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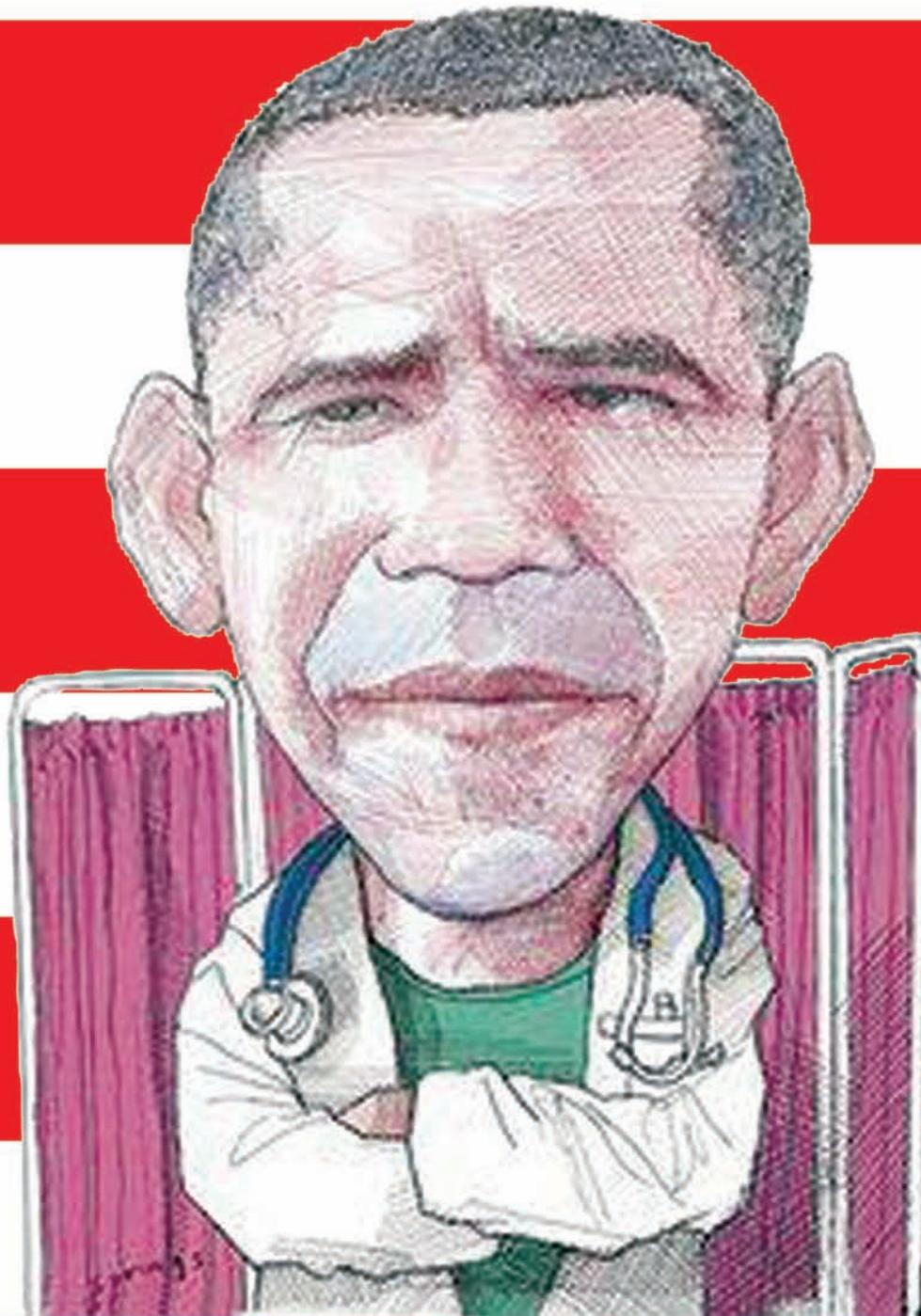
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Baptist Leader: I'm Exhibit A on Diversity

The Rev. Fred Luter Jr.'s flock backs him as an inclusive symbol of Southern religious conservatism.

By: Denise Stewart
Guest Columnist



Vernetta Ballard, 53, has been a member at Franklin Avenue for 17 years. Like most church members, she was displaced in 2005 by Hurricane Katrina and lived for two years in Alabama. Two years later she returned to the Crescent City — and to her church, which also had to rise from the ruins of the floodwaters.

On Sunday she had white embroidered commemorative cloths that had been sewn by the church's sewing ministry. "It's just amazing to see our pastor elected the first African-American president of the Southern Baptist Convention," she said. "To God be the glory."

Since his election earlier last week, Luter says he has had a steady flow of phone calls from people offering prayers and support. As he was checking out of a hotel in downtown New Orleans on Thursday, his cell phone rang, and on the other end was President Barack Obama. "That messed me up," Luter said jokingly from the pulpit. "How does he know my cell phone number?"

The two presidents talked about five minutes, he added. President Obama congratulated him, then asked Luter: "So what's it like to be the most popular president in America?"

Like Obama, Luter is a first, and he's keenly aware of the changes that brings. "There's a tremendous amount of pressure," Luter said, during a brief interview after the morning worship. "Anytime you are the first at anything, there are high expectations. My greatest challenge is not to mess up."

Luter said that his election is evidence of the convention's commitment to diversity, but it is not a token gesture. "The Southern Baptist Convention is open to all people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds," he explained. "This is real. It goes beyond the studies and the reports, and Fred Luter is exhibit A."

The 16-million-member SBC must have a well-thought-out plan for increasing diversity, says Bill J. Leonard, the James

and Marilyn Dunn Chair of Baptist Studies at the Wake Forest University School of Divinity in North Carolina. "There must be intentionality on diversity," he said. "Luter and others must be invited to share power in denominational leadership and on the various committees."

Luter's election is an important step, but the impact of that step is what is truly important, according to Leonard. "The Gospel says, 'By their fruits you will know them,'" he said.

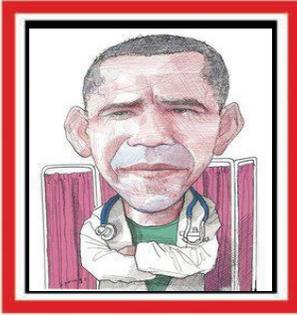
One of the most diverse Baptist denominations, Leonard said, is the [American Baptist Churches USA](#). About 30 years ago, the American Baptists set quotas for their congregations to achieve diversity, Leonard said.

While quotas may not be an effective approach to increasing diversity in the predominantly white Southern Baptist Convention, the denomination must choose different ways to reach out to people of other races. "Some of the African-American churches in the SBC are dually aligned with the National Baptist Convention," Leonard said. That approach may allow the SBC to achieve more diversity and partner in ministry with other congregations without causing a huge disruption for other denominations, he added.

Luter said that he has received support from past leaders of the SBC. "I have received phone calls from each of the past presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention who still are living," he said. "They've called and asked me, 'What can we do?' I tell them to pray for me. I want to represent God well. I want to represent our church well."

Denise Stewart is a freelance writer in Alabama and a member of a congregation aligned with both the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention.

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“WHATZ IN YOUR WOMB?”

A DOWN-TO-EARTH SELF DISCOVERY BOOK FOR BLACK WOMEN



A new book is changing the game for any Black woman who is in a relationship, looking for a relationship, or tired of relationships that don't work out. *Whatz In Your Womb?* by Ma'at em Maakheru is helping women all across the country get to the root of their inner drama so that they can attract healthier and more enduring relationships.

Women have the amazing and divine capacity to mimic the creation process in the womb. The womb is a receptacle for holding and cultivating the most precious energy... life. With that in mind, also know that a womb can hold and even act on any type of energy that is allowed to enter it. This is one of the reasons women are deemed emotional. In this very down-to-earth, entertaining, and interactive book, the reader will find out what - or who - is in their womb.

This book has had readers crying, laughing, and just plain tripping out while following Ma'at em Maakheru through her journey of finding out what's in her womb and how to deal with it. “This book is important for Black women to read because it is not based on theory; it is the actual heart felt exploration of a Black

woman committed to getting to and recovering from her core issues regardless of the outcome so that she can operate at her highest vibration...that woman was me,” Maakheru said.

Through exploring Maakheru's experiences, readers have embarked on their own journeys and worked out their issues through a unique series of exercises and “interludes” that have led them to discovering some “funky little energy” that hemmed them up and had them bugging out! However, at the journey's end, the readers found out how to get “Craig and ‘Nem out of their womb,” put their “inner whitegirl in check” and bring back the deity in them.

“I read the book and I have been inspired,” said Jessica McCulley, a mother of two. “I can't wait to have my girls get their ‘funky little energy’ in check!!! And maybe their path will be easier.”

