



"If now isn't a good time for the truth, I don't see when we'll get to it." - Nikki Giovanni



TORCHBEARER! The Valley Weekly founder and Alabama A&M University graduate Dorothy W. Huston (3rd, r) presented a check for \$50,000 from her home reception to launch the alumni fundraising sector of the University's 150th anniversary campaign toward \$150 million. Pictured (l-r): Robert Holmes, AAMU President Daniel Wims and VP Jamal Ali. More on Page 10.

AAMU Reaffirmed by SACSCOC

Alabama A&M University's (AAMU) institutional accreditation was reaffirmed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

(SACSCOC) at the recent SACSCOC Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas, on December 10. The university completed the approximate 36-month process to include a compli-

ance report, off-site and on-site peer reviews to gain this favorable decision.

The delegation of administrators attending the meeting included Dr. Daniel K. Wims, president;

Dr John D. Jones, provost; Carlton Spellman, CFO; Dr. Rhonda Moore Jackson, accreditation liaison; Dr. Jeanette Jones, Faculty Senate president; Dr. Bonnie Banks, QEP director; and Dr. Tau Kadhi, dean of graduate studies.

"We are grateful to the Commission and peer reviewers as we do not take a positive outcome for granted," said Wims.

100 BMOGH to Hold Annual Gala

100 Black Men of Greater Huntsville, Inc., will hold its annual Holiday Gala on Saturday, December 21, at the Von Braun Center Saturn Ballroom in downtown Huntsville at 7 p.m.

The guest speaker is Dr. Joshua W.

Murfree. Visit www.100BMOGH. com.

SBDC, UAH to Host Workshop on "Starting a Business in Alabama"

The Small Business Development Center and UAH will host a two-hour "Starting a Business in Alabama" workshop on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, via Zoom.

Register online to secure your spot: https://asbdc. ecenterdirect.com/ events/10191

This workshop will provide participants with a comprehensive overview of the steps required and recommended for starting a small business in the State of Alabama, with a primary focus on businesses in Madison, Limestone, Morgan, Marshall, Jackson, Cullman, and Dekalb counties.

The following topic areas will be covered: a business start-up checklist; reserving a company name; pros and cons of optional legal structures; get-

ting a tax number; business taxes; and state and licensing requirements. Furthermore, this workshop will touch on the importance of resource partners such as business attorneys, bankers, outside accountants, and insurance agents. Participants will also receive handouts and workshop takeaways.

Zoom link will be received the day before the webinar.



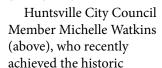
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AAMU Celebrates 149th Commencement During Fall 2024 Ceremony

Alabama A&M University celebrated its 149th Commencement Ceremony on Friday,

December 13. The University awarded 365 degrees as 119 graduate students and 246 undergraduates completed academic chapters on The Hill.



HMBCC Meetings

The Huntsville Metro **Black Chamber of** Commerce promotes, creates and fosters economic development opportunities. HMBCC meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday at 12 noon. Call (256) 427-2650 or e-mail info@hsvblackchamber.org. VISIT

milestone of becoming the first Back women elected to the Huntsville City Council, delivered the

> commencement address. The twotime alumna and management and program analyst for the U.S. Army Garrison at Redstone Arsenal had the crowd

cheering seconds into her address.

"One of the greatest lessons I learned here at Alabama A&M University was confidence, the belief in my abilities, the knowledge to back it up and the determination to never give up."

Watkins emphasized the University's motto, "Service is Sovereignty," urging graduates to lead with integrity. "True leadership demands tough choices," Watkins explained. "You will have to make decisions that are not popular, but leadership is about making those choices with honesty and prioritizing the greater good."

Watkins also challenged graduates to be good Normalites. "The best way to be a good Normalite is to be a good person," she said. "When you go the grocery store, be a good Normalite. When you go to your mailbox and see your neighbor speak, be a good Normalite, and while you're at that mailbox, mail that check to Alabama A&M University.



Council Meetings

Huntsville City Council's regular meetings are held on the 1st floor of the Municipal Building on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

There is nothing average about being a Normalite. We are extraordinary.

Class of 2024, as you depart this illustrious University, one that I love dearly, I ask you to leave with a determined spirit, a resilient mind and a desire for humility. Always remember, to whom much is given, much is required."

