



APRIL 2011

THE CAPITAL CITY COURIER



**This Side
of Sane!**
**How Does
Mental
Illness
Affect Our
Lives?**

**Morgan Freeman, The "Want to be Wild"
Interview - pg. 7**



Morgan Freeman finally won an Academy Award in 2005 in the Best Supporting Actor category for his work in Clint Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby," for which he also won a Screen Actors Guild Award. In 2009, he reunited with Eastwood to portray Nelson Mandela in the true-life drama "Invictus," . . .

**Ernestine "Ernie" Shepherd, Fit and Fabu-
lous at Any Age! - pg. 8**



Ernestine "Ernie" Shepherd, at age 74, is a personal trainer, a professional model and a competitive bodybuilder. In March of 2010, on stage in Rome, Italy, she was formally given the title of "World's Oldest Performing Female Bodybuilder" by Guinness World Records.

**Mayor Mike Houston, Rolling Up His Mayoral
Sleeves and Digging In! - pg. 19**



Mike Houston is the current Mayor-elect of the City of Springfield Illinois. He served as Mayor from 1979 to 1987. He was easily reelected with almost fifty percent of the vote in a four-way race. He plans on making this his final run for Mayor.

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APRIL 2011

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From The EDITOR

Michael Pittman

How many times have you heard the phrase, he or she is “the black sheep of the family?” This phrase often describes those persons of a particular family that are either different, go against the grain, or often seem to get into trouble. It seems that hardly any family is immune to having a black sheep member. Some, unfortunately, have more than one. Black sheep family

members come from various socioeconomic backgrounds. From the rich and famous, middle class families, low income families, black, white, Hispanic, you name it, they all exist. In society, it is easy to look at a family that could be described as dysfunctional and draw the conclusion as to why that family has produced so many black sheep. But what about the opposite? Take for instance a middle class family with strong morals and values and both mother and father present in the home. A home where the children lack for nothing. So, why is it that black sheep members are produced from a family such as this? Whose fault is it? The children’s? The parents’? The schools’? I’m sure many of you know several people that you would classify as black sheep. What is also interesting is that, in some situations, those individuals who have been classified as black sheep individuals by certain groups or people do not seem themselves as such and often look upon their critics as black

sheep. There are those who probably labeled Einstein a black sheep. Whatever the case, black sheep do exist, but how they are classified is a different story.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mayor-elect Mike Houston on his recent victory in the race for Mayor for the City of Springfield. Houston received almost 50 percent of the vote in a four-way race, and easily outdistanced the other candidates. Congratulations should also be rendered to the victorious candidates for Springfield Alderman, as well as to Cecilia Tumulty on her reelection to the office of City Clerk. I would be remiss if I didn’t send out a special congratulations to Ward 3 Alderman Elect Doris Turner. Doris, who is a current member of the Sangamon County board, easily won election to her first term as Alderman, thereby joining Alderman Gail Simpson as the second black Alderman on the City Council. There will be a myriad of issues that this new Mayor and new and current Council members will have to address. I wish them much success as they work on moving Springfield forward.

Now that the weather is getting nice, it’s time to get out those jogging

and walking shoes and work on getting our bodies in shape. After interviewing 74-year-old Ernestine Shepherd, she really inspired me to continue to spread the word that a person is never too old to exercise or get their body in shape. Many of the illnesses that beset us as Americans could be combated or totally cured with a proper diet and exercise. So, please take the time and start today to making you a better you.

This month’s cover story written by Kim Gordon is titled “This Side of Sane: How Does Mental Illness Affect Our Lives?” Also in this month’s edition are interviews with the world’s oldest female body builder Ernestine Shepherd and Mayor-elect of the City of Springfield, Mike Houston, written by yours truly and a story titled “Mistaken Identity,” written by Kimberly Conner.

I hope you enjoy this month’s edition.

Michael Pittman
mpittman@ameritech.net

APPLICATION FOR APPRENTICESHIP

The City of Springfield, Department of Public Utilities, in conjunction with the International Brotherhood of Electric Workers, Local #193, will be accepting applications for apprenticeships in the Electrical Department of City, Water, Light & Power. Application packets may be picked up beginning April 18, 2011, Monday through Friday (excluding April 22nd) in the Office of Human Resources, 300 S. 7th Street, Room 309. **Applications must be hand delivered by the applicant to the Office of Human Resources 300 S. 7th Street, Room 309, Springfield, IL 62703, commencing April 25, 2011, through April 29, 2011, and May 2, 2011, through May 6, 2011, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

For those applicants who live out of state or have an unreasonable driving distance from Springfield only, applications may be returned by certified mail or special carrier. These applications must be postmarked no earlier than April 25, 2011, and no later than May 6, 2011. We will not be responsible for applications lost in the mail or delivered late. An applicant may not apply past the deadline date.

Applicant must provide the following data at the time of application:

1. Completed application
2. Copy of high school diploma or GED certificate
3. Official high school transcripts showing one full year of grade “C” or better in algebra must be provided in a sealed envelope from the school.
4. Official college transcripts and other trade related documentation (if applicable) that is provided in a sealed envelope from the school will be accepted and considered.
5. Copy of Veterans Military Release Form DD-214 (if applicable)

Minimum requirements to qualify for an interview:

1. Must attain seven (7) points or higher on a nine (9) point scale on the NJATC aptitude test.
2. Must be physically able to perform the requirements of the position
3. Will be subject to a medical, drug and alcohol screening
4. Valid drivers license and must be able to obtain an Illinois Commercial Drivers License (if required by the functional area).

The application and registration rules are strictly enforced and no exceptions are made. No faxes or e-mails will be accepted. All documents must be included in application packets in order to be accepted. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY REGARDING STUDENTS

The recruitment, selection, employment and training of apprentices during their apprenticeship shall be without discrimination because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex or disability unrelated to the person’s ability to perform the duties of the job. The sponsor will take affirmative action to provide equal opportunity in apprenticeship and will operate the apprenticeship training program as required under Title 29 of the code of Federal Regulations, Part 30.

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MISTAKEN IDENTITY

by Kimberly D. Conner

It's apparent that there's trouble when the blaring lights pierce the back window, the last ones you want to see in the rearview. Sending the kids into a tailspin, secure in their safety seats, they are panicked-stricken, pleading for an explanation when I'm asked to step out the car. But the arresting officer can't tell me anything other than, "I have a warrant for your arrest!" That can't be. Maintaining my innocence, "Not in front of my kids", my pleas go ignored. I'm a victim of Mistaken Identity.

Stopped by the police four times in the last five years, this was one Springfield woman's account. Her family has had to shell out over \$1100 so far and the case hasn't even reached a courtroom. Her mother had to pay \$525 to bail her out of the county jail, booked in at 8PM; it was 1 A.M. before she was let go. "My kids were traumatized. My three-year old son stayed awake all night, upset. I had to calm him down. I had to tell him it was ok for him to go to school. My son was afraid to go to school the next day, afraid I would be arrested again."

Her lawyer requested a copy of the police report. Met with opposition at every corner, the victim was told that there was no report when she tried to obtain a copy. She was told the same thing the second time, "We've got nothing to give you." How could there be no report? She was arrested and taken down to the station." Chicago was apparently too "busy", she says. She was denied details about the warrant. The truth is, police were looking for a Chicago woman with the same name and date of birth. Initially, officers told her that she was stopped because her license was suspended. However, the Secretary of State assured her that there was no one in the State of Illinois matching her name and date of birth with a suspended license, contradicting earlier information. The state's attorney's office told her that there is nothing that they can do until she goes to court in Cook County. She was told that she needed "proof" to file a report of mistaken identity, by authorities. This isn't proof?

Her family works tirelessly to clear her name. The first time she was pulled over was in 2006. On that stop, she was cleared through fingerprints. The second time she was taken to the station, but when the officer realized the mistake, he felt sorry for her and gave her a ride home, according to the victim. Why wasn't that same protocol followed during the most recent stop? Like

others, she keeps a copy of a document proving her innocence, on her at all times, but on this particular day, she didn't have it.