Whether you're a professional woman who can't find a decent man, a woman who keeps meeting the wrong men or a man who wants to know how to be a better mate, *Whatz In Your Womb?* has the real-world answers to finally put your relationship struggles to rest.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

With a Big Five consulting background, an MBA from Johns Hopkins University and undergraduate work at Howard University, Ma'at's background may seem disconnected from Holistic services. However, her educational, professional, and personal experience combined with her spiritual evolution enables her to formulate interactive workshops, books, and projects that resonate with everyday folk from a down to earth perspective. Ma'at is a Reiki Master/Teacher, Belief Management Coach, Kemetic Priestess, Yoruba Initiate and founder of the URban Energy Center.



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He's Broke and Ready to Shack Up, but I'm Not

Ask Demetria: Pass on playing house until you're sure the relationship — and you — can handle it.

My boyfriend of two years lost his job six months ago and is now losing his apartment. He's asked to stay with me because he doesn't want to move back home with his mother. I feel bad for him, but I don't really want to live with him. What do I do? —F.J.

He's jobless and broke. And since so many men tend to define their worth by their ability to provide and he's got no finances to contribute, he's likely broken, too. Moving in might be a come-up for him, but it's likely to be living hell for you. He doesn't have enough money to maintain a home of his own, which means he'll be living off you. Bills, groceries, rent or mortgage? All you, you, you and you.

If you two were living together as an unmarried couple — more or less playing husband and wife — there'd be no question that you should cover him. You want to play wife, then you do wifely duty, which would be to pick up his slack and make the best of it. But you haven't moved in together for a reason, and deciding to do so hastily and for his financial reasons would be a bad move.

He won't be destitute and living on the streets if you don't say yes. He'll be at home with Mom. Tell him you're not up for this challenge and don't think it's in the best interest of your relationship. Suggest other ways you can help without reaching into your pocketbook to fund this transition. Does he need help job-searching, restructuring his résumé, practicing his interview skills? That's your girlfriend duty to pitch in. Financially covering or supporting his basic needs while he's unemployed is not.

Even under the best of circumstances, living with someone is a huge undertaking. It sounds fun in theory, and it is in the early stages (all access!) — and it certainly can be convenient (cheaper rent!) — but there's a lot more to cohabitation than that. You're literally sharing your life and intermingling your finances. That is a major commitment, like a marriage but without its benefits.

People often ask me what I think about cohabitating before marriage, and my answer is often, "Well, it depends." There's no definitive stance the way there is for what to do if your spouse assaults you (leave, no question) or if you catch him or her in the physical act of cheating (leave, no question). For a while my answer was: "Don't do it! Reconsider! Read some literature!"

But then I read a 2010 study by the National Center for Health Statistics that debunked the long-held belief that couples who cohabit before marriage are more likely to divorce. The study

found that in an era when about two-thirds of couples who marry live together first, there are few differences between those who cohabit and those who don't.

Of those who had ever cohabitated before marriage, the probability that they'd still be together after 10 years is 60 percent for women. Meanwhile, those who did not cohabit have a 66 percent chance of still being married after a decade. Whether moving in together is right depends on the couple's specific situation.

If you choose to cohabit as a test run for marriage, I get it. Truthfully, you don't know anyone until you live with that person. It's a fact to which anyone who's ever shared a dorm room or apartment with even their same-sex best friend can testify. And for that reason, I totally get why a couple would want to share the same space and feel each other out and know if they can commit to forever-ever. In this case, even if cohabitation — and by proxy the relationship — doesn't work out, it's better to know that your conflicts can't be overcome prior to being locked into marriage.

But cohabitating without an end goal just isn't a wise move. I've counseled too many women who moved in with their partners, thinking that it meant the relationship was going "somewhere," and it was really just a convenient and temporary setup for their significant other. They took on all the responsibilities of a wife and received none of the privileges. They were devastated when things didn't work out as they'd hoped.

I also know too many guys who lived with their partner, only to end up homeless, sleeping on a friend's couch and giving up almost all of their stuff (out of chivalry, really) when things went awry in the relationship. In both situations the endings were ugly, an added-on hell to an already unpleasant breakup. But these outcomes were inevitable because either the couple moved in together for the wrong reasons or there was never an end goal for sharing a space.

I tell you this so you don't feel guilty about your decision. As a concerned girlfriend of two years, surely you want to accommodate your partner's wishes, but it's important that you consider the long-term effects of his short-term needs. Good luck!

Demetria L. Lucas is a contributing editor to *The Root*, a life coach and the author of *A Belle in Brooklyn: The Go-to Girl for Advice on Living Your Best Single Life*. She answers your dating and relationship questions on *The Root* each week. Feel free to ask anything at askdemetria@theroot.com.



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Christopher Kelly has a lifetime of experiences that have prepared him to serve as Volusia County Judge. He has a reputation as a hard-working attorney with an impressive depth of knowledge of the law. He has served an extensive array of clients with integrity. He is passionate about the law and justice and approaches them with professionalism in the courtroom and empathy for people.

Combined with his ten years of experience as a prosecutor, Christopher Kelly spent over five years with the law firm of Crotty & Bartlett, P.A., where he gained valuable experience in a general civil practice and running a business. In his current role as Managing Assistant State Attorney, Christopher Kelly oversees the day-to-day operations of the Felony Division of the Daytona Beach State Attorney's Office where he manages over 20 attorneys.

In addition to being held in high regard as Managing Assistant State Attorney, Christopher Kelly has an impressive track record as a businessman and a community volunteer. He learned the value of hard work and community service as a young man, which define his life to this day. He treats everyone with respect and dignity. As Volusia County Judge, he will bring to the bench the quality we most revere in a judge... good judgment.

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Resolve to Quit Smoking in 2012

Stick to your New Year's Resolution with Help from Volusia County Health Department and Tobacco Free Florida

DAYTONA BEACH- If resolutions were as easy to keep as they are to make, there would be fewer cigarette smokers in Volusia County. Seven out of ten adult smokers report that they want to quit completely. Last year, about half of them made an attempt to quit. Yet, few (6.2 percent) were successful.

The Volusia County Health Department and Tobacco Free Florida are encouraging smokers to use the program's free and convenient quit resources to start the year smoke-free and increase their chances of staying smoke-free for good. Evidence-based cessation counseling and Food and Drug Administration approved nicotine replacement therapies (NRTS) provided by the program can double to triple your chances of successfully quitting.

Nicotine is one of the most addictive chemicals. The current design and contents of cigarettes make them more attractive and addictive than ever before. Today, cigarettes deliver nicotine more quickly from the lungs to the heart and brain. Poor preparation and a quit plan that's not entirely right for you can make quitting even harder. While quitting is difficult, it is not impossible. In fact, there are now more

former smokers than current smokers in Florida.

"Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and premature death nationwide," said Dr. Bonnie J. Sorensen, director of the Volusia County Health Department. "Tobacco use results in an estimated 28,600 deaths in Florida each year which breaks down to 88 tobacco related deaths daily in the state of Florida. Now is the time to quit smoking."

Smokers who want to quit should not be discouraged. Most former smokers made several attempts before finally quitting permanently. The average smoker attempts to quit between eight and 11 times before ultimately succeeding.

"Every year, many Floridians try to go it alone as they resolve to quit smoking," said Dr. Frank Farmer, Florida's State Surgeon General. "While quitting cold turkey may work for some, every day there is mounting evidence that counseling and medication have been proven effective and can greatly increase your chances of not just quitting, but staying tobacco free for good."

Free Quit Resources

For Volusia County residents, who are interested in quitting and would like additional information they can initiate this process by contacting the Tobacco Prevention Program at the Volusia County Health Department (386-274-0603). The local program office will assist them with a schedule of local classes.

