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"And Ye Shall Know The Truth..."

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Washington Muhammad and Don Lynn

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Sentencing Reform: Congress Attempts to Inject a Little Sanity into the Nation's Criminal Justice System

By Fletcher Word

Sojourner's Truth Editor

In June 1971, President Richard Nixon declared a "war on drugs." He dramatically increased the size and presence of federal drug control agencies, and pushed through measures such as mandatory sentencing and no-knock warrants.

In December 2018, a long overdue sentencing reform act was approved by the United States Congress in December and signed by the president. The First Step Act, the result of years of work by members of both major parties, is an important start to bringing some sense of sanity into a criminal justice system that has resulted in the United States having the highest

allows those convicted before 2010 of the then much harsher crack cocaine sentences to petition for relief.

What it does not do is significantly address the reasons for the sentencing disparities that result in the incarceration of a disproportionate number of black males. The "War on Drugs," or, more accurately, "the war on young black men" continues.

The war, which President Richard Nixon announced in 1971, has been particularly devastating in the African-American community for two reasons: one, it has targeted black men for arrest and incarceration at a disproportionate rate compared to their white counterparts and, two, the sentences that black defendants have received have been wildly unjust when compared to those received by white defendants.

The origins of the current high rate of incarceration within the general population and, in particular, the minority population are rooted in the President Ronald Reagan administration and the Sentencing Reform Act, part of the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984.

The Sentencing Reform Act was the result of years of study by congressional committees and among its stated goals was an effort to avoid "unwarranted sentencing disparities among defendants with similar records that have been found guilty of similar criminal conduct ..."

The Congressional intent, as stated, was to promote "honesty in sentencing" and also to reduce "unjustifiably wide" sentencing disparity. The honesty part was addressed by abolishing parole forcing inmates to serve virtually all of their sentences. The disparity part was addressed by establishing a sentencing commission that would set sentences for similar acts of criminal conduct and give the sentencing judges "guidelines" to follow, that is, a very narrow range of options.

Although the SRA was passed by both houses of Congress, it was the U.S. Senate that was the driving force behind the Act and for the Senate conservatives, such as the old-time Dixiecrat, Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, the Act would ensure that criminals stayed in prison for a long time – thereby avoiding the charity of judges and/or parole boards who were soft touches.

For the Senate liberals (in fact, no one was really liberal on the issue of crime) every criminal deserved to serve the same length of sentence as every other criminal whose offense was similar. The actual length of those sentences was of not much concern during the 1980's when everyone was fixated on what seemed to be a dramatic increase in crime, particular crime associated with drug trafficking.

However, after the SRA was passed, and while the Sentencing Commission was getting organized, the "crack epidemic" took hold and, according to observers, threatened to destroy the black inner city communities and eventually, and more importantly, infect the white suburbs as well.

In a panic, Congress reacted by passing the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, superseding some of what the Sentencing Commission was working on and establishing mandatory minimum sentences for certain levels of drug trafficking. For crack cocaine, supposedly the drug of choice in the African-American community and among black drug dealers, the mandatory minimum sentences were set at a ratio of 100-one, crack to powder cocaine. A defendant sentenced for the possession of five grams of crack cocaine – enough for a short party for two or three people – would receive a sentence of five years, the same sentence as a defendant found guilty of trafficking 500 grams of powder – enough to earn thousands of dollars in sales to eager customers.

The plan to lock up black drug dealers, especially those who dealt in crack cocaine, worked to perfection. The United States prison population increased from 329,122 in 1980 to 2.2 million in recent years. Those in prison for drug offenses went from about 40,000 in 1980 to 500,000 today. Black Americans, who comprise 12.2 percent of the general population, are 33 percent of the prison population – much of it, particularly in federal prisons, because of crack cocaine offenses.

In addition to the draconian sentences that were imposed by the manda-

"You want to know what this was really all about," said John Erlichman about the War on Drugs. The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying. We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or blacks, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."

incarceration rate in the world, much of it due the long-running "war on drugs."

What the First Step Act does is introduce four changes to federal sentencing laws. First it shortens mandatory minimum sentences for some non-violent drug offenses; second, it allows judges more leeway to use the "safety valves" to go around mandatory minimums in some instances; third, it clarifies that the "stacking mechanism making it a federal crime to possess a firearm while committing another crime, such as a drug offense, should only apply to those who have been previously convicted; fourth, it

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African Americans Should Be Wary of Ohio's Proposed 'Stand Your Ground Bill'

By Anthony Bouyer, PhD

Guest Column

Ohio Republican law makers have introduced a new bill, HB228, "Stand Your Ground." If passed, the bill will eliminate a person's "duty to retreat" if he feels his life is in danger, allowing the individual to protect himself by using deadly force. Representative Niraj Antani, R-District 42, is a co-sponsor of the bill and says he supports it because it will clarify the current law which only allows citizens to use lethal force to protect their homes or car.

The new law, if passed, will state that if you get into a confrontation with someone and you feel threatened, you don't have to retreat. You can shoot the individual and then the burden of proof is on the prosecution.

So the question is why should African Americans be wary of the bill? Let's digest the bill's language. The issue that African Americans, and particularly African-American men, need to be concerned with is the "duty to retreat" language which permits an individual if he feels his life is in danger, he will be able to use deadly force to protect himself.

So as an individual all I have to say is: "I felt my life was in danger."