In 2007, the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) filed a lawsuit in Denver, Colorado on behalf of 5 innocent people involved in mistaken identity cases, citing violation of their Fourth Amendment Right, which prohibits unreasonable seizures and guarantees that no individual shall be arrested without probable cause. The ACLU called the debacle, "reckless" police work. Lawyers contend that Colorado is not alone, suggesting a more widespread problem. Communities question police standards and practice, mistaken identity cases, are seemingly on the rise. There have been notable cases in the states of Florida and New Jersey. A gross miscarriage of justice involved a man, who on the advice of his attorney, was told to sign an extradition waiver admitting guilt, telling him that this was the "quickest way to clear his name". Another man was arrested and jailed for eight days because his name matched the alias of a perpetrator. For another woman, it took 2 years to clear her name, losing \$3,500 in bail costs alone. In a separate incident, Colorado officials insisted that another victim pay in excess of \$200 in fines owed by the real culprit. An ex-Marine was held in jail for close to 2 months for a crime he didn't commit. Upon his arrest, he pleaded with authorities to check his fingerprints, but his requests fell on deaf ears. As a result, he lost his job, and subsequently lost his home. Among the countless victims was a high school teacher who went to visit a former student in jail and found himself on the other side the bars. He has the same first and last name, but a different middle initial, as the criminal. A New York man filed a second lawsuit against the NYPD after he was mistakenly arrested a second time. The first suit was settled in the sum of \$120,000. In a separate case, an innocent man was arrested and as it turned out, the actual perpetrator had died years earlier, though authorities maintained an active warrant for his arrest. Good luck with that.

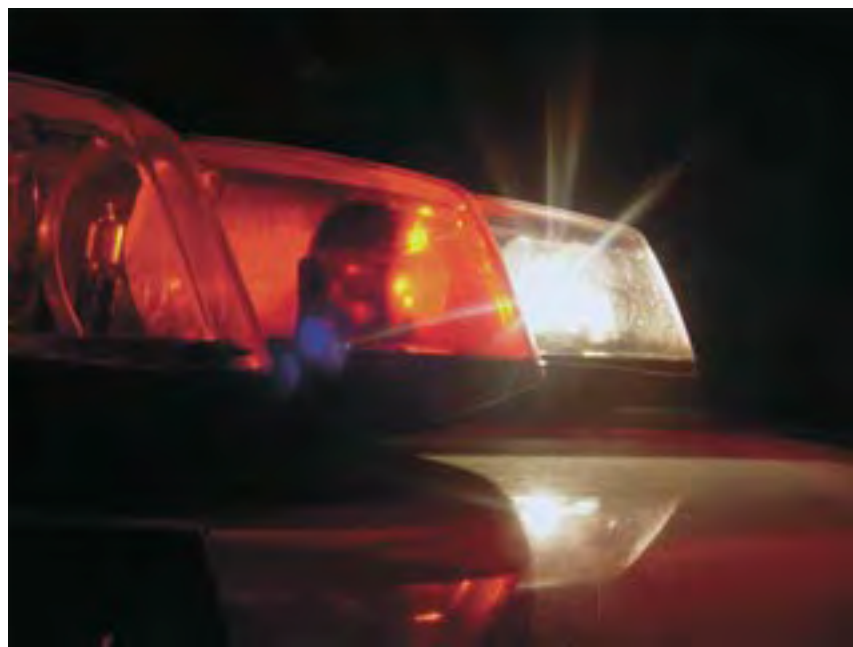
Stop and think about the impact, being falsely accused of a crime, and forced to live in fear. Substantial financial costs, a wealth of time and energy, go into proving one's innocence, in cases of this nature. Experts say that it can take weeks, months, even years to clear up mistaken identity cases, an uphill battle, especially without the cooperation of law enforcement agencies and officials.

Arresting officers failed to see even the obvious differences in the Springfield case.

"Our weight and height are not the same. She weighs 175 pounds, I weigh 105. We have the same name and date of birth, possibly the same middle name, but spelled differently." When asked how it felt to be taken to jail in front of her children, "I was terrified and embarrassed, embarrassed most of all because it happened in front of my children. It traumatized them. Every time I have been pulled over my kids have been in the car. It was depressing. I've had to miss work to try to clear this up. My mom has had to miss work. It's been stressful." In recent news, the nation's top high school football recruit, Jadeveon Clowney, was handcuffed and questioned in a case involving mistaken identity and an armed robbery.

Who knows what the ultimate cost will be or who will be a victim? The Springfield woman nearly missed a job opportunity because of a Chicago woman with the same name, "It's the principle of it", she uttered. Later this month she's headed to court in Chicago, two and a half hours away, forcing her to miss work again. Her mother and number one supporter, has had to miss work too, in an effort to unravel the mess, assisting with child-care needs and some of the legwork. The victim said that she can't her young son with her to the police station while she searches for any documentation that could clear her name because he's afraid of the police now.

She maintains that she's received little help from officials in obtaining a copy of the police report that details the arrest and documents that support her innocence, consistently told that no such report exists, she has faced one closed door after another. Was proper procedure followed in this case? The community wants to know how this could happen in the Capital City. Why wasn't more done to facilitate communication between Sangamon and Cook County, to clear her name? She spent 5 grueling hours in the county jail. Some would question why officers didn't run the victim's prints through AFIS, the automated fingerprint identification system, to compare fingerprints. When it was determined that the victim was not the person guilty of the crime, why wasn't proof of her innocence documented and maintained in a computer or criminal information database, and recognized as a mistaken identity case, in an effort to relieve the victim of future occurrences and bogus arrests? As citizens, we are called to follow rules and guidelines, the same should apply with law enforcement officials; if proper procedure is not followed, there should be consequences. Officers have a responsibility to verify that the person they are arresting is the person that is guilty of the crime. Adopting new policy and practice, applying stringent guidelines in law enforcement agencies in its responsibility to the people should ensure that American citizens Fourth Amendment Rights are upheld through the Constitution of the United States, conducting thorough searches and investigations prior to arresting a person that maintains their innocence. Simply documenting such findings in a central place or database, accessible to all departments and personnel, could have made a significant difference on that day, had those extra steps been taken.