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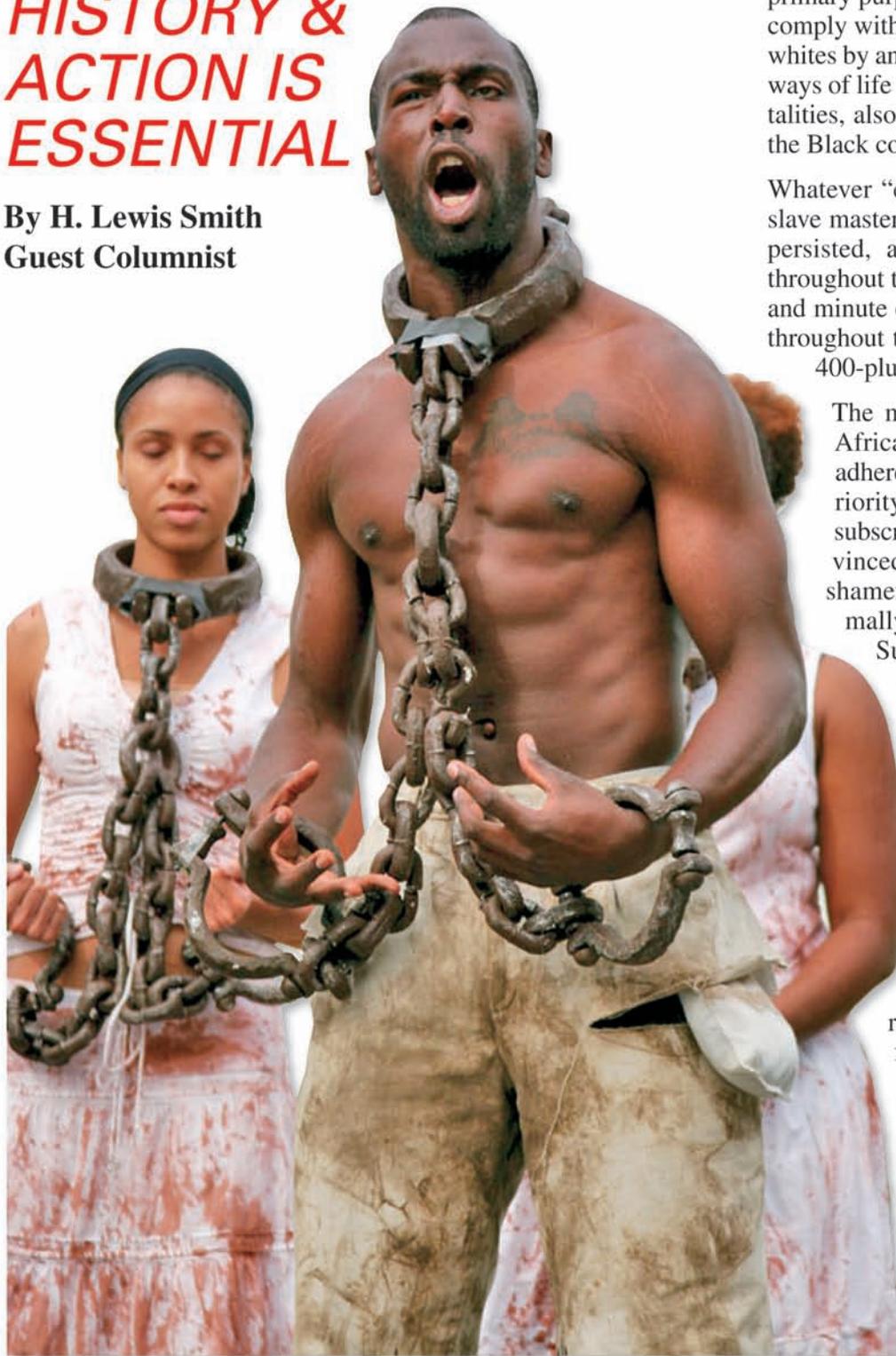
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TO ESCAPE SELF-PERSISTED CAPTIVITY:

EMPHASIS ON BLACK HISTORY & ACTION IS ESSENTIAL

By H. Lewis Smith
Guest Columnist



This past February renowned actor Laurence Fishburne narrated a PBS documentary, *Slavery By Another Name*. The documentary showed that slavery in America did not end in 1865 with the Emancipation Proclamation as the majority of people have been led to believe. Rather, with the federal government's quiet complicity, slavery actually ensued for almost another 100 years with all of the evil, horror, and brutal aspects of race-hate escalating to even greater heights.

To maintain the status quo in society, the South's judicial system was wholly reconfigured, and one of its primary purposes was to coerce African Americans to comply with the social customs and labor demands of whites by any means necessary. As such, the spirit and ways of life under slavery, as well as the inferior mentalities, also continued; and now, even at the hand of the Black community.

Whatever "education" and deformed self-image the slave master imposed upon blacks during slavery has persisted, and been handed down - by Blacks - throughout the generations. The continued self-hatred and minute or unfound self awareness that permeates throughout the Black community is a direct result of 400-plus years of mind control.

The mentality or beliefs that the majority of African Americans presently and voluntarily adhere to is the same unfortunate policy of inferiority and self-hatred Blacks were forced to subscribe to when enslaved: Anyone who is convinced his or her past is empty, backward, shameful or, indeed, totally negative, will normally resist any attempt to revisit that past.

Such a person will have no true identity, despise self, and have no real awareness of his/her culture and heritage. This same person will refuse to consciously participate in or relate to any cultural customs, and will resist any attempt to validate any "facts" discovered. They remain in the darkness, helpless, and dependent. The doctrine hasn't changed one bit.

In order to correct the problem, Blacks must consciously and sub-consciously realize that what they were taught was not for their liberation, but was and still is only in the best interest of the ruling class. History translates into "his-story" - the manner in which one understands or interprets history from his or her own perspective to his or her own benefit.

Today, Blacks are living witnesses as to how real black history has been - by "his-story" - distorted, misleading, deceptive and mind controlling.



American history teaches that slavery ended in 1865; this misinformation is a blatant example of how the truth can be and is tampered with to seemingly save face for America, “the dream country”. However, the obvious suppression of or disregard for such a critical piece of American history makes one question what other aspects of history, in general, have the people been lied to and deceived about.

Evidence all around the world suggests that Black civilizations were far more advanced than the images portrayed to the black community by the ruling class. The ruling class would have Black America believe that the Black race is limited to huts, spears and jungle life with no trace of civility, culture, organization, and self-sufficiency. Research exposes this as a gross fabrication.

Further, Black America must confront and correct the lies that have destroyed the group as a people. With the exception of the Black man’s image as presented by academics, the average African American knows very little, if anything at all, about his or her African heritage, and has, more than likely, been misinformed. The American-born black man and black woman are completely brainwashed beings who only know, recognize and comprehend or experience what their slave master has decided for them. It’s incumbent upon Black America - as a group - to liberate their own minds.

Secular and non-secular people who have spent centuries strategically and heinously orchestrating the black community’s physical, psychological, emotional and

spiritual enslavement are not going to just turn around and set Blacks free; Blacks must remove the shackles of mental enslavement themselves.

Consider a white hunter who sets out to capture a baby elephant. He approaches a baby elephant and its mother. Sensing danger, the mother charges at the hunter who raises his rifle, pulls the trigger, and kills the charging elephant. The baby elephant is captured, tranquilized, and with a cable wrapped around its neck, taken into captivity where it is tied to a post. For five years, it remained tied to that post even though it is now full grown and could have uprooted the post at any time. However, the elephant did not realize it possessed this strength as it had been trained to accept enslavement and that bondage was the norm. Finally, one day, it unintentionally broke free of the cable, and rather than scuffling off, the elephant chose to remain close to the post even though it was now free.

The elephant elected captivity, which is unnatural, because it was so accustomed to being tied down and stuck in one spot. This story is analogous to Black America’s predicament and its use of the n-word. Black Americans’ use of the n-word is a result of being conditioned, programmed and trained to carry out the bidding of a manipulative racist society.

There are many Black African Americans who really do not want or know how to be free, for with freedom come accountability and responsibility. Just as White America continued promoting slavery well after the Emancipation Proclamation - a supposed hard and immediate stop to all forms of slavery, the Black community has [also] allowed the slave mentality to continue: Blacks have continued to promote and keep alive the demise of the Black community and stifled progression by use

Until African Americans as a group are ALL free, none are truly free.



of the n-word, which was created to hold blacks in an inferior place in society. As such, this has caused learned helplessness, docility and passivity in the black community, keeping many Blacks cerebrally anesthetized no matter the extent of education attained.

Many Blacks have chosen not to move away from the post, and, frankly, that's quite bewildering. How is it that so many in the black community have chosen to remain captive and stationary? The RIGHT mix of KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING, and WISDOM enables one to move away from that post and toward progress. These three essential components that are necessary for resurrection and empowerment are defined as:

- 1) Knowledge:** awareness of the facts, truth, and reality. Black America must undo fables, lies and fantasies. Blacks as a people are more committed to fables, lies and fantasy than facts, truth and reality, which is a tremendous problem.
- 2) Understanding:** comprehending the “right” knowledge, and manifesting it into action.
- 3) Wisdom:** the optimum combination of knowledge and understanding expressed in the ability to make things happen.

Acquiring this enlightenment will automatically cause one to deviate from the norm and move away from that post or bondage. However, many remain captive because they have consciously chosen not to acknowledge and garner the elements needed for resurrection and empowerment.

Until African Americans as a group are ALL free, none are truly free. Need the name Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. be raised? Or the 2004 political incident where the Black Caucus was virtually told to be quiet and sit down by a combined show of force from the Democrat and Republican parties?

Black America has taken non-black man made doctrines - rather, white man made doctrines - as the inflicting rule and guide over and above facts and reality. Blacks have literally accepted that which does not even make sense as fact and truth.

The modern day equivalent of remaining tied to the post is to verbally acknowledge that you are a n**ger/n**ga. The Whoopi Goldbergs, Sherri Shepherds, and Byron Pitts of tel-



evision land could never publicly deny the n-word and keep their coveted positions. Embracing the word assures them of acceptance. The irony of it all is that they are not feigning or doing it for show - they truly have accepted their so-called place as the n-word.

When listening to the lyrics of rap music, the n-word is used in the same context with violence, drugs, and misogyny. Rappers such as Jay Z, P. Diddy, Lil Wayne, 50 Cent, and many others have all benefited exponentially by reassuring the systemic that they are doing their part of keeping Black America in its place and tied to the post. No longer is there a need for the hooded white sheets. Black ventriloquists have voluntarily replaced the KKK, and, to be perfectly honest, are doing a far more masterful job of maintaining the mental enslavement of the Black race.