Why is this troublesome for African-American men? The images of African-American males today from the media often show them as violent, and as non-human. Alexander (2011) offered an historical view of how disingenuous the dominant culture is in creating negative images of African-American males:

Following the Civil War, it was unclear what institutions, laws, or customs would be necessary to maintain white control now that Slavery was gone. Nonetheless, as numerous historians have shown, the development of a new racial order became the consuming passion for most white Southerners. Rumors of a great insurrection terrified whites, and blacks increasingly came to be viewed as menacing and dangerous. In fact, the current stereotypes of black men as aggressive, unruly predators can be traced to this period, when whites feared that an angry mass of black men might rise up and attack them or rape their women. (p. 28)

Americans were reminded of this portrait of African-American men, when Police Officer Darren Wilson, when interviewed by Good Morning America (2015), described how Michael Brown looked right before he shot him in Ferguson Missouri, saying, "Michael Brown looked like a demon, non-human."

According to spring (2010), negative images of conquered groups go back much further than the Civil War, noting, "For early Christians, barbarian was synonymous with pagans and without civilization. Consequently, pagans or non-Christians were considered as less than human" (p. 3).

Over the past year we have witnessed an increase of whites calling the police on African Americans for going about their daily business. In Portland, Ore, an African-American male is approached by Double Tyree security officer and asked to show his key to his room for no reason, police was called and the man was removed from the hotel for no reason. Last month, police in the Seattle suburb

of Kirkland helped the owner of a frozen yogurt shop kick out a black man because employees said they felt uncomfortable. The arrest of two Africa-American males at Starbucks for doing what other customers do meet and talk. There are numerous incidents where the police have been call because whites felt uncomfortable around African Americans.

African Americans are being set up to become victims of a law that will be based on individual's indefinable fears of African Americans. The law will create more deadly situations for communities of color. Remember, those fears will not be based on your position, job title, income level, neighborhood or status in the community. Those fears will be based upon your race and gender if you are an African-American male.



Anthony Bouyer

Ed. Note: Bouyer, who has spent the past 25 years in the criminal justice system as a licensed counselor specializing in drug and alcohol counseling, earned his masters' degree from the University of Toledo in 2003 in counseling and education and his doctorate in 2016 from UT in philosophy of education in Social Foundation and Leadership

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The Importance of Education Equity

By Elizabeth Primas

NNPA ESSA Awareness Campaign Program Manager

States are in the driver's seat when it comes to improving their struggling schools. But how can we make sure they're not taking the "path of least resistance" when it comes to this important work, risking the academic prospects for students of color.

Building on the work done by Bellwether Education Partners, which conducted independent peer reviews of all 50 states' and the District of Columbia's ESSA plans that were required to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education for approval, the Collaborative for Student Success analyzed plans to see which states are taking advantage of new-found flexibility regarding equity in education. The new report, Check State Plans: Promise to Practice, found that just 17 states met its threshold for even having enough public information to review. The report notes that the results are "sobering" in that "more than 9 million students attend schools that do not meet anyone's standard for what is acceptable." This is particularly acute for students of color and who come from low-income families.

The fact is, achievement gaps between white and black students exist. We see this time and again in the National Assessment of Education Progress as well as on individual states' annual assessments. Students who attend inner city public schools tend to fare worse than their peers in suburban public schools. The gaps are even more pronounced when we look at private schools that draw privileged students away from city institutions. These racial divides segregate communities.

A report from the Young Invincibles examines these divides and developed three main findings: (1) minorities disproportionately enroll in for-profit and community colleges, which can condemn them to a vicious cycle of debt; (2) college costs hit minority students harder than their white peers; and (3) the achievement gap is racially divided. While 36.2 percent of white students completed four years of college in 2015, just 22.5 percent of black students could say the same, according to the analysis. While that's much better than the 1974 numbers in which just 5.5 percent of black students finished four years of college compared to 14 percent of white students, that progress leaves little cheer.

State education chiefs and their in-state partners at teaching and research

institutions plus educators on the front lines have a real chance to make a difference for black students and other minorities. But do they have the courage to make the necessary changes?

The Collaborative's report is a good starting point, and it provides a road-map written by education and policy leaders who are displaying the courage necessary to create bold plans that prioritize equity. Low-performing schools must be identified as such and be given real plans with real accountability measures to improve. There have to be consequences for students who don't make the grade, but for too long, our education system as a whole has punished students by not giving them the tools they need to succeed. We have to look at the institutions and root out systemic problems.

As such, the Promise to Practice reviewers evaluated state plans based on

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Books and Basketball at the Wayman Palmer YMCA January 5th and 6th

Youngsters will have the opportunity this weekend to learn a lot about and participate in books and basketball at the Wayman Palmer YMCA – 8 am to 5 pm – on Saturday and Sunday, January 5 and 6. Pearls of Wisdom Global Mentoring & Sports Foundation is presenting a free weekend camp courtesy of sponsors, volunteers donations and guest speakers.

The volunteers and guest speakers include Brandon Copeland, jujitsu instructor and motivational speaker; Debra Sue, Glass City Talent Agency; Dennis Hopson, NBA champ and all-time leading scorer at The Ohio State University and Jodie Summers, poet and author, among others.

The mission of Pearls of Wisdom is to reduce bullying; to educate kids on the importance of healthy living; to prevent drug abuse; to instill confidence; to encourage goal setting; to reduce school drop-outs and to instill a sense of the importance of being law abiding citizens.

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Sentencing Reform... continued from page 2

tory minimums for certain quantities of drugs that superseded the sentencing guidelines, the guidelines themselves presented a sterner approach to sentencing, an approach that took the sentencing decisions out of the hands of the judges ... and into the hands of the prosecutors.