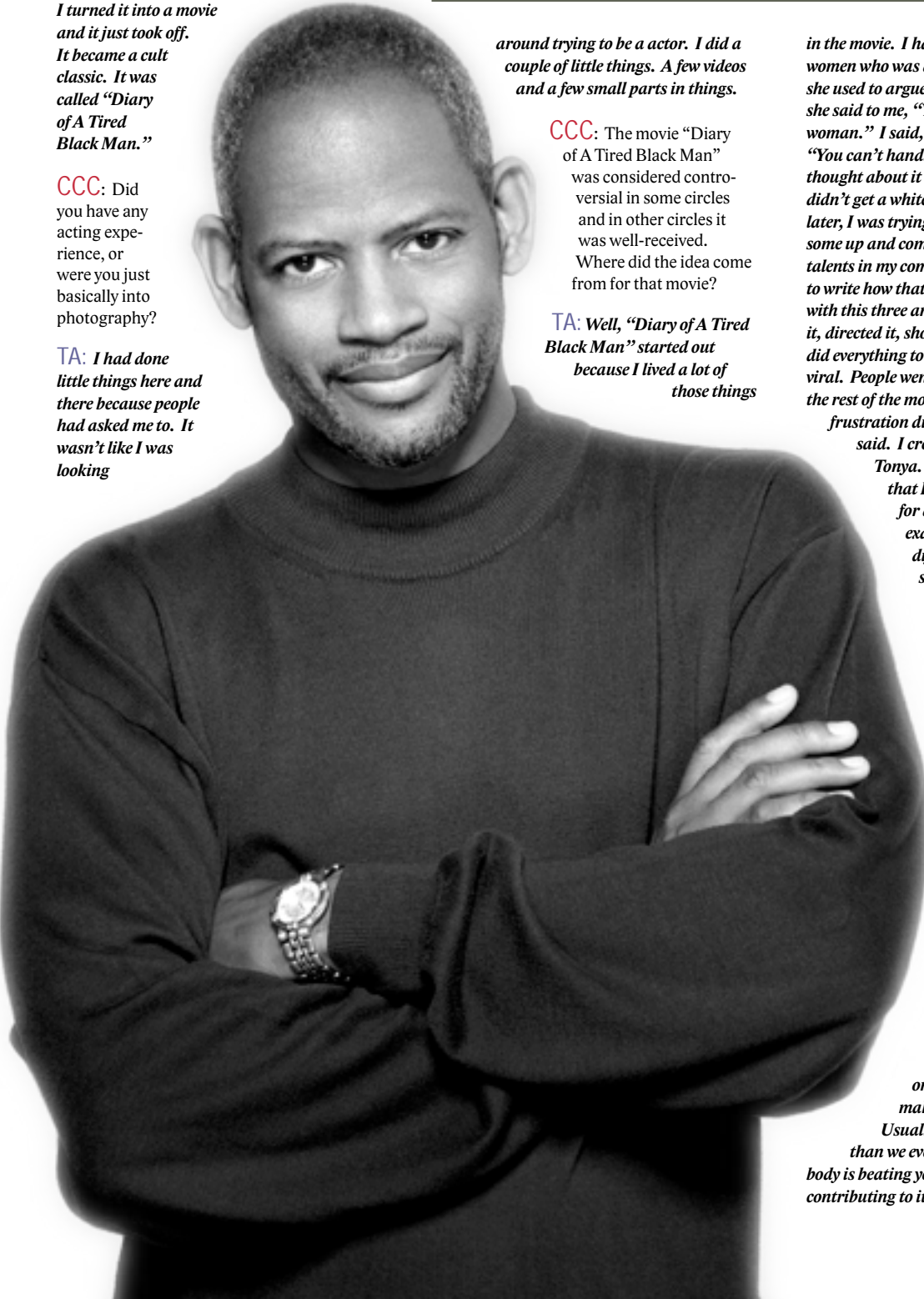


CCC: How did you get started in the film industry?

TA: *I got started as a photographer about 31 years ago. I worked with a lot of models and, of course, actors. So I got this great idea to put together an acting demo that would show people's acting abilities. Then maybe I could eventually become a filmmaker. I shot one thing in a thing I called "Screen Time" and it went viral. There was a demand to see the rest of the movie. I turned it into a movie and it just took off. It became a cult classic. It was called "Diary of A Tired Black Man."*

CCC: Did you have any acting experience, or were you just basically into photography?

TA: *I had done little things here and there because people had asked me to. It wasn't like I was looking*



IN THE NEWS

Tim Alexander: Filmmaker on a Mission!

by Mike Pittman

around trying to be a actor. I did a couple of little things. A few videos and a few small parts in things.

CCC: The movie "Diary of A Tired Black Man" was considered controversial in some circles and in other circles it was well-received. Where did the idea come from for that movie?

TA: *Well, "Diary of A Tired Black Man" started out because I lived a lot of those things*

in the movie. I had been dating a younger black woman who was a bit younger than myself and she used to argue with me constantly. One day she said to me, "You need to get you a white woman." I said, "Excuse me." She said, "You can't handle a strong, black woman." I thought about it and I said, "You're right." I didn't get a white woman, but I left her. A year later, I was trying to figure out some things for some up and coming actors to showcase their talents in my company's screen time. I started to write how that made me feel. I came up with this three and a half minute clip. I wrote it, directed it, shot it and edited the movie. I did everything to it. I put it online and it went viral. People went crazy and demanded to see the rest of the movie. It really came out of my frustration directly because of what she said. I created the main character, Tonya. She represented two women that I was engaged to and lived with for a brief period who were, like, exactly the same person with a different fingerprint and social security number. We fall into the pattern of going after the same type of people. That Tonya is a composite of an experience that was so similar, it was scary. That was the impetus of the movie.

CCC: What message do you try to convey in your projects?

TA: *I try to convey that we, ourselves and us are our own biggest problems in the attitudes, the choices that we make and who we want to be with and the lack of responsibility that we want to take for our own actions as well as the amount of blame that we want to lay on the other person. We are making our own selves miserable. Usually, we are a bigger contributor than we ever want to accept. If somebody is beating you and being abusive you are contributing to it by being there. No matter*

how you slice it, you are primarily responsible for why you are in a bad relationship.

CCC: You have stated that a lot of black women don't want a good black man, but instead want a thug. How did you come to that conclusion?

TA: *The conclusion is all around us. If women didn't like thugs, thugs wouldn't have so many babies. A thug might have 17 kids. That's ridiculous. How many fools would it take to have 17 kids with? Good men usually don't have that many kids and if they do, they take care of them and they usually have them later in life. The losers and the knuckleheads are having babies at 14 and 15 years old and don't stop until they are way in their 40's. We have to look at the reality. It's not what people say, but what they do that you have to look at. They can be in denial all they want to be about what they don't like, or "It's not like that," or "My friends are not like that." Well how come nobody has a daddy? By the time kids are 18, about 90 percent will not have their biological father at home. When I was a kid growing up in the sixties, 90 percent of kids had a father at home. How did we go 90 percent in the opposite direction in 45 years? It's absolutely ridiculous. What changed in the last 45 years? What changed is their attitude about sex, their attitude about what kind of man they want, their independence about what they need and don't need and blah blah blah. The appreciation of a good man, which is another message of the movie, has pretty much been destroyed. The appreciation for a dysfunctional man has been heightened. If they can just get that dysfunctional guy, then they can have everything that the media throws to them as justified, but all they're going to have is misery. So this message is to the women, because men know they're no good. We already know that, but nobody told the women. They don't seem to know it. It's not all women. It's the one that fits that category. It's not a blanket statement. Just like all black men are no good, we can't say that about black women. Some are, some aren't. My follow-up is going to called "Diary of A Tired Black Man's Sober Christian Cousin." "Diary of A Tired Black Man" had a potty mouth. This one has zero*

continued on page 6 >

Tim Alexander: Filmmaker on a Mission!

continued from page 5



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cuss words, no sex, no nothing. It's straight-laced with some of the best screen fights you've ever seen in your life, but nobody gets hit.

CCC: What can be done to fix the problems?

TA: We're going to have to skip a generation. Probably a generation and a half. We can't fix a lot of messed up people. What we have to do is incrementally become better people and make better choices and take more responsibility to raise our generations going forward. I'd

like to see it get 10 percent better in the next generation. After that, I would like to pick up another 5 or 10 percent. It's going to have to evolve. Everybody is never going to get fixed. If we can get the low-hanging fruit because some people are on the fringe. If somebody was to give the right input and they respond to it they can possibly change. Some people have never heard what the right thing to do is. People that have come from 3 or 4 generations of broken homes have never seen a good relationship between a man and a woman.

Never even seen it once. It's hard to know what to do when you don't know what to do.

CCC: Tell us about your current movie that you are producing.

TA: It's called "A Mother's Love." It started as a gospel stage play written by my cousin's wife, Carolyn Alexander. I converted the gospel play into a full screen play. It is the fire. It is so intense. It is a tear-jerker. I can't count the number of people that have cried. Black people, white people, everybody that sees the movie cries, because it touches your pain on so many different levels. It's so real and honest to see a family melt down before your eyes. Then you see what it takes to reach reconciliation. It's very powerful. It's about a mother, her mother and her daughter. You watch as the mother does not meet the needs of her daughter and the grandmother has to fight her to get her to respect and take care of her family. I'm not going to say a lot, but it is like something you have never seen before.

CCC: When will it make its debut?

TA: It's been showing here and there. It will be shown at some film festivals and a church convention. It's making the rounds. It will be available in about a week or two online. We're working on getting bigger distribution panels.

CCC: What is the website that they can get it at online?

TA: They can get it at timalexander@amotherslove.com

CCC: How difficult was it to produce these two movies?

TA: To me it was easy. I have unique skills that God has blessed me to be able to do a lot of things. To me, some things are just second nature. I plan to do a lot more.

CCC: Does being in Los Angeles give you any advantage in the movie industry, or is it a disadvantage in that there are so many people trying to make it in film there?

TA: Neither. If I was in Wichita, I could do the same thing. The only advantage is that here I can go to stores and buy the equipment that I need. In Wichita, I would have to order it. There are a lot of actors here so that does help. Being in Los Angeles didn't help because I didn't do it like most people in the industry do movies.

CCC: Who have been some of the most memorable people that you have worked with?

TA: Well, there is my star of "A Mother's Love," Rhonda Watts. And Vanessa Williams. I've worked with Michael Jackson, Jay-Z, Master P, Little Romeo, En Vogue, Chaka Khan, and Larry Graham. I've worked with tons of people through the years.

CCC: Who has been your mentor?

TA: No one really. I have been kind of plotting my course. I just do me. I must say that I am truly an original. I never worked as an apprentice under anyone. I'm a high school dropout. I just kind of made my own way.

CCC: What advice would you give to someone wanting to get into the movie producing industry?