President Daniel K. Wims then shared highlights of the Fall Class of 2024:

• 75 first-generation col-

lege graduates

- Two ROTC Cadets were commissioned
- 58% female and 42% male
- 50% of graduates secured employment
- 20% will continue their education
- 12% report a salary of \$70,000 or more
- The highest salary offer is \$152,000
- 147 students graduated with honors
- Highest GPA: Arissa Tenise Nolley - 4.0 GPA in

civil engineering

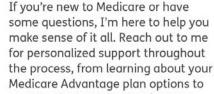
- Oldest graduate: liberal studies major Allen Ray Brooks, 60
- 10 students are secondgeneration AAMU gradu-
- Two students are thirdgeneration AAMU graduates.
- The University also awarded an Honorary Master of Arts degree to Mr. Arthur Seaton, II for his exceptional contributions to the City of Huntsville.

ON THIS DAY

On December 20, 1956, the Supreme Court's orders of injuction against segregation on city buses are delivered to the Montgomery City Hall. - Zinn Education Project



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"If you possess enough courage to speak out what you are, you will find you are not alone."

- Richard Wright



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	3/4 Page	7.5x10 inches	\$900
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	-	5x10 inches	\$600
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Eighth Page			
		2.5x5 inches	\$150
Sixteenth Page			
	·	2.5x2.5	\$75
	Classified	1 col.x1 inch	\$100/Flat

150th Torchbearer Reception for Alma Mater a Success!

I extend my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you who attended last Friday's Torch Bearer's Reception and helped make it a resounding success. Thanks to your generosity and commitment, we raised an incredible \$50,000 for Alabama A&M University—far surpassing our established goal of \$25,000!

Your support will make a transformative impact on the future of the university, and I'm truly grateful for your role in this milestone. Together, we're helping shape a brighter future for A&M through campus projects and vital student support.

It was an inspiring evening as we celebrated the university's rich history, honored the legacy of Dr. William Hooper Councill, and officially launched the 150th Anniversary Campaign. I'm excited to see where this journey takes us, and I couldn't be more thankful to have you alongside us in this important work.

Warmest thanks again for your presence, your generosity, and your commitment to Alabama A&M University's continued success.

Until next week, happy holidays to you and yours.





DECEMBER 20 - DE-AARON FOX - De'Aaron Fox is an American professional basketball player for the Sacramento Kings of the National Basketball Association (NBA). On June 22, 2017, Fox was selected with the fifth overall pick in the 2017 NBA draft by the Sacramento Kings. On January 25th, 2018, Fox scored 14 points, 4 assist and a putback Slam Dunk with 3.3 seconds left giving the Sacramento Kings the lead in a 89-88 win over the Miami Heat. On January 28th, 2018, Fox scored a season-high 26 points, going 6-6 from three-point range in a 15 point loss to the San Antonio Spurs. On February 14, Fox was named Lonzo Ball's replacement for the Rising Stars Challenge. In his second season, on November 1, 2018, during a 146-115 win over the Atlanta Hawks, Fox notched his first career triple-double with 31 points, 10 rebounds, and 15 assists. - BlackCelebrityBirthdays.org



Icons Expected for Orion's 'Women in Music' Week

Music icons Melissa Etheridge (left) and Indigo Girls will perform at The Orion Amphitheater on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025, as part of Huntsville's 2025 Women in Music Week.

The performance promises a celebration of artistry,



empowerment and legacy, amplifying the

voices of women in the music industry, say organizers.

The concert highlights the impact of Women in Music Week, an annual citywide event spotlighting the achievements and contributions of women across

of women across all facets of music. with a passion ing their comm

HPD Announces 73rd Session of Academy

The Hunts-ville Police Department (HPD) is accepting applications for the 73rd session of the Huntsville Police Academy, which will begin training in 2025.

Individuals with a passion for serving their community are



encouraged to apply before the deadline on Friday, February 28, 2025, at 6 p.m.

"Joining our department is more than just a job – it's a calling," Chief Kirk Giles said. For more

info, visit JoinHuntsvillePD.com.



SERENITY FUNERAL HOME

2505 University Drive NW - Huntsville, AL 35816 (256) 539-9693 - www.serenityfuneralhm.com

Funeral services for MS. KATIE AYERS (b. 1950) and MS. BETTY STEVENSON (b. 1955) will be announced at a later date.