Once the provisions of the SFA became active in 1987, prosecutors, for all intents and purposes, became the decision makers when it comes to sentencing. Rather than judges, appointed for life, whose decisions are virtually impervious to scrutiny, now ambitious prosecutors, who work in a culture in which scorecards are the measurement of success, can play God with the lives of the accused. Prosecutors make the decisions about what quantity of drugs or money or other criminal activity the judge must hold the defendant responsible for during sentencing..

Has the war on drugs worked? Cocaine use is down slightly but marijuana use has increased over the past four decades; heroin use has increased; meth use has exploded and opiates ... out of control.

The war on black people, however, has been really effective.

According to research, black and white Americans sell and use drugs at similar rates, but black Americans are 2.7 times as likely to be arrested for drug-related offenses. To date, 84 percent of federally convicted crack dealers have been African American, serving much longer sentences than their white counterparts convicted of selling powder cocaine.

Does crack cocaine justify such a disparity? Yes, if the only goal is to lock up vast numbers of black offenders. Regardless of the pervasive myths that held sway in the 1980s and for decades afterwards, powder and crack cocaine are chemically the same substance, affect the nervous system in the same way and are equally addictive.

Perhaps the most disconcerting assumption about the crack cocaine problem, as it was conceived in the mid 1980s and still today, is that crack is the substance of choice for black America. In fact most crack users are white — anywhere from 55 to 70 percent, depending on the agency compiling such statistics and that includes the U.S. Department of Justice.

The economic cost of the war?

The war on drugs has received over \$1 trillion in funding since its inception. The government now spends around \$12.6 billion a year to house and care for these hundreds of thousands of inmates — a cost of \$25,251 per person according to the Federal Register. Compared to the \$10,591 spent to provide public education to a single student, the investment in prosecuting the drug war vastly exceeds the investment in the future of America's children.

The sheer numbers of the incarcerated are staggering. The United States, which has five percent of the world's population, houses 20 percent of the world's inmates. This nation has the world's largest prison population and the highest per capita incarcerated rate.

Finally in 2010, a ray of hope. The U.S. Congress passed an adjustment to the crack/powder disparity and reduced the 100-to-one ratio to 18-to-one — meaning 28 grams of crack cocaine would be equivalent for sentencing purposes to 100 grams of powder. The sentencing change was not made retroactive for those already sentenced.

Now comes the First Step Act of 2018, a product of five years of work by Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL); Cory Booker (D-NJ); Charles Grassley (R-IO). Originally, the legislation was the Sentencing Reform and Correc-

tions Act of 2015, a more expansive bill that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (D-KY) refused to give a vote.

That act would have made the lower sentences for crack retroactive and reduced mandatory minimum sentences. One can only hope that the current First Step Act is indeed a first step, and that the elements of the 2015 act will be the sensible next step.

Sensible has never been an integral component of the war on drugs.

John Ehrlichman, counsel and assistant to President Nixon for Domestic Affairs, later admitted in 1994: "You want to know what this was really all about. The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying. We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or blacks, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."

Education Equity... continued from page 4

a rubric that included whether the state has a coherent vision for improving student outcomes, whether there is a strategic use of funding and alignment of resources, the use of evidence-based interventions, and how well state leaders engaged stakeholders. That last component is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of ESSA — federal lawmakers required states to gather input from a wide range of groups outside of traditional education. Civic groups, business leaders, parents and community activists were given a seat at the table.

We watched excitedly as several NAACP groups got involved from the very beginning, helping policy and lawmakers understand community and even neighborhood needs for the betterment of students. Still, it disheartening to learn that just 17 states are ready to identify and provide the kinds of supports that low-performing schools require. Other states can look at Colorado, which has developed a clear menu of school improvement items for districts to choose from, or Nevada where districts have to describe how their strategies for addressing equity gaps in funding applications. Nevada is also using equity-oriented data like behavior and attendance to understand schools' challenges.

There's so much anger and divisiveness in our society today, but the importance of education equity should be among the things on which we can all agree. Every single student in every single school, no matter where that school is located or what kind of home life the child has, must be given the tools and knowledge to succeed. We shouldn't have to fight for this right — the right to an education. And yet we find ourselves year in, year out looking aghast at assessment scores that prove achievement gaps are still there. Thought-provoking analyses like that done by the Collaborative for Student Success will help close those gaps until they are well and truly gone.

Elizabeth Primas is an educator who spent more than 40 years working to improve education for children. She is the program manager for the NNPA's Every Student Succeeds Act Public Awareness Campaign. Follow her on Twitter @elizabethprimas.



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A Mental Health Moment

By Bernadette Joy Graham, MA, LPC, NCC, Certified Grief Recovery Specialist

The Truth Contributor

Loneliness.....

One of the worst feelings I have ever felt outside of something grief related was loneliness. There are days when we just want to be left alone, but being alone and feeling lonely are very two different experiences. Loneliness comes in many forms. Out of say, 20 of my clients, 10 of those clients struggle with loneliness.

Some of those are married, in relationships, living with their families, attend college, have careers and so forth but just being around people just is not enough when that open space in our hearts begin to ache. When I get lonely, I often cry but I know it will pass and I try to create ways to remove the empty, painful space in my heart.

A recent survey from 2018 by Cigna and Ipsos, a marketing re-



Bernadette Joy Graham

search firm surveyed over 20,000 Americans over the age of 18 and the results were:


- 47 percent felt left out
- 27 percent rarely or never felt as though there are people who really understand them.
- 43 percent felt that their relationships are not meaningful
- 43 percent felt isolated from others
- 20 percent rarely or never felt close to people
- 18 percent didn't feel like there are people they can talk to
- Only 53 percent have meaningful in-person social interactions, such as having an extended conversation with a friend or spending quality time with family, on a daily basis.
- The loneliest generation of adults was Generation Z or those 18 to 22 years old.