TA: Spend as many hours as you can stay awake toward your craft. The only difference between me and anybody else is that I put more time in on doing it. Most people aren't as dedicated as I am. To each is own.

CCC: Do you have anything that you would like to add?

TA: I would like everybody to get a copy of my new movie and spread the word, because this is word of mouth. I do screenings at churches, conventions, any type of sorority or whatever organization that people have, I can come out and discuss this film. And please do not make copies of the movie. That is crushing to my ability to move forward and make other films. I'm an independent filmmaker, and I'm doing my own independent distribution and I need people to support what I'm trying to do and help me move forward and not work against it by casually making a copy. It does affect me and the other people that work in this process.

CCC: Tim, thanks for your time.

TA: Great, Mike. Thanks a lot.



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Morgan Freeman finally won an Academy Award in 2005 in the Best Supporting Actor category for his work in Clint Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby," for which he also won a Screen Actors Guild Award. In 2009, he reunited with Eastwood to portray Nelson Mandela in the true-life drama "Invictus," for which he garnered his latest Oscar nomination.

Mr. Freeman had previously been honored with three other Academy Award nominations, for "Street Smart," "Driving Miss Daisy" and "The Shawshank Redemption." And he is set to star next in the family adventure "Dolphin Tale" opening in September.

Morgan's long list of film credits includes "Red"; "Batman Begins," "The Dark Knight," "The Bucket List," "Gone Baby Gone," "Bruce Almighty," "Evan Almighty," "Along Came a Spider," "Deep Impact," "Amistad," "Kiss the Girls," "Se7en," "Glory," "Lean on Me" and "Brubaker." And he's lent his distinctive voice to Steven Spielberg's "War of the Worlds" and the Oscar-winning documentaries "March of the Penguins" and "The Long Way Home."

Here, he talks about narrating "Born to Be Wild," an endangered species documentary chronicling the extraordinary efforts of a couple of conservationists to save orphaned elephants and orangutans.

Kam Williams: Hi Mr. Freeman, I'm honored to have another opportunity to speak with you. *Morgan Freeman:* Hey, Kam.

KW: I told my readers I'd be interviewing you again, and they sent in more questions than I'll ever be able to get to, so I'd appreciate your keeping your answers brief, so we can get to as many as possible.

MF: Okay, no problem. Are you telling me you just want "Yes" and "No" answers? [LOL]

KW: Sorry, no, not quite that concise. Leon Marquis asks: what interested you in narrating another documentary? Was it the fact that "March of the Penguins" and "The Long Way Home" went on to win Academy Awards?

MF: Well, I wasn't really thinking about those at all. I just felt that what these two ladies' [Daphne Sheldrick and Birute Galdikas] are doing is extremely important. I believe in helping the planet survive, and that includes reaching out to help some of the disappearing creatures whose habitats we're destroying. It's up to us to somehow reverse that trend. I don't know how we'll achieve it, but we need to.

KW: Editor/Legist Patricia Turnier asks: What message do you want the public to take away from the movie?

MF: How critical it is that we pull together and focus some attention and energy on alle-

INTERVIEW WITH KAM WILLIAMS

Morgan Freeman, "Born to Be Wild"

viating the plight of endangered species.

KW: Patricia mentions that upon Emancipation, many American ex-slaves named themselves "Freeman" to show their pride and gratitude for their freedom. Do you know whether that is how your family lineage got the last name?

MF: I have no idea. I've tried to research it, but couldn't find anything to tell me.

KW: Harriet Pakula Teweles says that when movies went from silent to sound, they were called "Talkies," and that now we have "Voicies," where unseen narrators play a pivotal role, as you do again in "Born to Be Wild."

MF: That's not exactly a question, but rather an interesting observation, and a new term that Harriet's coined, "Voicie!" And it's a good one. [Chuckles] Most documentaries today are narrated by somebody commenting in the background.

KW: Harriet also says: It was great to see you on Broadway in "The Country Girl." Would you consider returning to Broadway?

MF: In a word, "No."

KW: Keith Kremer asks: If a person unfamiliar with your work wanted to watch just one of your films, which one would you suggest?

MF: I think I would recommend "Invictus."

KW: Ilene Proctor has a related inquiry: Since you've contributed your immense talents to so many great films, I'd like to know which one is your favorite.

MF: "Glory."

KW: Ilene also asks: Did you have a role model, whenever you played God?

MF: Yes.

KW: And who was that?

MF: Me. [Laughs heartily]

KW: Peter Keough asks: Are you the voice of God, or do you just play him in movies?

MF: What the heck kind of question is that? Tell Peter that I AM the voice of God and that he better listen to me. [LOL]

KW: Mike Pittman wants to know whether you ever felt like giving up and doing something different at anytime during your acting career.

MF: Oh yes, many times, however, not during my career, but while trying to get my career going. Absolutely! I have many friends and Provi-

dence itself to thank for not having given up.

KW: Mike wants to know if you have any advice for young actors desiring to become actors.

MF: Well, if they're already actors, then there's no desire to become actors. What they're looking for now is success, to become paid actors. And the only advice I have for them is to persevere. Just keep plugging away. Keep going! Don't give up! The surest way to fail at anything is to give up.

KW: John Zippert would like to know whether there are any community-based, charity organizations you're working with in Mississippi?

MF: My own. I have a charity dedicated to education.

KW: Larry Greenberg is curious about how your plans to make historical dramas about the black experience in America are coming along?

MF: Slowly.

KW: Judyth Piazza asks: After what movie did you finally say to yourself, "I have arrived!"

MF: "Street Smart."

KW: Attorney Bernadette Beekman, says that she's not only also a Gemini but that you two share the same birthday, June 1st, as well. She wants to know, if you've been to any exotic animal orphanages like those shown in the documentary?

MF: No, but I have foster-parented seven cats.

KW: Bernadette has a follow-up: How does

your country home life in Mississippi compare to the citified Hollywood environment you enter into for work?

MF: It's preferable. That's why I'm there.

KW: Hisani Dubose says: I would

like to know what gets you interested in a script and if you ever turn down movie roles?

MF: Oh, I've turned down a lot of stuff. And what interests me is the same thing that would interest you in a book. If a book doesn't hold your interest after several pages, what do you do?

KW: I put it down.

MF: It's the same thing with a script.

KW: What is your guiltiest pleasure?

MF: Playing solitaire on my computer. I'm totally addicted to it.

KW: The bookworm Troy Johnson question: What was the last book you read?

MF: I just read a book called "1,000 White Women," which is based not on a story but on an actual event. In the 1850s, a Cheyenne chief apparently asked the President of the United States for white women, saying that peace could be achieved if whites and Native Americans became one through the offspring of intermarriage.

KW: The Dulé Hill question. To what do you attribute your success?

MF: Perseverance, luck and just a little bit of talent.

KW: Well thanks again for the interview, Mr. Freeman, and I hope to talk to you about "Dolphin Tale" in the fall.

MF: Alright, babe, take care.



LIFESTYLES

Ernestine “Ernie” Shepherd: Fit and Fabulous at Any Age!

by Mike Pittman



Ernestine “Ernie” Shepherd, at age 74, is a personal trainer, a professional model and a competitive bodybuilder. In March of 2010, on stage in Rome, Italy, she was formally given the title of “World’s Oldest Performing Female Bodybuilder” by Guinness World Records. She travels throughout the country giving motivational speeches to senior citizens as well as other groups. Ms. Shepherd has one son and a grandson and resides in Baltimore, Maryland with her husband of 53 years, Collin.

CCC: When did you first get into bodybuilding?

ES: *I actually started bodybuilding when I was 71 years old. I am now 74. However, I started exercising at the age of 56.*

CCC: Did you have a sedentary lifestyle prior to starting to exercise at 56 years old?