Funeral service for **BABY BOY LAIDEN FULLOVE** (b. 2024) was Sunday, December 8, at Serenity Funeral Home Chapel.

NELMS MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME

2501 Carmichael Avenue NW- Huntsville, AL 35816 - (256) 539-8189

www.nelmsmemorial.net

Funeral service for **MR. TWASKI BROWN** (b. 1979) was held on Monday, December 16, at the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel with Pastor Gary Battle officiating.

Funeral service for MR. ROBERT JUNIS SUBLETT, JR. (b. 1943) was Thursday, December 12, at Saint Paul United Methodist Church (Triana, Ala.) with The Reverend Damien Turner serving as eulogist.

Funeral service for **MR. JAMES IRVIN PARKER** (b. 1950) was Tuesday, December 10, in the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel.

Memorial service for MRS. ERICA D. PRESSEY (b. 1974) was Tuesday, December 3, at the Nelms Memorial Funeral Home Chapel with Reverend Dr. C. Jermaine Turner as officiant and Nicole Leland as eulogist.

ROYAL FUNERAL HOME

4315 Oakwood Avenue NW - Huntsville, AL 35810 - (256) 534-8481 www.royalfh.com

Memorial service for MS. CLARISSA CONZUNEE MO-SES COLEMAN (b. 1990) was Tuesday, December 17, at the Royal Chapel of Memories.

Graveside service for MRS. MARGARET LOUISE BOYD LEAVELL (b. 1936) was Sunday, December 15, at the Valhalla Memory Gardens, 698 Winchester Road, Huntsville, Ala.

Funeral service for MRS. CLARA L. MILES (b. 1945) was Sunday, December 15, at the Mount Zion CPCA, 3726 Pryor Road, Madison, Ala., with Pastor James Robinson officiating.



Today's Spiritual Game Plan: "A Marriage That

Works"

First Corinthians 13:4–6 says, "Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs."

There is a quote from a famous movie that says, "You complete me". Now this sounds very endearing. But we have to remember that only God can complete us. In other words, we can't put that much responsibility on the person that we love. Because in the long run it ends up being too much for someone to bear. Now I bring this up to say, if you are going to get married, you have to be prepared to go to work, because it takes work to make a marriage

For example, some people may say, "My marriage is not working," but perhaps this is because they are not working on their marriage. In fact, if some people approached their job the same way they approached their mar-

successful.

riage, they would not even have a job. Sometimes, marriage is not pretty like a picture—it



needs work. Even when things are going well, it still requires work. So many people go into marriage thinking about what they can get out of it. But when you do this, you miss the point of "giving yourself away. So many people want the "gift" of a relationship

without the giving that is required in a relationship. Remember, marriage is the best thing, but it's not the easiest thing. So, if we understand this and we understand that only God can complete us, then we will be blessed in our marriages and live happily ever

after.

Prayer: Loving Father, help us to continue to work on our relationships the same way we work on anything that we love in life.

Question: What are some things that you do that help your marriage work? Happy Holidays!

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:
"Thinking About Tomorrow
Today, at Christmas!"



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REMEMBER: Trump Is Not the Enemy - Just a Mirror!

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities against powers; against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places." -Ephesians 6:12

Whether in or out of the White House, Donald Trump remains the most influential person on the planet. Challenge me.

Since his first term, virtually every news event - Russia's invading Ukraine, Supreme Court rulings, and inflamed racial injustice, for example - bore his influential thumbprint.

But despite his vitriol and our "Trumpxhaustion," this now two-time presidentelect is not our main enemy, as the Apostle Paul noted in the opening Bible text.

Here, Paul reminded the Ephesians that their true enemy was not human but Satan, the spiritual being.

For many, Trump is merely a Satan avatar - just like you. And me, quite honestly.

At best, Trump is an eight-year widescreen TV, whose reflection mirrors our own shortcomings that we need to acknowledge and correct. Now.



Quiz: Take the "Trump-in-You" Challenge, . . .

True, we enjoy gang-tackling "45/47" for his thinly-veiled racism, sexism, and nativism.