The above research results were conducted via survey and does not account for every adult or child, for that matter, but it helps to give an idea at least of how Generation Z across America is experiencing loneliness. Loneliness can be a choice with isolation or it could be out of our control.

My heart often goes out to those in nursing or group homes with no family available or willing to care for them. I think about all of the children in just Ohio's foster care due to losing their parent(s) to heroin or other drug of choice. And let's not forget about our troops overseas and on active duty away from their families. I was one of those troops many years ago and as long as I had my fellow Airmen, I never quite felt lonely, it was only after I returned, I felt lonely because I felt as if no one understood my way of life. It is an adjustment period. Part of counseling is adjusting to that which you hope to change, want to change or in the process of changing.

I previously worked at an in-patient drug rehabilitation program that housed about 100 adults. I served as a mental health counselor to patients diagnosed with other than drug/alcohol related issues. Honestly, I felt everyone who walked into treatment suffered from adjustment disorder. They just lost their drug of choice and way of coping. They often lost their children, families and homes. At various times I would observe them outside in the back playing basketball, joking around with each other, making friends, sharing stories and just sit-

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Seniors: How Healthy Feet Can Reduce Your Risk of Falling

Special to The Truth

Among older Americans, falls are the number one cause of injuries and death from injury, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Not only are seniors more at risk for falls, when they do so, it poses a greater risk for injuries, hospitalization and complications. For a ground-up approach to fall prevention, seniors should start by examining the health of their feet.

"Painful foot conditions, such as osteoarthritis, corns, bunions, hammertoes and diabetes complications, can make it difficult for seniors to maintain balance and coordination when walking or standing," says Michael Ambroziak, DPM, FACFAS, a board-certified foot and ankle surgeon and Fellow Member of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ACFAS). "Compounding the issue is that the very exercises intended to correct risk factors for falls, such as lower-body weakness, as well as gait and balance problems, are made difficult to perform when one is suffering from painful foot and ankle conditions."

While the factors causing falls are numerous, experts say that seniors, and everybody for that matter, can take steps to reduce their risk by minimizing or even eliminating foot pain. Doing so will improve balance, coordination and stability when walking or standing.

Foot and ankle surgeons recommend the following ways to help keep feet and ankles healthy:

- Don't ignore pain: Foot pain is not just a normal consequence of growing older, so don't resign yourself to aching and suffering. You likely have a treatable condition. For a proper diagnosis and intervention, be sure to pay attention to your feet and see a foot and ankle surgeon if and

when you experience pain.

- Examine your feet: You are the gatekeeper of your own health, making regular at-home foot examinations critical. At the sign of bumps, lumps or other changes in your feet, make an appointment with your foot and ankle surgeon.

- Exercise: Simple stretching exercises can help you maintain strength and mobility in your feet and ankles, as well as provide pain relief. Talk to your physician about appropriate exercises for you.

- Protect: Use padding, insoles or whatever special footwear you are prescribed. Be sure to wear these, along with comfortable, sensible shoes, every day.

- Be flexible: Know that at times, surgery is the most appropriate treatment for a given condition. Fortunately, many simple surgical techniques allow foot surgery to be performed on an outpatient basis.

For more ways for to keep feet and ankles healthy, prevent falls or to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org, the patient education website for ACFAS. Foot and ankle surgeons are experts in providing both conservative care as well as surgical approaches to foot and ankle healthcare.

Remember, just one fall can permanently rob seniors of their independence and dramatically reduce their quality of life. Taking good care of feet and ankles however can reduce the risk of a life-altering slip, trip or fall.

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Free Training for A Month!

By Ryan Rollison

The Truth Contributor

Yes that's right, FREE training for a month. I am offering a free month of Dream Bodies Fit Camp for the New Year. Read on for details.

Every year I get texts and emails about keeping the weight off for the holidays and losing it for the New Year. Everyone wants to start fresh after the holidays.

A recent study showed that 80 percent of Americans surveyed had given up any hopes for keeping their weight in check over the holidays. They will "just start after the holidays."

Are you one of these 80 percent or are you a part of the 20 percent? I hope you are one of the 20. It makes absolutely no sense to give up and eat horribly just because it's the holiday season. Show some discipline and keep some personal nutritional goals so that you can stay on top of your weight management.

Why would you throw away all your efforts no matter how big or small, just because everyone else around you is slacking? What did your parents say to you? "If everyone was jumping off a bridge..." So why put the extra fat on when you have some to work off already?

The average person gains seven to 10 pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year. That's just the average! So bet your bottom dollar that the numbers can be much higher than that.

Let's be realistic with the holiday eating situation. Parties, break room treats, meetings with holiday food trays, gift boxes of goodies from friends and spirits. Now partaking in everything that is set in front of you is hopping on the fast track to that seven-plus pounds that everyone is putting on. It's time to show some discipline and save yourself from a regretful New Year resolution to lose weight that you most likely will not stick to.

Everyone has great intentions, but the reality is most people try and fail. Then the yo-yo dieting begins all year. Let's not forget about the panic to be ready for that summer swimsuit body. Why not pay attention now instead of stressing and trying to get that quick fix? It's a life style and crash diets will never be the way to go.

Now I am not saying pass on all the holiday treats but I am saying be smart. You do NOT have to eat everything you are given. Share it with others, set it out at work and let others partake in calorie stacking. Set limits for yourself and stick to them. Eat slower, enjoy your food, pick only a few sweets to eat and be the example.