ES: *Yes. At age 56, I, with my sister who was at that time 57, was invited to a church picnic and our husbands told us to wear bathing suits. So we went to the store to buy bathing suits. We didn’t like the way we looked in our*

bathing suits, so we left the bathing suits in the store. We went to the picnic and we meet other people there, and we heard them talking about exercising, and we asked them where they went to exercise. So, 2 or 3 days later, my sister and I started going to this college to start doing aerobics. The teacher noticed after a few months how our bodies had responded to everything he said to do. He asked us if we wanted to start lifting weights, and we said, “Yes.” I really didn’t want to do it, but I was just following my sister. After awhile, I noticed the change in her. She had begun getting written up in the newspapers, but I wasn’t getting anywhere, so I started to get angry. I left the gym and walked home. My sister came to the house and said, “If you want to get fit like I am and get in the papers, you’re going to have to start working out hard.” So I did. The teacher would take us out to speak to other seniors about the importance of exercising. However, my sister after awhile had begun complaining about having headaches. She said to me one particular day that her head was aching really bad. The next time she said that it felt like water was draining in her ear. We had begun swimming, also, so she thought that the water feeling was just from the swimming. Then she told me that she couldn’t see out of her left eye and that she also could not use her hands. The next day my sister and my parents took her to

the hospital. After a long wait there, they took her to another hospital. At that time I had met up with them and got in the back seat of the car. My sister laid her head on my lap and said, “You don’t know how much my head is hurting.” She told me awhile back when she started having this problem that she was going to have a quick death and that I wouldn’t know what to do. She then said that she wanted me to promise her that, “If anything ever happened to me, you’ll do the things that we said that we were going to do.” Which were to continue exercising and try to motivate and inspire other seniors on the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. I told her that nothing was going to happen to her. She said, “If I make it, you and I are going to be in the Guinness Book of World Records or in Ripley’s Believe It or Not as two of the oldest ladies who have become bodybuilders.” Anyway, when we got to the hospital, she didn’t want a wheelchair and wanted to walk into the hospital. She then looked at me again and said, “Now remember what I told you to do if something happens to me.” After they admitted her and did a CAT scan, the doctor came down and talked to us and told us that my sister had suffered a brain aneurysm and that she was now on life support and there was nothing else that they could do for her. After hearing that I really went to pieces, because my sister was a person who never got sick and was very healthy. I remember getting up and running around the hospital screaming that now I don’t have anyone, and what am I going to do? My younger sister said, “You have me,” but that is not what I wanted to hear. After my sister’s daughter came to the hospital, she told them to take my sister off of life support, because her mother had told her that she never wanted to be on life support. After they took her off the life support she died.

CCC: It sounds like your sister’s death was the catalyst to really get you started going strong in exercising.

ES: *Well, after her death, I just didn’t know what to do. Before she died, we had left the gym at the college and went to a place called Capital Fitness, because the college didn’t stay open as long as we needed it to. While we were at Capital Fitness, we met a person by the name of Raymond Day who had instructed us on how to use the equipment at the gym. After my sister died, I just hated everybody and everything and I didn’t want to hear anything about the Lord because I wondered why the Lord would let my sister die, when there were so many other people*

in the world. So, I couldn’t go to church or pray. I was depressed. I developed high blood pressure and was also having panic attacks and acid reflux. You name it and I had it. I would just sit around the house and not do too much of anything. Then one day my mother came to me and said, “That’s not what your sister wanted,” and “You need to get yourself together and do what she asked you to do.” Then my mother asked me to name five things that God has done for me to keep me alive for as long as I have lived, because, “It has to be God’s work to keep you here.” I didn’t want to do that. She told me to take my time and think about it and maybe I would get on my feet. So I got myself together and went to church one day and I remember a hymn being sung that was titled, “Here I am Lord, It is I Lord. I heard you calling through the night and I will go wherever you lead me.” I remember the end of the song saying, “I will hold your people in my heart.” So I sat there and not once did I have a large outburst to cry. Excuse me, but I get emotional. (Tears) While I was there, I said “Restore to me the joy of my salvation, restore to me the joy of each new day and give me back the love I once had for you and never let it slip away.” I left the church that Sunday with a renewed spirit. I came back to the house and sat in the room quietly and said to myself, “Now you’ve got to get on your feet and do what your sister asked you to do and God will guide you through.” I prayed again, and the next day I called Ray and said I was ready to get back to the gym, and he said, “That is wonderful, because that is what your sister would want you do.” I went back and trained with Ray three days a week. I did everything he told me to do. He was there to make sure that I did everything I was supposed to do. He kept me going. He then started to take me to various bodybuilding shows and I liked them. I said to Ray that this is nice, and he said, “You are going to be doing this too, remember?” I said I didn’t think that I could do it. We worked at this particular body building show, and I also wore nice outfits to the show to reveal my physique because I knew I was in good shape. I was a little ham. So I was at this particular show and a young man who had this show was a former Mr. Universe. His name is and was at that time, Yohannie Shambourger. So he said to me, “I’ve seen you before and you look so nice.” He said, “I need someone to present the trophies to my bodybuilders,” and asked if I would mind coming up on stage to present these trophies. I was so thrilled to do it that I said, “Yes!” I went on the stage and I had the opportunity to know how it felt to have people looking at me presenting the trophies. Each year I would go to his show and he would have me come up and present the trophies. So that went on for awhile. So Raymond said to me, “Ernie” (he called me Ernie), “you have been presenting

continued on page 9 >

Ernestine "Ernie" Shepherd: Fit and Fabulous at Any Age!

continued from page 8

trophies, so how about bodybuilding? Remember your promise?" And I said, "I do, but I don't think I can do that." He said, "You have done everything else so you have got to do this." So he and I had gone to lunch, and while we were there we saw Yohnnie Shambourger. Ray pushed me and said, "I have done all I can for you and now you need someone to take over to get you ready for bodybuilding." So he pushed me over to Yohnnie and said, "Talk when you get over there." So I went over there and I said, "Yohnnie, I've decided I wanted to be a bodybuilder." So he said, "Ms. Ernie, that would be wonderful." But I said, "I need you to train me." He said, "I don't mind, but you are going to go on a long journey and you are going to have to promise me that you are going to listen to everything that I tell you to do." I said I could do that. He contacted me in a matter of a few days and he said, "I want you to send me pictures of how you are looking now, and what I'm going to do with you is something called online training, but every now and then, you are going to have to come to Fort Washington to my center to see how you are progressing." So I sent pictures to Yohnnie and he trained me online and every so often I would visit his center. He taught me how to pose and all the things that I needed to do to become a bodybuilder.

CCC: Most people, especially people your age, are not in the shape that you are in. What message would you like to convey to those people?

ES: First of all I tell my seniors and I tell everybody that age is nothing but a number and that you can get fit. If ever there was an anti-aging pill, it's exercise. Because exercise does keep you young, it keeps you healthy and it keeps you positive and confident. Those things are so important. My mantra is determined, dedicated and disciplined to be fit. If you take those three words and use the determination to continue to go to the gym and to get out and do cardio, to eat correctly and to do strength training. Those three words will get you to do those four things. The hardest one is discipline in eating correctly. Because you have to stop eating all of the junk food. Once you start doing that you notice how differently you feel by letting all of the junk food go. So I tell them that I'm not asking them to be a bodybuilder, but I'm asking them to live a healthy lifestyle. So that's what it takes for the young, the old or whatever.

CCC: Right now you are listed in Guinness as the oldest female bodybuilder. Had you every heard of a lady by the name of Marjorie Newman who recently died at age 87 from leukemia, but up until her death was a female bodybuilder?

ES: Marjorie Newlin. She and I were the best of friends. I met Marjorie Newlin when Raymond Day sent our picture into Essence magazine. So she and I met at the train station and we were carrying our bags in to have our pictures taken. Marjorie and I were in the same book together. She and I also were in a couple of other books sitting side-by-side as two senior bodybuilders. I went to Marjorie's funeral. I just loved her. She had gone on the Oprah show and I was supposed to go on behind her. She and I were on The View together. We had so much fun. She was a wonderful lady. Everything that Marjorie did, I was following in her footsteps. She and I would talk on a weekly basis.

CCC: What does your son think about what you are doing?

ES: My son, who is 53, has always been active. He played basketball in college and he still runs and works out. He is thrilled over everything that I have done and what I am doing as well as my husband of 53 years and my 14-year-old grandson. My grandson and I go jogging together and he calls me TT. He says "TT, you can run." We just have a ball.

CCC: Do you train other people?