Even if our criticism of him is justified, however, we also need to first ask ourselves:

- 1. We rail against Trump for promising to deport and separate children from their immigrant parents, . . . but do your and my words and actions similarly dismantle families starting with our own immediate households?
- 2. We decry Trump's well-documented misstatements, . . . but how often do you and I knowingly fail to be forthright and truthful? How often do we offer incomplete information, when transparency is what's needed? How often do we remain mum and withhold vital fill-in-the-blank facts the withholding of which we employ as a tool for control? And
- 3. Yes, we were angered by Trump's un-confessed and vilifying statements of racial, ethnic, gender and class discrimination, . . . yet can you and I accept Jesus' challenge of John 8:1-12, to the men accusing the woman caught in adultery and demanding that she be stoned to death, when He asked.

"So when they continued asking him, He lifted up himself, and said unto them, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." John 8:7?

... And a God Do-over!

If like me, you're 0 for 5 with those in-your-face questions, let's look now and forever at our own mirror reflections; and then, apply God's do-over: daily Bible reading and prayer.

Trust me, it works best when applied daily, . . .





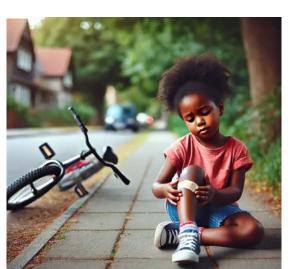
The Pain ...

Pain, it's something you will never escape. It's coming for you one way or another. Some-

times you get to choose it, sometimes you don't. But what is so wonderful is you can choose the pain of Success, or opt out for the pain of Failure. Your choice! I mean, if you're going to have it, you may as well get something out

of it, correct?

So, how do we do that? It's not a hard thing to reason through, but most things aren't hard to "think" through. Action is where the magic is. The action is the place where change happens. It's the place where re-



silience is built. Strength is obtained. Mindset is shifted. It resides right there. ..in the action.

There are going to be moments of failure, but if you "get back up on that horse," with the tools you have gained through failure and maneuver through again, dodging the mistakes you made previously, you will create a path to success. You will develop

a new way of doing things. You can gain determination and an ability to focus. You can develop discipline and fearlessness. You can allow your pain to set you up to obtain some things you have never had the ability to dream up!

Isn't that just magnificent? Pain can do all of that!

God loves you, and so do I.

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



SPRING REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN.









HAPPENINGS, ACTIVITIES & MORE!

Thru January 5

Skating in the Park Big Spring Park Downtown Huntsville

December 18

Huntsville Art Supplies Ribbon Cutting 2211 Seminole Drive Studio 270 Huntsville, Ala. 1-2 p.m.

December 19

Queermas: A KGBTQ + Winter Holiday Event The Rainbow Symposium 5-8 p.m.

Holiday Wine Tasting The Wine Cellar 2304 Whitesburg Drive SE Huntsville, Ala. thewinecellarhuntsville. com

December 20

Big Spring Jingle Big Spring Park Downtown Huntsville 4-9 p.m.

December 21

Winter Solstice Plant Medicine Ceremony Coordinator: M edusa Dakini - \$10-20; \$40 205A Water Tank Road Toney, Ala. 4:30-7:30 p.m. https://square.link/u/ uvAO6rb6

Bookish Ball: An ACO-TAR-Inspired Evening 701 Amphitheater Drive NW Huntsville, Ala. 6 p.m.

December 31

New Year's Eve: A Garden Affair Isenberg Grand Hall 4747 Bob Wallace Avenue Huntsville, Ala. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

New Year's at Noon 701 Amphitheater Drive Huntsville, Ala. 11 a.m.

Stella's Sparkling NYE: Pink Champagne Bash 127 Holmes Avenue NW Huntsville, Ala. 8 p.m.

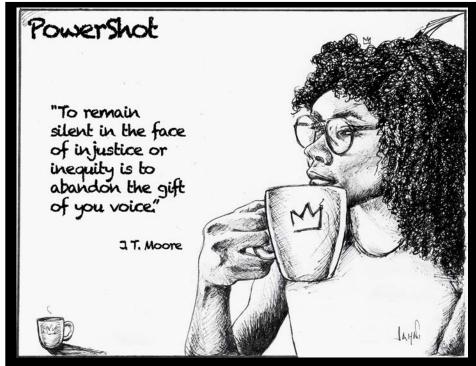
NYE Party Life Huntsville Tickets: nyepartylife. com Westin Huntsville 9 p.m.-1 a.m.

January 30

Love's Rosetta Stone: The Love Language Event 2205 University Drive NW Huntsville, Ala. 6:30 p.m.