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Don't wake up the next day and regret your food choices. Just think an hour of bike riding only burns about 650 calories. So you would have to ride five hours to burn one pound of fat which is 3500 calories. But you can consume 3500 calories in a matter of minutes. I don't know about you but I am not trying to ride a bike for five hours to burn one pound of fat that's been added to the fat that is already here. Now we're talking 10 hours! No thank you.

So bottom line here is make good decisions, be smart and don't put yourself deeper into fat storage debt.

Good luck and Happy Holidays.

OH yes, the free training. I will be starting new fit camp at American Academy of Martial Arts/Judan Judo located 5020 Lewis Ave. Corner of Lewis & Lasky. Fist 5 emails I receive about the FREE classes will get the 12 sessions for free. The next five will get \$25.00 off.

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Good Food for Your Gut

By Patrice Powers-Barker, Ohio State University Extension, Lucas County

The Truth Contributor

Typically, the words “bacteria” and “microorganisms” make people think of illness and sickness. While some bacteria and viruses are “bad” and cause health problems, there are trillions of microorganisms that do “good” work.

The gut system, (stomach, small intestine, large intestine) relies on good microorganisms to function. Although the entire body system is very complex, scientists are discovering more about the “good” microorganisms and the beneficial role they play in the body. The University of Kentucky Extension explains, “the health of the body depends on the balance between good and bad bacteria” and suggest ways to “tip the scale in favor of healthy bacteria.”

Two words that are often associated with positive gut health and diet are Probiotics and Prebiotics. Probiotics are live microorganisms that help increase the good bacteria in the gut. Probiotics are good microorganisms, naturally found in fermented food. Some examples of fermented food include dairy products like cottage cheese and yogurt, vegetables like Kimchi (a Korean fermented dish made of vegetables and varied seasonings) and sauerkraut and soy products like fermented soy beans. Prebiotics offer fuel for probiotics in the gut. Prebiotics are naturally found in human breast milk and foods like Jerusalem artichokes, onion, jicama root, leeks and asparagus. In addition, some other foods can act like prebiotics like bananas and dried beans.

The start of a new year is always a popular time to review personal habits and set goals for a healthier lifestyle. If promoting a healthy microbiome is of interest to you, consider the following recommendations. New mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their babies to help develop the child's strong microbiome. For new moms as well as the rest of the population, think about making the following changes:

Reduce the use of unnecessary antibiotics. Sometimes antibiotics are necessary but not only do they kill the “bad” microorganisms, they also kill the “good” ones. So unless it's a health need (and prescribed by a health care professional), skip the antibiotics. This also includes home cleaners like soap

... continued on page 10



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Children belong in families, and Lucas County Children Services believes that every child should have a caring family.

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Good For Your Gut... continued from page 9

that include antibiotics – they kill all the bad and good bacteria. Typically, washing hands with plain soap and warm, running water is the best recommendation for warding off the “bad” microorganisms that cause problems like colds.

Increase time outdoors. Not only can spending time in nature offer other health benefits such as exposure to vitamin D, exercise and relaxation, it also exposes people to positive microbes in the environment.

Reduce Stress. New studies are looking at the possibility of stress reducing beneficial microbes in the body. More research is needed but stress can also cause some indirect problems. Indirectly, when we are stressed we don't always eat as healthy. For example, if someone is stressed and making poor food choices, like high sugar and high-fat foods, that will not benefit the good gut organisms. To reduce stress, remember to get enough sleep and add some exercise to the day.

Increase healthy food choices. This nutrition article focuses on food and its health benefits to the gut system. Probiotics and prebiotics can be purchased as supplements although we recommend getting them through healthy food choices. If you have gut related problems, please work with your health care provider. Also, if you increase your intake of food that contains probiotics (many are high in fiber), slowly add them to your diet.

Add more probiotics and prebiotics to benefit your gut system by eating a variety of foods in moderation. Supplements are not a requirement. To strengthen gut health, choose plant-based foods that are high in fiber like whole grains, fruits, vegetables and dried beans. Fiber itself is not a microbe but it is critical for a healthy digestive tract and interacting with the probiotics.

As mentioned earlier, some foods with Probiotics include, cottage cheese, yogurt, fermented vegetables like Kimchi and sauerkraut and drinks like Kombucha. Some easy, affordable foods that include prebiotics include dry beans, vegetables and fruits like asparagus, onion, jicama, Jerusalem arti-

choke, sliced berries and bananas. Eat foods with 100 percent whole wheat and other whole grains. Are those foods already part of your diet? Is there something new you can try? Here's to a Healthy New Year!

Information for this article is from Ohio State University Extension, Live Healthy Live Well, Michigan State University Extension, University of Kentucky Extension and Colorado State University Extension.

Mental Health Moment... continued from page 6

ting together. I came to tears as I walked to my car that warm Sunday because each was smiling and it was if his or her loneliness had shifted to happiness.

Of all the medications and drug and alcohol classes, I believe the remedy to addictions is no longer feeling and being lonely. If the individual has people in which to share their stories, time, love, compassion and especially their progress, that's half the battle. Remove the loneliness factor and you have an individual who will finally live out their life's purpose, feel part of society, give back and secretly care about other's who feel lonely. Bottom line, loneliness can cause and severe pain and suffering. Becoming social and having a support system does not happen overnight but is the best anecdote over suicide, depression and giving up one's hope and faith.