ES: Yes. I am a personal trainer at Energy Fitness and Wellness Center. I train ladies and men in the mornings on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10 to 11. Then I have one-on-one clients. Then I train on Monday nights from 7 to 8, then on Thursday nights from 6 to 7. It is a joy to have the people with me. They say that I inspire them. I always tell them that they inspire and motivate me to keep going because I know that I have to do the things that I'm doing. I cannot tell them to do something if I'm not doing it. So I practice what I preach. Also, my sister still motivates me, because I remember the things that she said. So between my clients and my sister, that's what keeps me living a healthy lifestyle. I eat the same way each day. If I'm going to continue to tell others to continue to do what I'm doing, then eating the way that I do is effortless to me because it has been engrained in my mind and it is part of my life now. It's no effort to me to get up at 3 a.m. every morning and have my devotion and then after that eat and go out at 4:30 each morning to run or walk. I stay out there until 7:30 because I have to get to the gym by 10 a.m. But I get up there early because that's when I do my training. Then after my training I have to train my clients. This is everyday except on Sunday. Sunday is the day that I really do not do any walking, running, or training. I get my rest. I come home from the gym and I take a nap. I get back up and prepare myself to go back up to the gym. I do get the sleep that I

need and then I come back in and I go to bed.

CCC: What does your diet consist of?

ES: First thing in the morning, I scramble 10 liquid egg whites. I may eat a Lender's bagel with jelly on it. I drink 16 ounces of water. Then I have a little pouch of Gatorade. That is to get me a jump start when I go out and run. When I was thinking about losing weight I didn't eat, but I need that for endurance when I'm out running. I come back in and I will drink a cup of liquid egg whites. Then maybe I will eat two wheat waffles and I will proceed to the gym. If you note that, I scrambled ten egg whites then I drink ten egg whites. That's my protein. I need my protein. I do not take any supplements. I put absolutely, positively nothing in me because my sister said that we would be two seniors that did everything naturally. We didn't want to be big bulky ladies, but we wanted to be toned ladies. And you don't want to tell people to take supplements because you don't know what they will do to you. So after I am back home from being at the gym, I eat a piece of roasted chicken, a baked potato and a frozen vegetable that is cooked. Frozen vegetables have no preservatives at all. I don't use salt or pepper on my food. I then rest. When I get up, I eat a can of tuna fish and brown rice and maybe another fruit. That is four meals. Before I leave for the gym, I will eat some turkey, brown rice and another vegetable. With all these meals I am consuming 16 ounces of water. After returning from the gym, I have another meal. It seems like I'm eating a lot of food, and it is. But the calories aren't high. Then before I go to bed I will drink another cup of egg whites. Notice I have egg whites four times a day. I weigh between 116 and 120 pounds. So each pound that I weigh I get in a gram of protein. So I am consuming 120 proteins every single day. Sometimes I get in more. People will say is that bad on your kidneys? No. Because I'm moving about. I need all that to really give me that energy and to build muscle. Because you need protein to build muscle. My carbohydrates come from the vegetables. I'm getting everything that I need. I go to my doctor and everything checks out okay. My pressure is fine; I don't have panic attacks anymore. All of the things that I've had are gone. So, I pass that information on to others to let them know how important it is to eat correctly. Leave the sweets alone. I'm not saying not to eat any, but after you get where you want to be, you can eat your sweets in moderation. The only sweet that I eat is sugar free Jell-O.

CCC: Do you plan on writing any books or producing any exercise videos?

ES: Yes. My manager, Yohnnie Shambourger and I are working on that. We're moving on it,

however we are very busy doing motivational speaking. I've been to Rome, Italy, California and so many places. I'm just so thrilled to speak to so many people and to really let them know it's not about me, but it's about me trying to motivate and inspire people.

CCC: Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

ES: The only thing that I would like to add is that I am so happy and thrilled that I have gotten the opportunity to really inspire so many people and motivate them. And I know that I have done this due to the emails that I have received, the many letters and the way people stop and tell me that I have helped them. I come home and thank God and thank my sister for giving me this love for fitness. And I thank you for even wanting to talk to me and hear my story. I'm never too busy to talk to anyone and to help them. God is so good.

CCC: Ms. Shepherd, thank you for your time.

ES: Thank you so much. I hope I didn't talk your ear off. I just so thrilled that anybody would even want to talk to me. Thank you so much!



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Q. I've been with my boyfriend for about two months and I've noticed that if I suggest something for us to do or make a choice (like what movie to see) he immediately says "No", and for no obvious reason. Sometimes I can't even get my thought out of my mouth and he hasn't heard what I'm about to say before he has already said "No". Yes, I know he is being controlling, but other than this habit, we don't have any problems. Why does he do this, and what am I not getting?

A. In my opinion, you have already identified the "why and what" reasons – i.e., he is controlling. The more he can shut you down or 'up', it reinforces his feeling as well as his 'need' to control you. Not continuing to say what you are thinking, etc., is falsely leading him to believe that his controlling behavior is okay. In my opinion, his behavior will become less and less attractive as time goes on.

Q. Our grandmother raised us, and now we have been taking care of her. However, her condition has progressed to a point that we can no longer care for her at home and she will need to be put in a nursing home. How do we go about selecting one and avoiding the horror stories that we have been warned about?

A. One of the benefits of living in the 'age of technology' is the availability of information on the internet. That includes information about nursing homes' quality and complaints. The results of required professional reviews of nursing homes to determine if they meet specific health and quality guidelines at both the state and federal level are posted on the web. The web will also provide information regarding the types and frequencies of complaints, as well as comments from satisfied/dissatisfied customers and families. After your on-line research, make visits to the nursing homes you are considering – in the morning and evening – and personally evaluate what you see, smell and hear. Once your grandmother has been admitted to a nursing home, frequent visits by the family and friends will encourage the staff's cooperation if for no other reason than your presence.

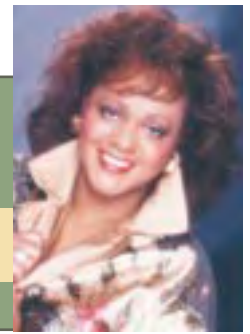
ASK SARNIA

by Sarnia Cotton

Q. Me and my wife have been having it hard with making ends meet. Seems like as soon as I get a job she loses hers, and vice versa. I found out that my wife has been sending the little money that we have been making to late night television ministries for their gimmicks – prayer clothes and special oils. This caused a serious fight because she thinks that I have "been taken over by the enemy", that "I am a non-believer", and that my not believing in these gimmicks is why we haven't had a "breakthrough". I know that we are both stressed out, but I believe she has been brain washed and is being taken advantage of. She is no longer talking to me and has moved in with another family member. I didn't see this coming and I don't know what to do. Help.

A. Whereas I personally believe that prayer works and it is at the top of my list, an additional resource may be needed to address your situation, i.e., counseling. Prolonged stress and continuous disappointments does have serious affects on one's wellness. It is possible that your wife could be overly affected by life's stressors and not recognize the soundness of her decisions when it comes to television ministries making miraculous promises in exchange for financial donations, and could benefit from another person such as a mental health counselor or 'your' church pastor to discuss her point(s) of view. I suggest you talk with the family member with whom she is living and try to determine if they have identified any other inconsistencies with rational thought processing in your wife's behavior, and if so enlist their assistance in getting your wife professional help.

Questions may be submitted to asksarnia@yahoo.com



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INSPIRATION

God Wants YOU!

by Sherry Pittman

The idea that an all-powerful, all knowing, everywhere at the same time God loves us can sometimes be daunting to imagine. Those who accept His love does not find it necessary to over analyze this concept. Frankly, when I think of my many sins I'm very thankful that someone still loves me. But God has taken this much further. He has sent his only son to pay the price for my sins, death on a cross. It is humbling when I think of the things I've done and that, someone innocent, has paid the cost for me. On the other hand, I am equally grateful that I've been given a fresh start and spared from eternal damnation. The fact of the matter is that God does really truly love us more than we can image. He desires to fellowship with us, commune, have relationship, etc. Many

fear that God will see our sins and be angry with us; consequently, deceptive practices are easy to adopt. Because of our sins, we tend to hide or worst yet, run from Him.

In Genesis 3:8, we read of Adam and Eve hiding from God. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." Can't you almost feel the fear of knowing you've done wrong and you're about to be caught? Doing wrong, sin, causes us to want to avoid the person we have wronged. We hear them and are immediately reminded of what we did and hope they don't know. We want to hide. God's desire for relationship with us drives him to seek us. He calls us to himself, in hopes that we will admit our wrong, repent, so that our relationship with him can be restored. He enjoys our presence and wants us to be free from the need to hide by know-

ing and accepting his plan of forgiveness.