Black African Americans unhealthy willingness to self-sabotage serves as a testimony to the effectiveness of 400 years of mental abuse (mind control). To overcome! A process that never took place, must and needs to take place... DE-PROGRAMMING!



H. Lewis Smith is the founder and president of UVCC, the United Voices for a Common Cause, Inc. (www.theunitedvoices.com); a writer for the New England Informer Online, Staff Writer for ThyBlackMan.com, and author of “Bury that Sucka: A Scandalous Love Affair with the N-Word”. Follow H. Lewis Smith on Twitter: www.twitter.com/thescoop1

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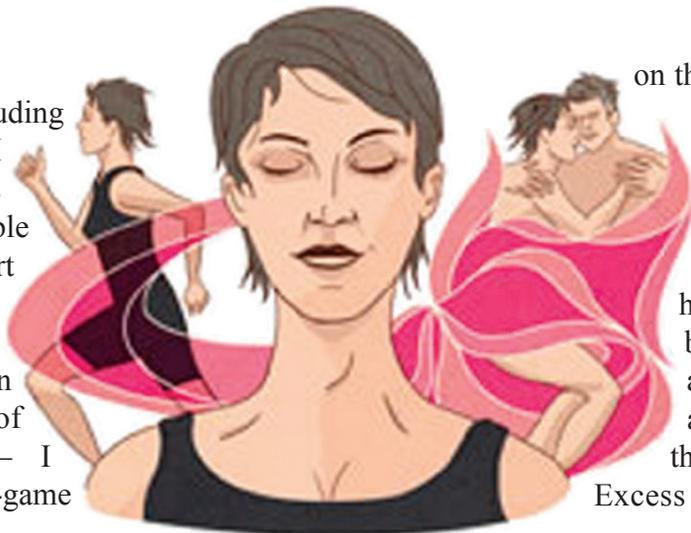
To help manage stress, Dr. Oz prescribes more frequent sex and consistent exercise

By Dr. Mehmet Oz

No one is immune to stress, including me. For my television show, I participated in a stress experiment by wearing a portable device that monitored my heart rate, respiratory rate, and skin temperature for 24 hours. Even after two years of hosting my own show — and two decades of performing heart surgery — I learned I still experience “pre-game jitters.” My adrenaline starts to pump, causing my heart to race before it returns to baseline.

Exercise and sex are two key stress fighters. —
Illustration by Edward McGowan

Periods of brief stress like this are normal, but chronic stress takes a toll on the body — there’s the rush of adrenaline that never quite turns off, leading to an overproduction of another stress hormone, cortisol. I’ve seen firsthand how excess cortisol places a massive strain



on the heart.

Now scientists are learning how cortisol affects the brain, too. Researchers recently discovered that the hippocampus — an area of the brain that helps you respond to anxiety-filled situations — appears uniquely susceptible to the negative effects of cortisol.

Excess cortisol, they suspect, may suppress neurogenesis, the brain’s ability to create and

support new brain cells. And that’s not good for anyone, especially those over age 50.

So how can you turn off the cortisol? Two key stress fighters are exercise and sex. While exercise increases cortisol in the short term, over time it decreases anxiety and boosts neurogenesis — likely by improving blood circulation to the brain. Even more intriguing, the brain cells created during exercise may be more resilient against future episodes of stress.

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ANNUAL SEAFOOD FEST

Bethune-Cookman University Alumni – Orange County Chapter held its Annual Seafood Festival on June 8, 2012 at Saint Mark AME Church-Orlando, FL. This signature fundraising event provides scholarship opportunities for students in the Central Florida area matriculating at the Great Bethune-Cookman University.

There was something for everyone –

The event opened with a soft medley of Jazz by Orlando's own Jazzzone featuring Ricardo Williams & Ronald Starks. Over 450 guests feasted on fish, crab, shrimp, and an array of sides, salad and desserts.

Orange County Chapter member Jasmine Burney kicked off the political forum with the introduction of Orlando political candidates who worked the crowd stomping for a vote. The voter's registration booth was open and everyone was encouraged to register.



We were graced with the appearance of Wildcat Football coach Brian Jenkins who thanked everyone for supporting Wildcat season and looking forward to another great season. Adrienne Noel representing ESPN – MEAC/SWAC greeted the crowd with excitement for the upcoming BCU/Alabama State match up on September 1st at Orlando Citrus Bowl.

Bethune-Cookman University Orange County Alumni Chapter (OCAC) is on the move from embracing the latest in technology to exceeding our fundraising efforts; we are indeed a force to be recognized. Bethune-Cookman University's Orange County Alumni Association and its members play an important role supporting the mission of the University and strengthening the lifelong bonds B-CU alumni have to each other and the institution.

Through fundraising initiatives like the Annual Seafood

Feast, the annual Golf Classic and targeted efforts to increase alumni contributions, the B-CU Orange County Alumni Association helps meet the needs of today's students. OCAC also help locate future B-CU students through recruiting efforts at the local chapter level. The B-CU OCAC works to ensure the positive reputation of the Great Bethune-Cookman University. OCAC major fundraising efforts are all geared to support the university and students within Orange County as they continue their educational thrust. It is crucial that each of us do all we can to assist our University as often as we can.



The BCU Orange County Alumni Chapter



***BCU Orange County Alumni welcomes
Coach Jenkins***

The Bethune-Cookman University Orange County Alumni Chapter believes in the motto ***“Enter to Learn; Depart to Serve”***. OCAC provided gifts of Thanksgiving baskets and Christmas toys to the Total Restoration Transformation Center during the holiday season, which helped to assist 95 families with Thanksgiving baskets and over 100 children with Christmas toys – Center Executive Director, Bridgett Davis.

Mission

The mission of the Bethune-Cookman University Orange County Alumni Chapter is to support the university by initiating/hosting events that are designed to increase awareness and involvement in the university and the attainment of its mission, primarily through local fund raising activities and recruitment of students.

Vision

The Bethune-Cookman University Orange County Alumni Chapter is a non-profit organization which supports the University through networking and coordination of efforts, activities, and special events to increase social and professional interaction among alumni by:

- Promoting and encouraging ongoing strong alumni financial support of B-CU
- Promoting and encouraging alumni interest in B-CU
- Assisting with recruitment and retention of students

- Communicating through positive interaction among alumni
- Providing programs, activities and services that positively reflect the image of B-CU and the B-CU Orange County Alumni Chapter
- Conducting chapter meetings and attending conferences, setting goals and providing a strong organizational system

Sustaining a legacy of service, the Orange County Chapter of the B-CU Alumni Association has supported the following local University events:

- Provided dinner to the B-CU Marching “Wildcat” Band
- Provided snacks to the B-CU Concert Chorale
- Provided lunch boxes to Basketball & Baseball team
- Sponsored the first tailgate for the B-CU Baseball team and their families
- Supported the Florida Classic luncheon
- Participated in several area community college fairs / events
- Provided tuition and book scholarships to local students

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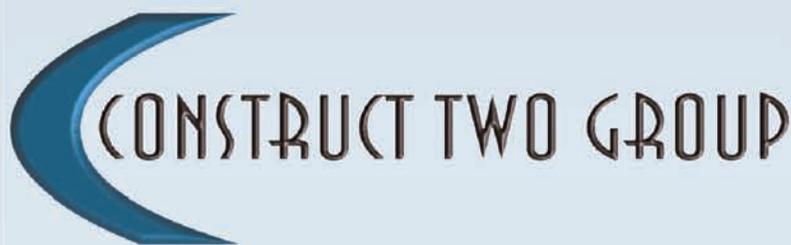


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Ms. Pelosi walked to the Capitol flanked on the right by Representative John Lewis of Georgia. Mr. Lewis, a prominent activist who confronted violence during civil rights marches before coming to Congress, said, “Today we are walking again, and we will be walking into history.” Ms. Pelosi and Mr. Lewis were joined by Representatives Steny H. Hoyer of Maryland on the left and John B. Larson of Connecticut on the right.

Obama Hails Vote on Health Care as Answering 'the Call of History'



Democrats were jubilant; they saw the bill as the culmination of a four-decade fight to expand health coverage, coming as many Americans find themselves with rising insurance costs and declining access to care. Ms. Pelosi and Representative James E. Clyburn of South Carolina, the Democratic whip, had been responsible for wrangling Democratic skeptics of the bill from both the right and left. They received applause as they returned to the Speaker's office.



Abortion rights were also on the minds of some of the protesters who gathered on Capitol Hill. Demonstrators opposing and supporting the measure clashed on Sunday.

**By ROBERT PEAR and
DAVID M. HERSZENHORN**
Guest Columnists

WASHINGTON — House Democrats approved a far-reaching overhaul of the nation's health system on Sunday, voting over unanimous Republican opposition to provide medical coverage to tens of millions of uninsured Americans after an epic political battle that could define the differences between the parties for years.

With the 219-to-212 vote, the House gave final approval to legislation passed by the Senate on Christmas Eve. Thirty-four Democrats joined Republicans in voting against the bill. The vote sent the measure to President Obama, whose yearlong push for the legislation has been the centerpiece of his agenda and a test of his political power.