February 8

R&N Invitation
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"Reconciliations are for after the violence has ended."

- N. K. Jemisin





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

Mrs. Willie Mae Draper

Mother Willie Mae Draper was born November 25, 1923, in Madison County to the Late Mr. Henry Lee Miller and Mrs. Pearline Binford Miller. During early childhood, she contracted the "fatal" disease diphtheria, but through the faith and continuous prayers of her mother, God miraculously healed her. This divine intervention became the foundation upon which Mother Draper's built her life.

In 1950, Mother Draper, under the ministry of Elder S. H. Netter, was saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. God saved her husband and called him to the ministry and in 1963 Elder Draper became the Pastor of the New Market COGIC, later the Beirne Avenue COGIC. Pastor Draper and Mother Draper served until his death in 1998.

Mother Draper's most noted dates, appointments, and honors are: 1985-present, President, State Hospitality Department, appointed by the late Bishop C. H. Ashworth



Alabama State Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction I; and, in 1990, international missionary work in Schweinfurt, Germany and across northern Germany on a 21-day sojourn filled with teaching and evangelizing.

Mother Draper served as an Alabama delegate to the National Women's Convention of the International Church of God in Christ for 35-plus years faithfully. In 2002, she traveled to Oahu, Hawaii, where the Lord used her to witness to souls. which is the mark of a Godly woman. She is celebrated for her quiet dignity, labor of love, and Godly advic Mother Draper stands tall as a virtuous role model in her church, i her family, and in her community.

She is the proud mother of three children—Betty Damper, Pastor Dave Draper, Jr., and Pastor Jesse Draper—and she is a beloved grand- and great-grandmother. Mother Draper possesses a saintly nature which is the mark of a Godly woman. She is celebrated for her quiet dignity, labor of love, and Godly advice. tall as a virtuous role model in her church, in her family, and in her



"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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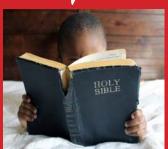
This Sunday's Lectionary

Sunday, December 22, 2024

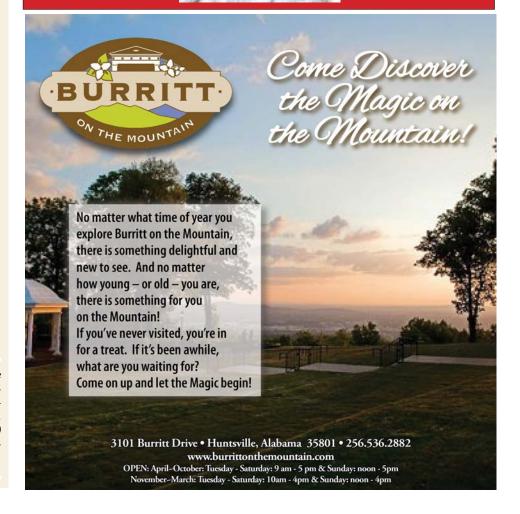
Fourth Sunday

of

Advent



(Track 2, Year C)
First Lesson:
Micah 5:2-5a
Psalm 80:1-7
Second Lesson:
Hebrews 10:5-10
GOSPEL:
Luke 1:39-45



Kevin Hart Set to Entertain Huntsvillians This Spring at The Orion

The legendary comedian Kevin Hart will appear at The Orion in Huntsville on Friday, April 11, 2025, at 8:15 p.m.

The Emmy and Grammy-nominated comedian was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he launched his career as a comedian during an amateur night at a local comedy club.

Over the years Hart has become Hollywood's box office powerhouse, opening eleven films at number one at the box office and grossing more than in \$4.23 billion global revenue. Hart has also become a successful Entrepreneur; he is chairman of Hartbeat; a global, multi-platform media company creating entertainment at the intersection of comedy and culture with a mission to keep the world laughing together. The next generation media company unites Hartbeat Productions' best-in-class TV and film production capabilities with Laugh Out Loud's expansive distribution network, along with its marketing, sales, experiential, branded content, digital and social capabilities.