Sin not only damages our relationship with God, but it damages our relationship with others as well. But Jesus Christ came to restore those broken relationships. God's love for us extends beyond any sin we may commit. Just the same, in our humanness, we are afraid that our particular sin is just too much. Understand that regardless of what you have done, God still loves you immensely. Regardless of what we have done, if we only confess and be genuinely sorry, He removes our guilt and shame so that we can be back in joyful, rightful fellowship with him once again.

Nevertheless, sometimes the fear of "what's going to happen to us" is so great that God's forgiveness may not truly sink deep enough for us to believe and accept that truth. That's when we become "negatively creative." We find elaborate ways to avoid the truth and deny what we've done. We create detailed stories (lies) about where we've been,

what we did, who we were with, why it took so long, etc., etc. But hiding from God is impossible because he is all knowing anyway.

Remember, God knew you would make mistakes, (sin) that's exactly why he sent his son, Jesus to pay for ALL your mistakes. Instead of hiding or resisting that you're wrong, learn from your mistakes, admit you were wrong, make adjustments, and think of how you can avoid the errors again. Take your wrong doings to God and ask him to apply the blood of Jesus to your sin. If you're caught in a trap from the enemy, ask God to please get you out. Know that He knows anyway and simply accept the price that has been paid already for your forgiveness. Fulfill God's desire to fellowship with you by walking in the newness of your forgiveness. Let dishonesty and hiding be someone else's story. Your forgiveness and grateful right standing, begins with confession not deception, with the one who loves you deeper than you can imagine.

Sherry Pittman is a monthly staff writer for the Capital City Courier Newspaper. In addition to public speaking, she hosts two television shows "Heart to Heart" and "House to House." She is a licensed real estate broker and holds a Bachelor of Science in Speech Communications and can be reached for speaking engagements or comments and questions at SPittman@ameritech.net or 217.528.2998

HE SAID:

In order to have a successful marriage relationship or any successful partnership for that matter, there is one critical element that must be present. One word that most people know, but may not truly understand its importance, when it comes to relationships is *trust*. *Trust, is the foundation upon which the strength of all relationships are based. An acronym, I would like to use for the word trust is T (truth), R (relied), U (upon) S (stands), T (tall). Which simply means trust is built by truth. We must be honest and truthful in our relationship even in the small things. Sometimes husbands and wives don't tell each other the truth. For example, a wife cooks green peas for her husband and he doesn't like it. Because he does not want to hurt her feelings, he doesn't tell her, so she keeps cooking the peas! This will continue to frustrate him all because he didn't tell her the truth. If he told her the truth in a loving way, by first sharing what he did like about the meal she probably would receive it and work on the peas. The wife also, should share with her husband those things that she doesn't like, so that he can make the adjustment. A couple, who chooses not to be truthful with one another, will build up a wall that could block communication and soon diminish intimacy, which is the key to a fulfilled marriage. So prac-*



THE WINNING TEAM

Trust!

by Aeneas & Tracy Williams

tice being truthful with each other, this simple principle will do wonders for your relationship!

SHE SAID:

By being truthful with one another in marriage, we can help each other grow and develop as individuals. When you have chosen as a couple to be truthful with one another, you can really enjoy the freedom that comes with unconditional love. I believe the marriage relationship is the best place to get developed as a person. What other relationship can you be so intimately involved, with no boundaries, where all your weaknesses are exposed, where

you have made a lawful commitment? When you can be yourself, with no fear of judgment, this solidifies the friendship in marriage.

Sometimes it is all in how a truth is shared. For example, my husband can be bluntly honest, and there were times when he did hurt my feelings, but I had to give him a tip on how to share a truth with me. My husband enjoys Oreos cookies, so I call this the "Oreo method".

Using the example of the peas:

Step 1. Top layer, encouragement: "Honey, I enjoyed dinner tonight".

Step 2. The crème, truth: "Those peas were a little too salty for me".

Step 3. Bottom layer, encouragement: "The chicken was delicious, good job honey!"

When we can be honest with one another, allowing each other the freedom of being

truthful, we can enjoy growing and developing together as individuals and as a couple. Try the "Oreo Method", it really does work!

Aeneas Williams, played 14 years in the NFL as a cornerback and safety for the Arizona Cardinals and the St. Louis Rams. Pastor Aeneas and his wife, Tracy, founded Spirit of the Lord Family Church, currently located at 206 Emerling Dr. St. Louis, MO, two years ago. The Williams' have shared marital concepts and mentored couples since Aeneas was a football rookie. The couple resides in Creve Coeur, MO, with their four children.

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COVER STORY

by Kim Gordon

THIS SIDE OF SANE! HOW DOES MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECT OUR LIVES?

In 1959, author Ken Kesey worked the graveyard shift at a mental health facility in Menlo Park, California. While he was there, he spent a lot of his time talking to the patients and noting the inner workings of the institution. He also had the opportunity to compare their experiences with his own under the influence of psychedelic drugs. While he was attending Stanford University in their creative writing program, Kesey volunteered for the C.I.A.-financed study known as Project MKULTRA, in which people were, knowingly or unknowingly, given psychoactive drugs such as LSD, mescaline, cocaine, and psilocybin mushrooms (or “shrooms”) in order to observe the effects of these drugs on the human mind. As a result of these experiences, Kesey wrote one of the best-known novels about mental health facilities, “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest.” The book tells the story of Randle Patrick McMurphy, whose rebellious antics land him in court facing prison. McMurphy fakes insanity in order to be sent to a “cushy” mental hospital instead of jail. While there, his antics and pranks continue, and he refuses to become the docile patient who sits qui-

etly in the corner. This brings him in direct conflict with the authorities, especially the head nurse, Nurse Ratched. The attempts of the domineering and strong-willed nurse to get McMurphy under her thumb fail miserably, and after a violent confrontation, she has him taken away to another part of the facility where he is subjected to a prefrontal lobotomy...part of his brain is removed and he is reduced to a vegetative state.

The underlying theme of “Cuckoo’s Nest” is that the person who does not conform to society’s expectations faces the danger of being forced to conform (through the removal of his ability to think for himself), but that person can also be an example to awaken others to a reality the authorities do not want them to see, including the status of their own mental health. The McMurphy character (played by Jack Nicholson in the film) influences the other inmates by helping them to see through the lies that they are being fed, along with their medication, each day...with the threat of forced conformity (lobotomy) hanging over their heads.

The World Health Organization estimates that one out of every four people (or 25%) will develop one or more mental disorders at some stage of life. The majority of

people treated for mental disorders suffer from depression, with the second largest group being those treated for alcohol-use disorder: a form of addiction that was added to the American Psychiatric Association’s “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.” The WHO also estimates that 14% of the total global disease burden can be attributed to mental health. These are frightening statistics which seem to indicate that many of us fall outside the realm of “normal” thinking. The question is, who is defining “normal,” and what ultimately determines insanity?

I SPEAK IN MANY TONGUES

Comedienne Lily Tomlin once asked, “Why is it that it’s called prayer when we talk to God, but when He answers back it’s called schizophrenia?” And historically, the line between sanity and madness has been a thin one, with the definitions often changing from one society to another. What is one culture’s schizophrenic is another culture’s visionary prophet who hears the voice of God. In medieval Europe, for example, the prevalent belief was that people were surrounded by demonic forces that constantly attacked the

pious. Only a very strong faith and the intervention of God could prevent the victory of evil. Therefore, if a person began talking or behaving in an “odd” manner, it was assumed that the person’s faith was not strong enough; evil had won and taken possession of the person’s mind. The “cure” for madness, then, was to torture the flesh in order to drive out the offending spirit. If someone claimed to be conversing with God, he or she ran a grave risk, indeed. If believed, the person could be elevated to the status of “saint,” as in the case of Joan of Arc. If he or she wasn’t believed, then it was assumed the person was consorting with the devil, and the Inquisition-type tortures and death would follow, as in the case of Joan of Arc. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake as a dangerous heretic, but centuries after her death, she was found innocent of the charges and canonized as a saint.

As the state of medicine progressed, mental illness grew to be seen, not as the work of demons, but rather as a collection of bad “humors” in the body. Actually a throw-back to the times of the Hellenic Greeks and early Romans, the theory of “humorism” proposed that the human body is made up of

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four basic substances: black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood. When these substances were “out of balance” or deficient, disease occurred. This led to such medical “procedures” as bloodletting (cutting the body and allowing blood to flow in order to release the bad humors), purging, and the application of leeches to suck out the “bad blood.” Trepanning, or cutting a hole in the skull, was another ancient medical “method” to release trapped blood or humors and “cure” the person who wasn’t “right in the head.”