After approving the bill, the House adopted a package of changes to it by a vote of 220 to 211. That package — agreed to in negotiations among House and Senate Democrats and the White House — now goes to the Senate for action as soon as this week. It would be the final step in a



Minority Leader John A. Boehner, left, and Representative Eric Cantor of Virginia, the minority whip, walked to the House floor on Sunday. Mr. Boehner, of Ohio, said lawmakers were defying the wishes of their constituents. "The American people are angry," Mr. Boehner said. "This body moves forward against their will. Shame on us."

bitter legislative fight that has highlighted the nation’s deep partisan and ideological divisions.

On a sun-splashed day outside the Capitol, protesters, urged on by House Republicans, chanted “Kill the bill” and waved yellow flags declaring “Don’t Tread on Me.” They carried signs saying “Doctors, Not Dictators.”

Inside, Democrats hailed the votes as a historic advance in social justice, comparable to the establishment of Medicare and Social Security. They said the bill would also put pressure on rising health care costs and rein in federal budget deficits. “This is the Civil Rights Act of the 21st century,” said Representative James E. Clyburn of South Carolina, the No. 3 Democrat in the House.

Mr. Obama celebrated the House action in remarks at the White House. “We pushed back on the undue influence of special interests,” Mr. Obama said. “We didn’t give in to mistrust or to cynicism or to fear. Instead, we proved that we are still a people capable of doing big things.”

“This isn’t radical reform,” he added, “but it is major reform.”

After a year of combat and weeks of legislative brinksmanship, House Democrats and the White House clinched their victory only hours before the voting started on Sunday. They agreed to a deal with opponents of abortion rights within their party to reiterate in an executive order that federal money provided by the bill could not be used for abortions, securing for Democrats the final handful of votes they needed to assure passage.

Winding up the debate, Speaker Nancy Pelosi said: “After a year of debate and hearing the calls of millions of Americans, we have come to this historic moment. Today we have the opportunity to complete the great unfinished business of our society and pass health insurance reform for all Americans that is a right and not a privilege.”

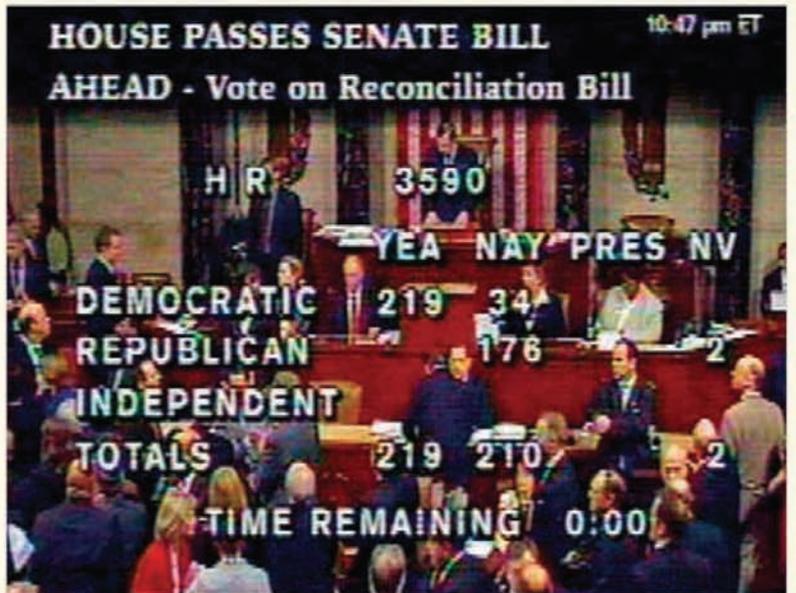
The House Republican leader, Representative John A. Boehner of Ohio, said lawmakers were defying the wishes of their constituents. “The American people are angry,” Mr. Boehner said. “This body moves forward against their will. Shame on us.”



President Barack Obama’s signature on the Health Care Reform bill.



House Democrats approved a far-reaching overhaul of the nation’s health system on Sunday. Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democratic leaders held a news conference after Sunday’s vote, which was marked by unanimous Republican opposition.



While Democratic leaders and the White House ultimately persuaded 219 members to support the bill — three more than needed for passage — they clinched their victory only hours before the voting started on Sunday. They agreed to a deal with opponents of abortion rights within their party to reiterate in an executive order that federal money provided by the bill could not be used for abortions, securing for Democrats the final handful of votes they needed to assure passage.

Obama Hails Vote on Health Care as Answering 'the Call of History' from Page 21



President Barack Obama signs the health insurance reform bill in the East Room at the White House, saying, "The bill I am signing will set in motion reforms that generations of Americans have fought for and marched for and hungered to see.... We are not a nation that scales back its aspirations. We are not a nation that falls prey to doubt or mistrust. We don't fall prey to fear. We are not a nation that does what's easy...."



Representative John D. Dingell's father was also a congressman who had introduced universal health care legislation. The Michigan Democrat, left, lent Ms. Pelosi a gavel for Sunday's vote.

Republicans said the plan would saddle the nation with unaffordable levels of debt, leave states with expensive new obligations, weaken Medicare and give the government a huge new role in the health care system.

The debate on the legislation set up a bitter midterm campaign season, with Republicans promising an effort to repeal the legislation, challenge its constitutionality or block its provisions in the states.

Representative Paul D. Ryan, Republican of Wisconsin, denounced the bill as "a fiscal Frankenstein." Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Republican of Florida, called it "a decisive step in the weakening of the United States." Representative Virginia Foxx, Republican of North Carolina, said it was "one of the most offensive pieces of social engineering legislation in the history of the United States."

But Representative Marcy Kaptur, Democrat of Ohio, said the bill heralded "a new day in America." Representative Doris Matsui, Democrat of California, said it would "improve the quality of life for millions of American families."

The health care bill would require most Americans to have health insurance, would add 16 million people to the Medicaid rolls and would subsidize private coverage for low- and middle-income people, at a cost to the government of \$938 billion over 10 years, the Congressional Budget Office said.

The bill would require many employers to offer coverage to employees or pay a penalty. Each state would set up a mar-



Democrats were not unified over the measure. Representative Bart Stupak and other Democratic opponents of abortion remained unsure of whether they would support the bill until almost the last minute, when they agreed on Sunday afternoon to back it after the president promised the order banning federal money for abortions. Still, 34 Democrats voted against the bill.

see HEALTH CARE VOTE – Page 23

Obama Hails Vote on Health Care as Answering 'the Call of History' from Page 22

ketplace, or exchange, where consumers without such coverage could shop for insurance meeting federal standards.

The budget office estimates that the bill would provide coverage to 32 million uninsured people, but still leave 23 million uninsured in 2019. One-third of those remaining uninsured would be illegal immigrants.

The new costs, according to the budget office, would be more than offset by savings in Medicare and by new taxes and fees, including a tax on high-cost employer-sponsored health plans and a tax on the investment income of the most affluent Americans.

Cost estimates by the budget office, showing that the bill would reduce federal budget deficits by \$143 billion in the next 10 years, persuaded some fiscally conservative Democrats to vote for the bill.

Democrats said Americans would embrace the bill when they saw its benefits, including some provisions that take effect later this year.



After the House approved the bill, President Obama, joined by Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., hailed the action in remarks at the White House. "In the end what this day represents is another stone firmly laid in the foundation of the American dream," the president said. "Tonight, we answered the call of history as so many generations of Americans have before us. When faced with crisis, we did not shrink from our challenges. We overcame them. We did not avoid our responsibilities, we embraced it. We did not fear our future, we shaped it."



House Republicans expressed their opinion of the bill before the vote on Sunday, echoing a chant by protesters outside. The party was uniform in its opposition to the measure, saying the plan would saddle the nation with unaffordable levels of debt, leave states with expensive new obligations, weaken Medicare and give the government a huge new role in the health care system.



Representative Patrick J. Kennedy, a Rhode Island Democrat, embraced Ron Pollack, an executive with the advocacy group Families USA, after the measure passed. Mr. Kennedy's father, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, had devoted much of his long Senate career to pursuing the expansion of health care coverage before his death in 2009. "Health care is not only a civil right, it's a moral issue," said the younger Kennedy, echoing the elder.