Bernadette Graham is a licensed professional counselor accepting new clients at her private practice. You may call 419.409.4929 to make an appointment. She also provides presentations and workshops on mental health related topics. Also, visit her website at www.joyofhealingtherapies.com

Source of survey from Cigna and Ipsos <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2018/05/01/here-is-more-evidence-that-americans-are-lonely-and-what-should-be-done/#418e69853194>


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The Best Books of 2018

By Terri Schlichenmeyer
The Truth Contributor

Everybody, it seems, has a Best of 2018 List out for the year. Best vacation, best TV shows, best movies, best place to eat. So here are the Absolutely Can't Miss, Don't Pass Them By, Wipe Your Calendar Clean So You Can Stay Home and Read Best Books of 2018 (a totally subjective list, in no particular order).

Fiction

Just about every person alive grew up feeling sorry for poor little Cinderella. In *All the Ever Afters* by Danielle Teller, we see the classic story from the POV of Agnes, the evil-not-evil stepmother. This novel is an eye-opener: there are always two sides to a story, and both could be correct.



Another two-sides-to-the-tale tale is *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* by Kiersten White, a novel of the woman who loved Victor Frankenstein. Or did she? Without him, she'd be homeless, broke, and hungry. With him, she would always fear his temper and the horrible things she was discovering about him. It's a dark-and-stormy kind of book,

perfect for anyone who wants winter chills of a different sort.

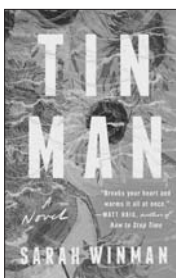
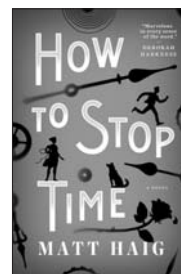
A lot of mini-stories make up *Berlin 1936* by Oliver Hilmes, translated from the German by Jefferson Chase. It's a multi-level tale of Nazis, gypsies,



homosexuals and secrets in the infancy of the Third Reich, told in a conglomerate, slice-of-life sort of way that will make you forget that it's all fiction.

Every year, it seems, scientists claim that humans will achieve immortality within a few decades. That's a curse in *How to Stop Time* by Matt Haig.

In 1598, a man named Tom fell in love with a woman named Rose. They had a daughter and then Rose fell ill and died; Tom, however, survived because he's an "alba." Tom is more than 400 years old and there are two things he wants: to feel as normal as he did in 1598, and to find his daughter, who is also an alba. Romancy? Yes, but also part sci-fi, part history, a little drama, and a whole lot of wonderful.



To round out the fiction list, there's *Tin Man: A Novel* by Sarah Winman. It's also the story of Ellis, who lost his wife and his best friend, the former to a car accident and the latter to AIDS. Ellis misses Annie because she opened his world; he misses Michael because Michael pushed him to do things he would have never tried. But there were so many things Ellis never knew about Michael, until he finds Michael's journal. Emotional, dramatic, also romantic, here's a book that'll make you curl up in your chair, stricken, for an hour after you've finished it.

Nonfiction

For anyone who's ever wondered how that guy on TV does those illu-

... continued on page 12

The TJO brings back the music of Stan Kenton to
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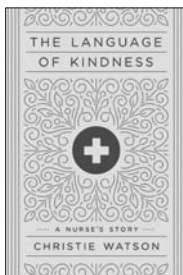
Box Office: 419.242.2787 or www.toledojazz.org
Ticket Prices: \$28/\$38/\$8 for students

Best Books... continued from page 11

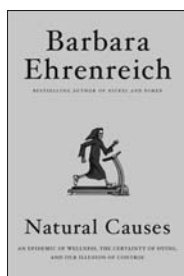


sion tricks, *Here is Real Magic* by Nate Staniforth is a book for you. Staniforth always wanted to be a magician but he wanted to do it big. Little coin tricks were old-school so, in this book, he goes on a journey to find out if magic is real or not. Hint: this isn't a magic book. Read it, and you'll be left with answers you weren't even asking for.

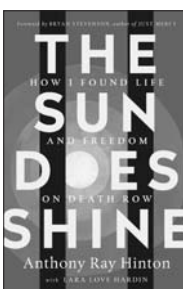
You may never see *The Language of Kindness* by Christie Watson on any other Best Of list and that's too bad. Watson is a nurse, and this is a book about being ill, care-giving, living, and dying. Beware that some of the stories are a bit gruesome, but this is a lovely book for anyone alive.



And not that there's a theme here or anything, but you'll also want to read *Natural Causes* by Barbara Ehrenreich, a book about the things we do to avoid dying. It's informative, funny, wry, and intelligent. Hint: rant, rail, avoid sweets, eat kale, do all you want, but you're going to die someday anyhow...

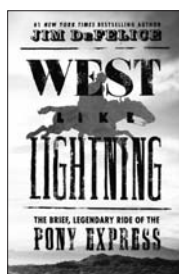


There's a ton of surprising gratitude inside *The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row* by Anthony



Ray Hardin with Lara Love Hardin. The reason is that Anthony Hardin was put on death row for a crime he didn't commit. First surprise: it took 30 years for him to be exonerated. Second surprise: this book holds a whole lot less anger than you'd think it would, and a whole lot of uplifting. Of all the books on this list, it's the one you'll never regret reading.

And finally, rounding up the Nonfiction list, there's *West Like Lightning: The Brief, Legendary Ride of the Pony Express* by Jim DeFelice. History fans will love this book because DeFelice focuses on the Pony Express but



doesn't ignore other major players in the Civil War era. Readers who like tales of little-known life will love this book, too, as will anyone who loves a good oater. Bonus: it's one of those easy to browse books that will pull you in tight.

