arts Building.

"So many people at A&M have worked tirelessly to prepare the space for this first 'performance' since the Retool your School funds were used last year to renovate the theatre space," said Jill Balch-Coon, an assistant professor in the Department of Visual, Performing and Communication Arts, who teaches the Advanced Directing II class. "We are so grateful to (First Lady) Abbiegail Hugine for her commitment to refurbishing the performance space

of the Johnson Theater."

Balch-Coon returned to her native Huntsville, Ala., after living for more than two decades in New York City, where she was an actress, university lecturer and non-profit professional. She also taught the Lincoln Center Scholars at Hunter College, a program that cultivates actors and theater professionals to teach in New York City's public schools. Balch-coon went on to thank AAMU-based Facilities crew Brian Shipp, Mark Rogers and Mary Johnson of Aramark for helping to get the venue "performance ready."

The Bulldog Players is comprised of 15 backstage and onstage players "who make theatre happen at A&M," said Balch-Coon. The actors in the production are students who auditioned specifically for "directing projects" and include Newill Sanders, Ansley Joseph, Tamara McCutchen, Malaysia Davis, Jordan Toney and Jada Gulley.

This production is the final project for the Advanced Directing II class.



The directors in this event are Malik Coleman, Turner Atkins, NaSasha Davis, Aaliyah Jones, Charles Nash and Jada Gulley. Backstage are Jordyn Johnson, Makala Kimbrough and Kennedy Kipp. Karrington Earle serves as stage manager. The backstage crew, actors and directors are all communication arts majors in either performance or production concentration.

"We cannot wait to share with the A&M Community," said Balch-Coon. For more information, contact jill.coon@aamu.edu.

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Staying Ahead of the Curve

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Movie villain to real-life hero: AI poised to become humankind's most powerful tool

(BPT) - The race for a COVID-19 vaccine may have a surprising beneficiary.

Artificial intelligence, the sometimes maligned and misunderstood villainous technology behind Hollywood blockbusters from "2001: A Space Odyssey" to "The Terminator" could emerge as a hero of epic proportions. Successfully taking on the COVID-19 virus by aiding vaccine development and management of clinical trials, researchers say, is only the beginning of what this powerful tool can achieve. Today, the pandemic; tomorrow, global warming and other looming humanitarian challenges of our time - alongside new, transformational ways of doing business, which will speed innovation, improve financial performance and boost job satisfaction for workers.

AI is helping people answer what had been unanswerable questions, too complex for human brains and powerful computers to handle. One of the powerful lessons researchers say we are learning in the fight against COVID-19 is the power and value of data. Notably, the role data plays in predictive analytics generated through AI. For COVID-19, some healthcare professionals and researchers relied on genetic algorithms to evaluate, predict and model the virus' behavior to help control its impact. That approach - using AI to see ahead - has enormous potential and is why predictive analytics is the subject of so much groundbreaking work in the field of AI.

Researchers at digital technology innovator Cognizant are experts on next-generation AI and data science. Among their ongoing initiatives is development of a powerful tool, "Evolutionary AI," which can



literally help to see the future by quickly analyzing enormous amounts of data and mapping the anticipated trajectory of selected trends. Evolutionary AI goes a step further than analysis, answering immeasurably complex problems - then prescribing solutions. Think of the benefits for a research oncologist who can now evaluate patient diagnoses, test results, demographics and individual risk factors across a mind-boggling array of data points to prescribe the best treatment. Or a greenhouse farmer who can now analyze seeds, soil, temperature, humidity and light requirements to yield optimal growth. The ramifications of that kind of application could be enormous, leading to more efficient farming and more food. Not just prediction, which can be so valuable on its own, but prediction and prescription - a one-two, revolutionary technology punch.

This new approach to issue-identification, prediction and decision-making is on full display during a new XPRIZE competition dubbed the Pandemic Response Challenge. A nearly three-month initiative co-sponsored by Cognizant, the challenge tasks participants to come up with the best way to use artificial intelligence to accurately predict COVID-19 infection rates and offer prescriptive intervention, all in an effort to save lives and re-open businesses, communities and the global economy. While there's a \$500,000 grand prize hanging in the balance for the top two winning teams, organizers say the real reward is in showcasing artificial intel-

ligence capabilities and the power of machine learning. Simulations and models that are created during the challenge will not only have an enormous effect on the continuing battle against COVID-19, but they

will also be potentially transformative in everyday business decision-making.

But for now, this XPRIZE competition, the 23rd since the organization was founded in 1994, remains squarely focused on COVID-19. Organizers are hopeful the competition will shine a bright light on the monumental advancement of this technology and offer assessment paradigms, predictive platforms and a path forward for real-world applications to address the pandemic.

"This challenge will inspire some of the world's brightest innovators to address the immediate threats to our economies and livelihoods," said Amir Banifatemi, chief innovation and growth officer at XPRIZE. He said the challenge could be a "game-changer when it comes to using data and artificial intelligence to create a route to recovery," especially now that vaccines are becoming available.

The ambitious, 10-week timeline of the competition underscores the urgency of stopping the spread of COVID-19 and developing a framework for communities and businesses to safely reopen. The challenge organizers are confident that artificial intelligence will help determine the best ways for communities to reopen, people to reengage with one another and the world to reclaim a sense of normal. In the case of COVID-19, AI could dramatically improve data-based decision-making and help shorten - even eliminate - another wave of infection, spread and death.

THE VALLEY WEEKLY

VALLEY
EVENTS

HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

Thru May 23

"Encounters"

Althea Murphy Price
Huntsville Museum of Art
hsvmuseum.org

April 13

Virtual Public Meeting
Session on the Transportation
Planning Processing
Huntsville
Zoom ID: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87008344351>
5-7 p.m.

April 15

Spring Plant Sale
Huntsville Botanical Garden
9 a.m.-5 p.m.

April 17

Magic City Classic
Alabama A&M University
vs. Alabama State University
Legion Field
Birmingham, Ala.
6:30 p.m.

April 20 - July 4**Exhibit**

"Tell Their Story: Remembering the Scottsboro Boys"
Sponsors: Burrirt on the Mountain, Francis Tate with CEOTA, John Allison and the Morgan County Archives, and The Scottsboro Boys Museum Scottsboro, Ala.
The Burrirt Museum

April 30

Spring 2021 Commencement
Alabama A&M University
10 a.m.-12 noon

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