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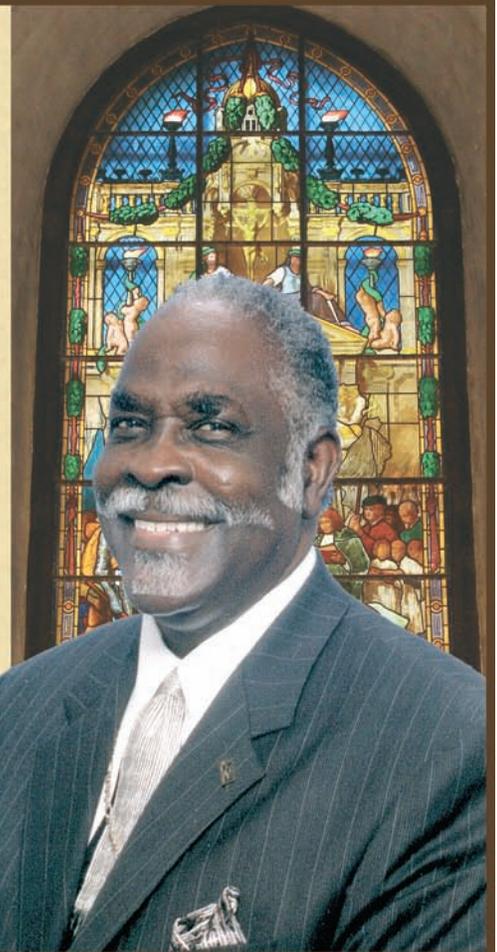
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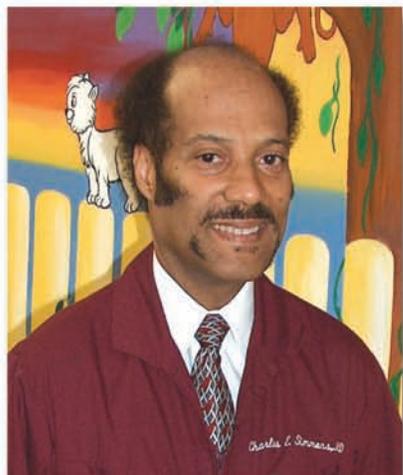
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Dr. Charles E. Simmons

Endometriosis

By Dr. Charles E. Simmons
Jacksonville, Florida
Assisted By Dominique D. Barrs
Medical Student

The word endometriosis comes from the word endometrium. The prefix *endo-* means “inside” and *-metrium* means “mother”. Endometrium is the tissue that lines the uterus (womb), and women with this problem have tissue that look and acts like the lining of the uterus, but grows outside of the uterus in places it’s not supposed to grow. These areas can be classified as tumors, growths, lesions, nodules, or implants. Most cases of endometriosis are found on or under the ovaries, behind the uterus, on the tissues that hold the uterus in place, or on the bowels or bladder. However, endometriosis can grow in the lungs or other parts of the body, however wherever this misplaced tissue is, it causes pain, infertility, and very heavy periods.

To better understand why pain is a result of endometriosis, an understanding of a woman’s period is needed. Every month, hormones cause the lining of the uterus to build up with blood vessels and tissue. The uterus then sheds this tissue and blood through the vagina if the woman does not get pregnant. Endometriosis also responds to the monthly cycle of the woman. Every month, the growths add more tissue and blood, and since the tissue isn’t where it is supposed to be, it can’t leave the body the way a woman’s period normally does. As time progresses, endometriosis areas can grow and become nodules on the surface of the pelvic organs, or even cysts (fluid-filled sacs) in the ovaries. This leads to inflammation, scar tissue, and pain from the resulting tissue and blood that is shed into the body.

Endometriosis does not discriminate who it affects. From a girl who just got her first period, to a woman encountering menopause, anyone can get endometriosis. Overall, women with endometriosis are 27 years old on average. They still get their periods, and have symptoms for two to five years before they even find out that they have it. The exact cause of endometriosis is still unknown, but you are more likely to get endometriosis if you get your period at an early age. Also, having heavy periods, or periods that last more than seven days can be a cause for endometriosis. Endometriosis can result from “retrograde menstrual flow”. This is when the tissue that sheds during a menstrual flow flows into her pelvis instead of exiting through her blood.

As stated before, pain is the most common symptom of a patient with endometriosis. Some women have reported that they have no pain, and they have a large region affected with endometriosis. Some women claim to suffer from an excruciating



Nodules or growths on the endometrium of the uterus.



A fallopian tube infected with outer cysts and nodules.

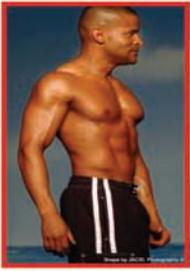
amount of pain, and their endometriosis coverage is minor. This is a great indicator that the amount of pain is not positively correlated with the severity of endometriosis. Those suffering from pain have a variety of painful encounters. Painful menstrual cramps, chronic pain in the lower back and pelvis, pain during and after sex, intestinal pain, painful bowel movements, painful urination during monthly cycle, spotting in between periods, fatigue, and infertility.

There are treatments for the pain and infertility that endometriosis causes. Over-the counter drugs and prescription drugs are available for mild cases of endometriosis. Sometimes, pain medication is not strong enough and hormone therapy is needed. Women who take hormone treatments usually do not wish to have children; they only want to alleviate pain due to their small growths and excessive pain. Pills, shots, and nasal sprays are the different forms that the hormones come in. For women who suffer severely from endometriosis, surgery seems to be the best method. The removal of growths and scar tissue, or destroying them with intense heat, are procedures done during Laparoscopy.

Endometriosis is really a growing issue, as more and more women are diagnosed with this problem. The *Endometriosis Research Center (ERC)* main goal is to make a positive difference in the lives of those affected by the disease. “The ERC is an International leader in raising Endometriosis awareness; providing education, encouragement and empowerment to all those living with this illness; facilitating global Endometriosis research efforts; and so much more”. Located in Delray Beach, Florida, the world headquarters is teaming up with clinicians and researchers all over the world to find more effective treatments, and eventually a cure.

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5 Steps to Make a Killer First Impression

By Vanessa Van Petten
Guest Columnist

Most people will judge you within the first second of meeting you and their opinion will most likely never change. Making a good first impression is incredibly important, because you only get one shot at it.

Princeton University psychologist Alex Todorov and co-author Janine Willis, a student researcher who graduated from Princeton in 2005 had people look at a microsecond of video of a political candidate. Amazingly, research subjects could predict with 70-percent accuracy who would win the election just from that microsecond of tape. This tells us that people can make incredibly accurate snap judgments in a tenth of a second.

How can you ensure people are judging you accurately and also seeing your best side? You never want to give people an inauthentic impression — many people can intuitively feel if someone is being fake immediately. However, any time you meet someone for the first time, you always want to start on the right foot.

Here are a few ways you can make sure people's first impression of you is a good one:

1. SET AN INTENTION

The most important thing to do for giving a good impression is to set your intention. This is especially important before any kind of big event where you would be meeting a lot of people — i.e. conferences, networking events or friend's parties.

As you get ready or when you are driving over think about what kind of people you want to meet and what kind of **interactions** you want to have. This can be an incredibly grounding experience and works very well to focus on what kind of energy you want to have for your event.

2. THINK ABOUT YOUR ORNAMENTS

Clothes, make-up, jewelry, watches and shoes are all types of ornamentation and people definitely take these into account when making initial judgments. I highly recommend getting some of your favorite outfits or ornaments together and asking friends you trust what they think of when they see them.

For many men, they do not realize that their watch can say a lot about them. For women, purses and large earrings or jewelry can also indicate a lot to a new person they are meeting. Make sure that what you are wearing and how you do your hair or make-up says what you want it to say to the people you are meeting for the first time.

3. BE CONSCIOUS OF YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Body language is a crucial part of first impressions. Everything from your posture to how you carry yourself to the way you're angling your body. Often, simply being aware of your body language can result in immediate improvements.

Another way to examine your body language is to look at yourself on a video walking around a room. Subconscious cues to keep in mind include noticing where you point your feet, the position of your shoulders, and the way you shake hands.

4. AVOID BAD DAYS

People who go to cocktail events or mixers after having had a bad day typically continue to have a bad day. If you are in a depressed or anxious mood, others will pick up on this from your facial expressions, comments and body language.

If you're having a bad day, stay home! Otherwise, find a way to snap yourself out of your bad mood. I find working out or watching funny YouTube videos before events often gets me in a more social, feel good mood.

5. BE INTERESTED AND INTERESTING

If you are truly interested in meeting people and are open to learning about who they are, they will get this in a first impression. We have all had the experience of meeting someone and knowing instantly that they were dragged here by a friend and are just waiting to get out the door and head home.

When you are meeting people for the first time approach others with a **genuine interest** in who they are. This is often contagious and you will have better conversations and lasting connections when you are interested because they become interested.

Vanessa Van Petten specializes in social and emotional intelligence research and development. The focus of her company is to research youth behavior and help adults keep up with young adults.

The Young Entrepreneur Council (YEC) is an invite-only non-profit organization comprised of the country's most promising young entrepreneurs. The YEC promotes entrepreneurship as a solution to youth unemployment and underemployment and provides its members with access to tools, mentorship, and resources that support each stage of a business's development and growth.



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James Huger, former City Commissioner and County Councilman.