Children's Books

For any child who loves the Little House on the Prairie books, *Hardscrabble* by Sandra Dallas will be a winner. It's a tale of 12-year-old

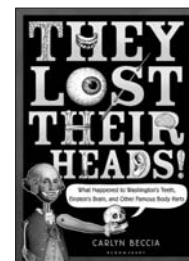


Belle Martin, who moves with her family from a farm in Iowa to the prairie in Colorado in 1910, and it wasn't easy. For your 8-to-13-year-old, though, Dallas eases through the difficulty and happiness of this historical novel.



Much as I loved the bouncy, joyful words that make up *Lorraine: The Girl Who Sang the Storm Away* by Ketch Secor, and as much as they made me so very happy, the cherry on this literary sundae are the illustrations by Higgins Bond. Lush, colorful, and radiant, this is the tale of a girl and her grandfather, their love of music, and a mysterious spate of missing items. Your 3-to-6-year-old will like that. You'll love the artwork.

And finally, something totally fun to read, for the kid who loves oddities: *They Lost Their Heads! What Happened to Washington's Teeth, Einstein's Brain, and Other Famous Body Parts* by Carlyn Beccia. This is a book that will inform your 10-to-14-year-old. It's also going to give them light shivers, a few laughs, and a big dose of informative history that doesn't feel like schooling. What better thing to have while school is out?



And there you are: The Absolutely Can't Miss, Don't Pass Them By, Wipe Your Calendar Clean So You Can Stay Home and Read Best Books of 2018. Go get 'em.

Season's Readings!



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The First Thursday Luncheon Series

Mike Ferner, coordinator of Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie (ACLE), will present The Third Battle for Lake Erie in the First Thursday luncheon series on January 3 from noon to 1:15 p.m.

The event includes a simple soup-and-salad lunch at noon followed by Ferner's presentation with Q&A discussion ending at 1:15.

The series is the result of a partnership between the Social Justice Subcommittee of the Toledo Chapter of U.S. Catholic Priests and St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

According to St. Paul Pastor Pete Bowmer, "All people of all faiths need to get together to look at today's critical issues through the lens of social justice and the common good." The theme of the series is "Culture at the Crossroads: Critical Issues of Our Time."

First Thursday lunches take place at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 428 N. Erie Street, Toledo, OH 43604. Cost is \$15 for lunch and pre-

sentation (cash or check at the door). Financial assistance is available for those in need.

RSVP to FirstThursdayToledo@gmail.com. For more information, please contact Fr. John Blaser, 419-344-1295, lormanj@gmail.com; or Rev. Pete Bowmer, 419-243-4214, pastor.pete@stpaulstoleado.org or check us out at facebook.com/firstthursdaytoledo. Tickets will be stamped at the door for free parking in the Kwik lot adjacent to the church. We hope you can join us!

Future presentations in this year's series:

February 7 Paula Hicks-Hudson, former Toledo Mayor elected in 2018 as Ohio District 44 Representative: Beyond the March: A Reflection and Discussion on Racism

March 7 Staff Member from U.S. Rep Marcy Kaptur's office: The Danger of Money to Our Democracy

April 4 Terry Glazer, former CEO of United North: Organizing the Community for Social Action

Swing Legends Big Bad Voodoo Daddy to Perform with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra

On Saturday, January 26, 2019 at 8 PM at the Stranahan Theater, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy takes center stage with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra (TSO) for a night of jazz, swing, and more. Since its formation in the early nineties, the band has toured virtually nonstop, performing over 150 shows a year, and has produced a sizable catalog of recorded music, with sales of over 2 million albums to date.

This eight-piece ensemble features Scotty Morris on vocals and guitar, Joshua Levy on piano, Kurt Sodergren on drums and percussion, Dirk Shumaker on bass and vocals, Glen "The Kid" Marhevka on trumpet, Karl Hunter on tenor, alto, and soprano saxophones and clarinet, Alex Henderson on trombone, Andy Rowley on baritone saxophone and vocals, and Mitchel Cooper on lead trumpet.

"We are so excited to present Big Bad Voodoo Daddy as part of our 75th Anniversary season," says Zak Vassar, President & CEO of the Toledo Symphony. "They were responsible for the 1990s swing revival and have continued to make amazing music for the past several years. I can't wait to see the energy they bring to the TSO. They'll certainly have us singing and dancing along!"

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy's efforts to promote and revitalize swing music have taken shape as much more than a simple tribute. Taking inspiration from the creators of this uniquely American art form, the band's original horn-infused music and legendary high energy show introduces the genre to a new and younger generation while remaining cognizant and respectful of the music's rich legacy.

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy has appeared in countless films and television shows, including *The Wild*, *Despicable Me*, *Phineas & Ferb*, *Friends*, *Third Rock From The Sun*, *Ally McBeal*, and *So You Think You Can Dance*. They have appeared live on *Dancing With The Stars*, *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*, *NBC's Christmas in Rockefeller Center*, *The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade*, a remarkable seven appearances on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, and the *Super Bowl XXXIII Halftime Show*. The band has also appeared as special guests with many of the country's most distinguished symphony orchestras, and has performed for three U.S. Presidents.

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy's performance with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra will take place on Saturday, January 26, 2019 at 8 PM at the Stranahan Theater. Tickets are available at toledosymphony.com or by calling the Toledo Symphony Box Office at 419.246.8000.

For more information, please contact Felecia Kanney, Director of Marketing for the Toledo Symphony at fkanney@toledosymphony.com.