Hart is also the founder of HartBeat Ventures. Together, these companies play an integral role part in building Hart's ecosystem for extraordinary growth and creativity. Hart continues to develop, star, and produce feature films, television, and podcasts

partners which include and Audible. Hart is currently touring internationally with his eighth hour of stand-up material; the tour is titled "The Reality Check" Tour. In 2020 Hart released his seventh

via Hartbeat for his various Netflix, Peacock, Sirius XM hour long stand-up special, "Zero Fu*ks Given," which quickly became Netflix's biggest stand-up special of 2020 and earned him a Grammy nomination for "Best Comedy Album". Hart also earned Emmy nominations for "Die Hart," for "Outstanding Actor in a Short Form Comedy or Drama Series" along with an Emmy nomination for his Docuseries, "Don't F*k This Up". Kevin is a New York Times Best Selling author twice over and his first Audible original, "The Decision," was nominated for an Audie award for "Best

Original Audiobook in 2021." Kevin is a founding partner in two companies: the premium tequila brand Gran Coramino, and plant based quick serve restaurant Hart House. Kevin's brand partnerships include Sam's Club, Audemars Piguet, Fabletics Men, Chase J.P Morgan, Draft Kings, Hydrow, NutraBolt, Brüush, Tommy John and Therabody.

This event will be a phone-free experience. Use of phones, smart watches and accessories, will not be permitted in the performance space.

Upon arrival at the

venue, all phones, smart watches and accessories will be secured in individual Yondr pouches that will be opened at the end of the event. Guests maintain possession of their devices at all times, and can access them throughout the event only in designated Phone Use Areas within the venue. All devices will be re-secured in Yondr pouches before returning to the performance space.

Anyone seen using a device (phone, smart watch or accessories) during the performance will be escorted out of the venue.





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Notes of a Native Son: **GENERATING LIGHT**

by afroblastik [John 'Jahni' Moore]

Some time ago, I traveled to see a Thornton Dial art exhibit. Although Thornton Dial has transitioned, his work lives on as a beacon of his presence here on the planet. As a fellow Alabama artist, I am inspired by his journey. Included on the panel discussion was Lonnie Holley, another southern artist I deeply admire.

It's very important for me and my practice to seek out those whose work/life have shaped my creative journey and pushed my vision forward. As I stepped up in line and began to speak with Lonnie, I noticed another young man waiting eagerly. Lonnie continued on and conversed with me longer than any of the others before. Having been in the position of one who has stood in the space of waiting and of greeting, I wanted to be respectful of both positions.

Not wanting to take up much more than my share of his time, I decided to step back and give the waiting young man his turn. He stepped up directly to me still smiling. With an animated look of controlled excitement



on his face he said, reaching out his hand, "I was waiting to meet you."

I was a bit surprised to say the least. It felt like time paused for a moment. I had come to seek wisdom and inspiration from someone I looked up to, only to be reminded that I too, am a light for someone else.

The moment revealed to me an ever present truth: we are all torches in someone's darkness, a lamp in another's searching, or simple a light along their pathway. While we are busy seeking illumination to guide our own path, we are generating light that illuminates the paths of others. It's humbling to

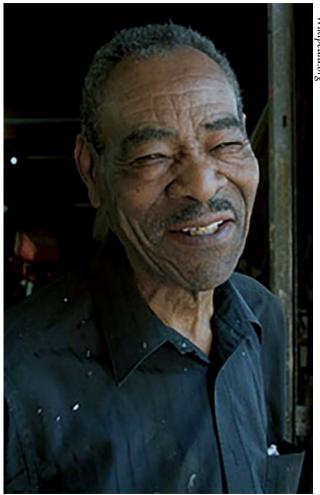
think about the ripple effect of our actions. Every brushstroke, every step forward or back, every story we tell holds the potential to inspire someone we may never meet. Whether you're an artist, a teacher, a parent, or simply a person striving to grow, your journey is leaving trails of light for others to follow.

I believe this is what creativity and ultimately humanity are about—connection. We are a collective constellation, each star adding brilliance to the night sky.

The world doesn't just need one blazing sun; it needs the combined glow of every light bearer sharing their radiance. Keep shining, I say. Keep creating. Keep living authentically or at least pushing toward it. You never know who might be waiting to meet you,



or who might already be watching and drawing strength from your light. We are all part of this dynamic, magnanimous, cosmic exchange of inspiration. When we create and share, we generate light—not just for ourselves, but for a world so in need of it.



Alabama A&M University 150th Anniversary Torchbearer Kickoff Reception Hosted by Dr. Dorothy W. Huston - Huntsville, Alabama