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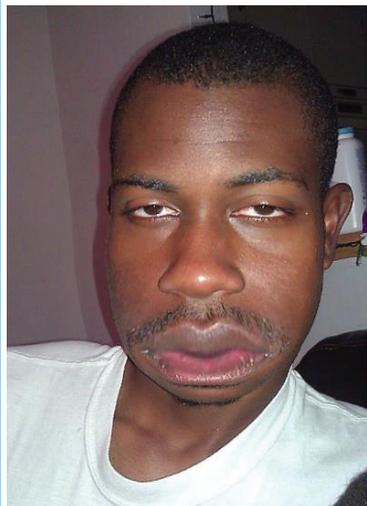
By Dominique D. Barrs, M.S.M.S

Food Allergies



A food allergy occurs when the immune system attacks certain proteins in a food. These proteins, in the case of allergic reactions, are called allergens. These allergens have survived the heat of preparation and cooking, the acid in the stomach, and the enzymes secreted during intestinal digestion. Due to this survival, these proteins cross the gastrointestinal lining, they enter the bloodstream, and travel to target organs, where they begin to elicit a response. To combat the invasion of these proteins, the immune system produces antibodies, which are proteins, which aid in the recognition and attack of these foreign substances. The antibodies that assist with allergies are immunoglobulin E (IgE). To protect the body from future invasion, the antibodies will attach themselves to mast cells. Once that harmless food is ingested again, the one that the body mistook as harmful, the mast cells containing the IgE will recruit histamines, which in tell fight the pathogens, eliciting an allergic reaction. Itching, swelling of the skin, hives, and welts are all a result of the release of histamine into your body, an inflammatory response.

Once the inflammatory response is triggered, there is increase blood flow to the damaged area. Histamine, which was released after the detection of the allergen, stimulates vasodilation. The blood vessels and the capillaries widen. These gaps allow plasma and fluid to have easier access to pass and leak through between the cells, and the increased blood flow produces the redness and heat. If there is an accumulation of fluid from damaged cells in tissue spaces, this causes swelling. If enough pressure builds upon nerve endings, this can lead to pain.



When a food allergy causes swelling of your body's tissues, it is called Angioedema. The more common sites of swelling associated with Angioedema are the face and the lips, however the mouth, tongue, and airways may swell as well. With the obstruction of your airways, breathing and swallowing may become impaired. Seafood (shell fish) and nuts are the most common food allergies that spark this condition. Antibiotic drugs may also trigger this response. To reduce the swelling, antihistamine drugs and corticosteroids can be administered for the milder cases. For the more severe cases of Angioedema, emergency medical treatment is needed.

Anaphylaxis is a more rare allergic reaction, but it can lead to fatality. This allergic reaction is a result from allergen extreme sensitivity or hypersensitivity. Involving the entire human body, the immune system releases excessive amounts of histamine. The body, being unable to cope, throws the body into shock, because of the sudden fall in blood pressure. Similarly to Angioedema, there can be constriction and obstruction of the airways, which can be fatal, and there may be swelling of the face, lips, and tongue. Urticaria, which is a rash red in color, and lumpy in texture, can cause itchy and irritated skin. Nuts are the more common food allergen to trigger this response. Adrenaline

may be prescribed by a physician to those suffering with Anaphylaxis, and syringes of epinephrine may be given.

Common Food Allergies in children include milk, egg whites, wheat, soy, and peanuts. About 6% of children are suffering with food allergies. In adults, the more common food allergies are shell fish, tree nuts, peanuts, and fish. About 2% of adults suffer with one or more food allergies. There are, however, foods that account for about 90% of foods that cause allergies. These popular allergic foods include, milk, egg, peanuts, tree nut, fish, shellfish, soybeans, wheat, and some fruits like bananas, grapes, melons, avocados, tomatoes, and nectarines. My food allergy does not fall on this list, and when I inform people of it, most people are shocked. I am allergic to apple juice. It causes hives to appear all over my body, and an instant spike in temperature. Apples, I can consume, however, I try to limit my intake.

Common symptoms of food allergies may vary, but the initial unusual change in the body's homeostasis can be a great indicator. Vomiting, diarrhea, rashes, itching, hives, and sometimes even asthmatic conditions may appear. Reading food labels carefully, avoiding your food allergens, and being aware of any other possible contact, are ways to prevent these symptoms. If you are unaware whether you are allergic to any food item, using a blood or skin test, you can detect whether you have a food allergy, or if a reaction was triggered by a food or another underlying issue. Minutes after exposure to the allergen, the reactions rapidly occur. These reactions take place in the respiratory tract, when the allergen is inhaled, or in the digestive tract when consumed.

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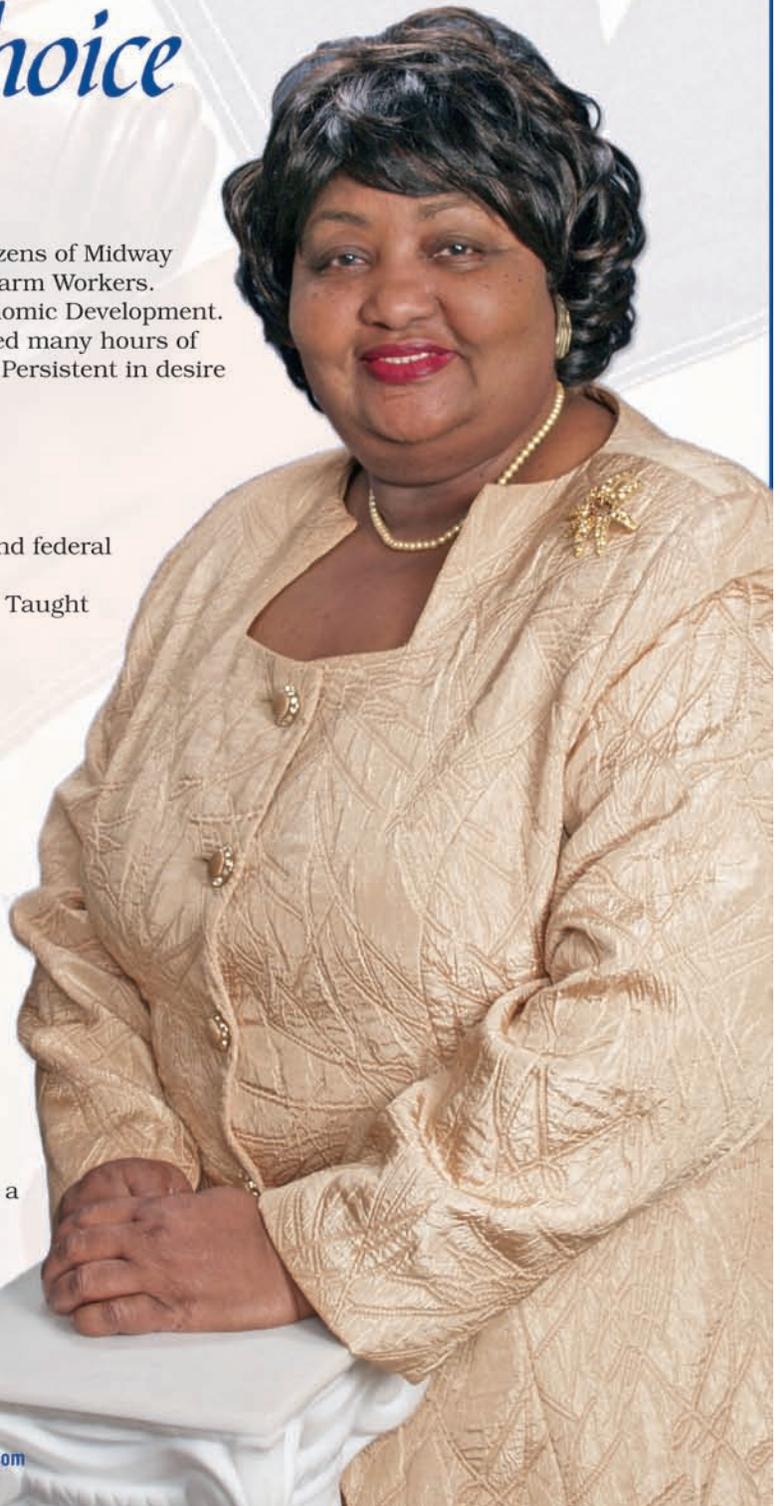
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Will the “Preachers” Get Their Power Back!

By Pastor Leon R. Bing
NJFWC.ORG

The title of this message is not a question, but rather a command. We have been divided in so many directions as *Ministers of the Gospel*, that the world can't trust any of us to give them truth! Because too many have watered down their teaching, preaching, and leadership of the flock of God just to appease unbelievers.

Unbelievers have caused God's chosen vessels to not proclaim His word in the earth today. And as God's chosen vessels, we need to look at the effect of not getting truth of God's Word out. To unbelievers, they tend to think that the problems and issues that this country is going through are just apart of life; “what ever will be, will be”.

Look at what has been happening over the past few years, tornadoes have wiped out complete towns, and fires have been so out of control that thousands of homes have been destroyed. Flooding, earthquakes (including the one that reached from the northeast down the Washington Monument in D.C.), winter freezes that have not been seen the northern states in over a hundred years, and most recently early storms that are popping up and doing severe damage this spring and summer. And let's not forget two recent unthinkable news stories of a man having his face being eaten off while he is alive, and a gentleman who killed his roommate's dog, then cooked it and “ate” it!