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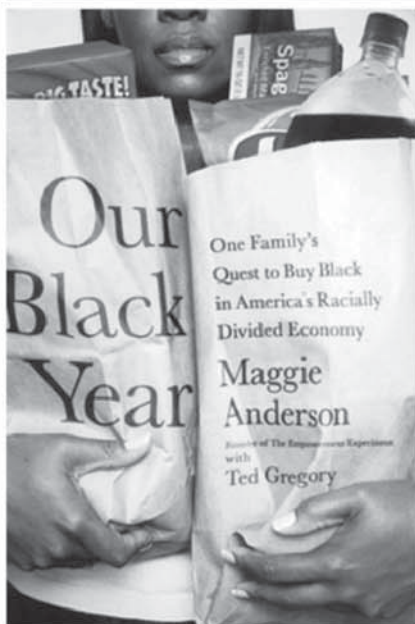
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CLASSIFIEDS

January 2, 2019

Page 15

CHOIR DIRECTOR/PIANIST

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Metroparks Toledo has an opening for a Philanthropy Assistant to provide administrative support for our Philanthropy Division and Metroparks Foundation. Moderate level of customer service and administrative support experience required, including database management. HS diploma or equivalent. Degree preferred. Full time position with benefits. \$17.03/hr. Go to www.Metroparks-Toledo.com to view the job description, position requirements and apply online by January 10. EOE

TOLEDO ZOO VOLUNTEER PROGRAM LAUDED

Leaders influence others first by who they are and then by what they do. Toledo Zoo's volunteer program is considered a leader and model for Zoo's around the world and recently received several prominent awards for their efforts.

The ZOOTEENS program as a whole was also honored as volunteer(s) of the year by the Ohio Provider Resource Association or OPRA, a statewide association of service providers for Ohioans with developmental disabilities. The ZOOTEENS program was nominated by Josina Lott Residential and Community Services, a local organization the program has supported for over a decade. The teenage volunteer corps were honored for their compassion and service to area organizations and individuals with disabilities.

"The Zoo is extremely proud of our volunteer program, that is made up of nearly 900 individuals, ages 13 – 92 who give over 67,000 of hours of service to the Zoo and our community each year. They help make the quality guest experience our visitors have come to know and love through their personal interactions and extensive knowledge of our animals. They are the face of our Zoo and help drive our mission forward in the community," said Shayla Bell Moriarty, Toledo Zoo's director of communications.

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OPEN HOUSE

The Padua Center, 1416 Nebraska Ave., Toledo, Ohio 43607, is hosting an Open House on Thursday, Dec. 27., 2018 from, 4:00-6:00. Please join in celebrating the Holidays and then go the Kwanzaa Celebration at The Frederick Douglass Center.

Come join neighbors and friends and usher into the New Year.

For more information 419-241-6465

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES

RFQ#18-Q001

Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority (LMHA) will receive proposals for **Architectural and Engineering Services**. Received in accordance with law until **January 18, 2019 at 3:00 PM ET**. See documents: www.lucasmha.org; 201 Belmont Ave., Toledo, OH 43604; or 419-259-9446 (TRS: Dial 711). Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity requirements (Executive Order #11246). This contract opportunity is a Section 3 Covered Contract and any Section 3 Business Concerns are encouraged to apply.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority (LMHA), located in Toledo, OH is seeking experienced applicants for the following position(s): Housing Specialist. For complete details, visit www.lucasmha.org/Careers. Deadline: 01/07/19. This is a Section 3 covered position(s). HUD recipients are encouraged to apply and are to indicate on the application if you are a LMHA Public Housing client or Housing Choice Voucher Program participant. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply. NO PHONE CALLS. Equal employment opportunity shall be afforded to all qualified persons without regard to age, race, color, religion, religious creed, gender, military status, ancestry, disability, handicap, sexual orientation, genetic information or national origin.



SPECIAL NOTICE

RE: EXAMINATIONS FOR JOURNEYMAN WIREMAN

Applications for the Journeyman Inside Wireman test will be accepted January 4-2, 2018 at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 8, 807 Lime City Road, Rossford, Ohio between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. The qualifications to be eligible for this examination are:

1. Must be 18 years of age or over,
2. Must live in the jurisdiction of Local 8 for one year prior to application.
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Toledo Kwanzaa House Holds Annual Holiday Celebration

Sojourner's Truth Staff

The Toledo Kwanzaa Committee hosted the annual holiday celebration at the Frederick Douglass Community Association from December 26 to 29 with a series of programs designed to foster understanding of African American culture and the principles that are at the core of Kwanzaa.

The seven principles celebrated each year are Umoja (Unity); Kujichagulia (Self-determination); Ujima (Collective work and responsibility); Ujamaa (Co-operative Economics); Nia (Purpose); Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith).

This is the 52th year of Kwanzaa, a holiday created by Maulana Karenga in 1966 as an African-American holiday. For decades now, Toledoans have carried forth the tradition. The current Kwanzaa Committee includes: Diane Gordon, Donald Lynn, Rev. Kenneth Peterson, Oscar Shaheer, Rolita Noble, Washington Muhammad and Alisha Smith.

Joining the celebration this year were the international students of American Cultural Exchange Service (ACES).

ACES is a non-profit organization dedicated to global education through secondary level exchange and is designated by the Office of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. State Department. The students visit Toledo for one academic year, living with host families, attending school and becoming involved in extracurricular and community activities.

ACES has a relationship with more than 86 countries and the local international coordinator is Tracee Ellis who encourages a diversity of American host families to experience the opportunity, particularly minority families.

Ellis can be reached at TraceeEllis.goglobal@aol.com or 419-450-0631. The ACES website is explorettheworld.org.



Fatuma Ahmed from Kenya, Mohamed Abdullah from Egypt, Mohammed Tariq from Pakistan, Ashrat Khumis from Tanzania



Diane Gordon



**January 5th & January 6th
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