Unbelievers find nothing about these incidents that have anything to do with God, but as believers, and Ministers of God, we must see that God is not pleased with the direction of this country! And the ministers who refuse to speak truth, and give truth are going to find out that God will not only judge this country, be he will bring judgment on them as well!

Let's go to the word and refresh our memories as to the boldness of true ministers of the Gospel!

Acts 4:1-22

1 While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the leading priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees came over to them.

2 **They were very disturbed that Peter and John were claiming, on the authority of Jesus,** that there is a resurrection of the dead.

3 They arrested them and, since it was already evening, jailed them until morning.

4 But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so that the number of believers totaled about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

Verse two reminds us that we speak on the authority of Jesus, even if it lands us in jail.

5 The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem.

6 Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest.

7 They brought in the two disciples and demanded, **“By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?”**

8 **Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Leaders and elders of our nation,**

9 **are we being questioned because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed?**

10 **Let me clearly state to you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed in the name and power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, the man you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead.**

Verse 8 reminds us that we are empowered to speak to not just our congregations, but even to the leaders of our “Nation”. So these Quote, “Big Name Preachers” should have stood on the Word of God rather than agree with the leader of this nation when he opposed the word of God.

11 For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, “The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.”

12 There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them.”

13 **The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men who had had no special training.** They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.

Verse thirteen reminds us that the Ministers of God should be known by the boldness in God, and not the way they compromise their calling just to have the world to like them and cater to them on matters not pertaining to the Gospel.

14 **But since the man who had been healed was standing right there among them, the council had nothing to say.**

15 So they sent Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves.

16 “What should we do with these men?” they asked each other. “We can't deny they have done a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it.

17 **But perhaps we can stop them from spreading their propaganda. We'll warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus' name again.”**

18 **So they called the apostles back in and told them never again to speak or teach about Jesus.**

19 **But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him?”**

20 We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard.”

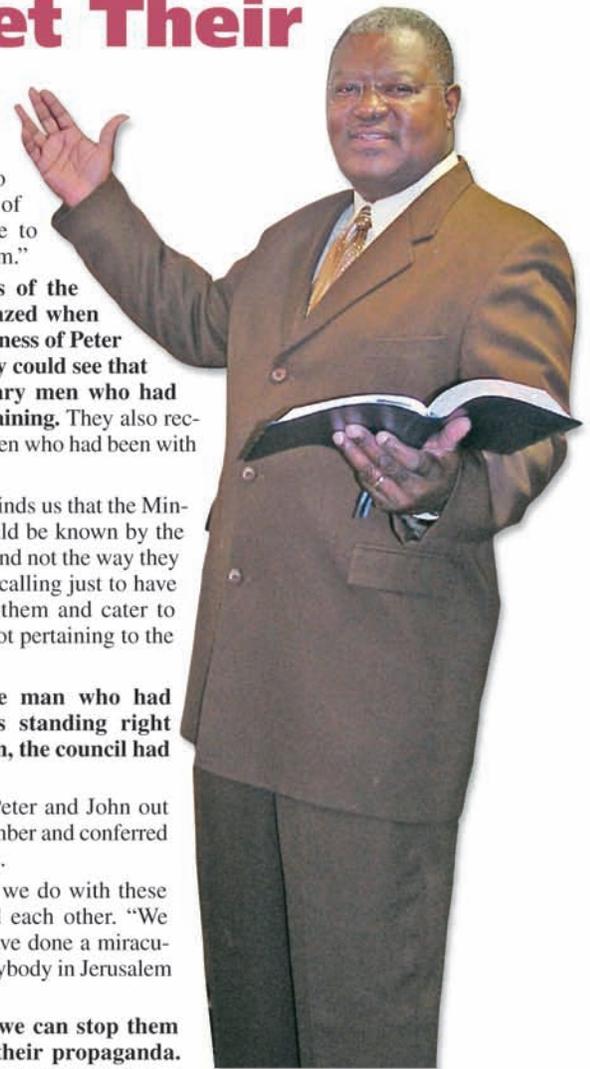
21 **The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God**

22 **for this miraculous sign — the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.**

NLT

Verse 14 reminds us that when there is a witness around, it makes it hard for accusers to spew out their lies. I will close this out with the **King James Version of Acts 5:29** Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, **We ought to obey God rather than men.**

God bless you family of God, I Love You, and pray that the Preachers get their power back!



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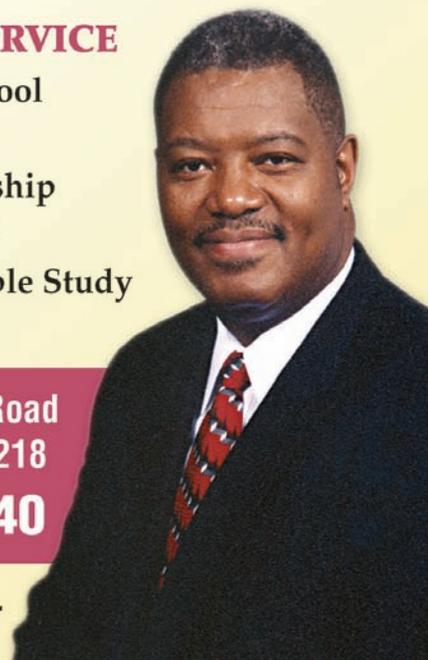
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Publisher's Editorial

The KING, the MICE and the CHEESE

Darryl A. Barrs, Sr., Publisher/Managing Editor

“America’s Pre-School Lesson”

As a young child, one of the very first books I read turned out to be one that had a profound affect on my life then and devoid my knowledge, even more so as an adult. This book titled: The KING, the MICE and the CHEESE, taught me the values of relationships and purpose. Written by Nancy and Eric Gurney in 1965, published by Random House, Inc. of New York, the book is very well illustrated.

The story goes along these lines, “Once upon a time, in a faraway country, there lived a king. He lived in a beautiful palace. He had everything he liked. He liked cheese best of all. His cheese makers made the best cheese in all the land. Everyone in the palace could smell that cheese. Everyone in the town could smell that cheese. Everyone in the country could smell that cheese. A mouse did.”

Now this is where the story gets good. The book says that mouse told all his friends and every mouse in the land ran to the palace. The mice had fun living with the king eating the king’s cheese but the king did not like it. He called his wise men for advice in getting rid of the mice. After careful thought and consideration, they brought in cats; big cats, little cats, fat cats and thin cats. These mice-chasing cats ran every mouse from the palace.

Now the cats were very happy living with the king, but the king was not happy living with cats. They scratch and clawed, there was too many of them. Again he called his wise men, and again after careful thought and consideration, they brought in dogs; big dogs, little dogs and spotted dogs. These cat-chasing dogs ran all the cats from the palace.

Now the dogs were very happy. They liked living with the king. But the king was not happy. He did not like living with dogs. They barked and chewed. In comes the wise men, this time they brought in lions... big - big brave lions. The dog-chasing lions ran every dog from the palace.

Now the lions were very happy living with the king, but not the king living with lions. They were big and scary. Again the call goes out to the wise men, they say this is easy, they bring in elephants. The lion-chasing elephants run every lion from the palace.

The elephants were very, very happy living with the king. But the king was most unhappy living with elephants. They were dusty and they smelled. How do you get rid of elephants, yelled the king? We can do it, said the wise men. We will do it right away. They brought back all the mice. The elephant-chasing mice went right to work and ran every elephant from the palace.

The king was right back where he started... mice everywhere... eating his cheese. “What am I going to do? For three long days the king sat and asked himself that question. After three days of thinking, he thought of the only answer. Calling the mice together, the king made a deal, “I’ll learn to get along with you. You’ll learn to get along with me.”

From then on, the king shared his cheese with the mice... and the mice learned to eat with very nice manners.

Jesus tells a story of relationship and purpose in Mark 4: 1-9. It is a story about simple seeds and their quest to survive. After telling this story, it’s interesting that Jesus concludes with the statement, “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*”

Could it be that America’s solution to all its problems... the mysteries of life, those complex predicaments, eluding answers, and that indistinguishable knowledge we seek, is hiding in plain view among the simple things in life. Is the prophet speaking to us today as a nation when he states in Ezekiel 12:2, “*Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.*”

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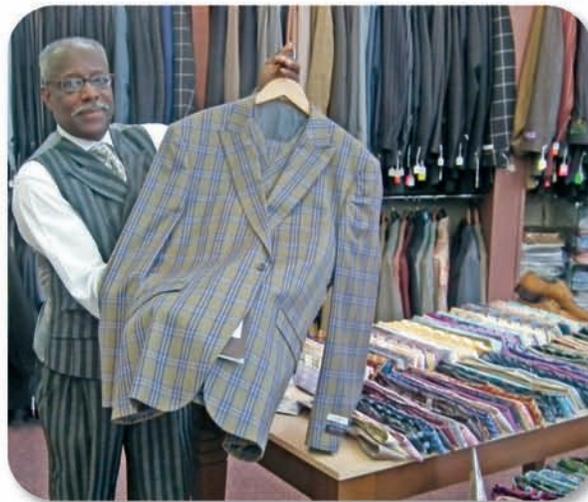
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