Eventually, though, the practice of medicine changed, as people realized they needed a hole in the head about as much as they needed...well...a hole in the head. But in Western societies, the cause of mental illness is still seen as strictly a physical abnormality...either a malfunction of a part of the brain or a chemical imbalance. Once a diagnosis has been reached, drugs are given to correct the imbalance, electroshock treatments are administered to alter the brain’s electrical wiring, or surgery is performed to remove or disconnect the “offending” pieces of the brain. Western medicine has always been in favor of picking up a scalpel and intervening.

In sharp contrast is the mindset of non-western, indigenous cultures such as the Native American, Chinese, Indian, and Africa. For example, the African worldview

holds that everything has a spirit and all life is connected. Therefore, we must be mindful of our influence in the world, because our actions can affect each individual as well as the community and even the world itself. For example, if you decide to build a dam...which restricts and causes changes in the flow of the river... you must first negotiate with the spirit of the river. If you fail to do so, the river might send a spirit to someone in your community. The spirit would disturb that person (someone who was sensitive to the spiritual realm), causing changes in his or her behavior. One of the functions of the shaman or sangoma (healers or holy men/women) is to divine or determine the cause of the disturbance (in our example, the river spirit) and find the solution or cure. In this way, the disturbed individual becomes a means of communication between the river spirit and the community. Ancestral spirits have also made their presence known through the supposedly mentally ill individual. It’s this spiritual aspect of life that causes the traditional African culture to welcome the schizophrenic or psychotic person instead of shunning them, considering them as a possible means of communication between the realm of the spirit and the human realm.

Another aspect to consider is the experience of the sangoma or shaman himself. In many traditions, one of the ways in which a

person is called to become a shaman or sangoma is through illness. The person is struck by a sudden and mysterious illness, often in the form of temporary insanity, which tells the community that this person has been called to be a healer. It’s said that only those who have known illness can heal, and so the healer is forced to face his own vulnerability. Therefore, many non-western cultures view what the Western world would call a psychotic “break” as an attempt of the spirit to take that soul to a higher state. As Joseph Campbell stated in “The Power of Myth,” “The shaman is the person, male or female, who...has an overwhelming psychological experience that turns him totally inward. It’s a kind of schizophrenic crack-up. The whole unconscious opens up, and the shaman falls into it. This shaman experience has been described many, many times. It occurs all the way from Siberia right through the Americas down to Tierra del Fuego.” Dr. Malidoma Patrice Somé, shaman of the Dagara tribe of Burkina Faso, explains that in the shamanic view, mental illness signals “the birth of a healer.” In the Dagara tradition, the community recognizes the signs and helps the emerging healer to reconcile the energies of both worlds...“the world of the spirit that he or she is merged with, and the village and community.”

One of the main features that distinguish Pentecostal and charismatic churches from other Christian traditions is the practice of “glossolalia” or speaking in tongues. It’s easy to see the similarities between this experience of holy utterances while possessed by the Holy Spirit and the “shouting” that is typical of many Southern Baptist churches with certain features of traditional African-Afro/Caribbean religions such as Santeria, Candomblé, Palo, and Vodun. In both the charismatic traditions and the Afro/Caribbean religions, the desired result is a communication with the divine that is achieved through trance. Both traditions use prayer, song, drumming and dance to reach that level of ecstatic experience, and are more alike in fundamental ways than is generally believed. It is likely the roots of both lie deep in an African past.

SAVE ME FROM THOSE WHO WOULD SAVE ME!

The American Psychiatric Association has spent the better part of the past century cataloging and naming the various symptoms of mental illness. But, before we look at those categories, I want to point something out. The official seal of the American Psychiatric Association features a portrait of one of the Founding Fathers, Benjamin Rush, who was also called the “Father of American Psychiatry.” Rush is famous for several groundbreaking theories in the field of medicine and psychiatry, including his notion that being Black was an inherited skin disease derived from leprosy. He called

this disease “negroidism,” or “negritude.” Rush felt that Blacks suffering from this disorder could be cured (turned white, as in the case of vitiligo), but until a cure was found, it was best that whites not intermarry with Blacks as the dreaded disease could be passed on to their children. Granted, it was the 18th century, and stranger theories were being written as if they were fact. In 1851, Dr. Samuel Cartwright claimed to have discovered two diseases that struck Blacks with an alarming frequency. The first illness was known as “Drapetomania,” which was the mental sickness that caused enslaved Blacks to want to run away from their kindly slavemasters (they must be delirious!). The second was “Dysaesthesia Aethiopica” or “Rascality,” which was a disease of disobedience, laziness, and disrespect, causing the afflicted Blacks to break, waste, or destroy the master’s property, as if out of pure mischief. (Those rascals!)

In addition to such racist roots, the field of psychiatry has historically been closely aligned with and supportive of the outrageously racist pseudoscience of eugenics. Eugenics comes from two Greek words meaning “good birth” and was rooted in the belief that those with “superior” genes have the obligation to pass on their splendid hereditary traits, while those with “inferior” genes should be prevented from reproducing at all. This insidious practice and the groups spawned by its tenets have placed long-reaching tentacles of hatred, racism, and self-loathing into the minds of people of color, especially after it was paired with psychology. Using standardized tests of human intelligence developed through decades of “psychological research,” proponents of eugenics began to implement their racist ideas and get laws passed in numerous states that would allow for the involuntary sterilization of people deemed “unfit” or “habitual criminals.” By 1930, twenty-four states had such mandatory sterilization laws on their books, and more than 10,000 people had been sterilized against their will, with California leading the way by sterilizing 6,737 individuals deemed “mentally unfit.”

But how could this continue, you ask? Who could possibly support such dangerous and foolish notions? The Pioneer Fund was established in 1937 by textile tycoon Wickliffe Draper to “improve the character of the American people” through race betterment principles and to encourage the procreation of “white persons who settled in the original 13 colonies prior to the adoption of the constitution and/or related stocks.” Also, in 1904, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie established the Carnegie Institution for Experimental Evolution in Washington, DC, the first formal eugenics organization in North America. Through corporations such as these, huge amounts of money have been given to fund “research”

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into theories of superiority and inferiority and to back notoriously stereotypical books such as the 1994 book, "The Bell Curve," that claim to prove the racial inferiority of Blacks.

Therefore it stands to reason that we should take everything that psychiatry and psychology has to say with a grain of salt, especially when it comes to cramming the human spirit into neat, little, stackable boxes and labeling them. Having said that, let's look at some of the more common disorders:

Depression affects a large percentage of the population, particularly during hard, economic times and other times of stress, fueled by the pressures associated with losing a job and with concern over how to survive in a hostile environment. Hopelessness and thoughts of suicide make the person a danger to him/herself and others. The standard "cure" is one of the antidepressant drugs, such as the overly-prescribed Prozac, even though one of the possible side effects of the antidepressant drugs is thoughts of suicide. A more natural herb to try is St. John's Wort.

Bipolar Disorder is the new name for "manic/depressive" and is a mood disorder in which the person alternates between eagerness and hyperactivity (manic phase) and crushing depression with thoughts of suicide. The standard "cure" is one of the mood-stabilizing medications, such as Lithium. St. John's

Wort is also a natural herb for this condition.

Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder that is characterized by obsessive thoughts fixated on something or the irrational compulsion to perform (or avoid) certain acts repeatedly, such as washing one's hands over and over. Tranquilizers such as Xanax are used to calm anxious minds. The natural herb is, again, St. John's Wort.

Schizophrenia is a psychosis that is usually accompanied by hallucinations and delusional beliefs, making the person a potential danger to him/herself and others. The standard treatment is one of the antipsychotic drugs, such as Haldol, Thorazine, Seroquel, or Abilify, however it's widely known that these often produce severe and adverse side effects. In fact, U.S. studies have shown that antipsychotic drugs appear to cause diabetes and fatal diabetic ketoacidosis in Blacks. Antipsychotic drugs can also trigger seizures if the person is susceptible to them. Central nervous system damage can result. Involuntary, jerking movements that may become permanent are also a possible side effect. For decades, lobotomy was the standard treatment for schizophrenia, however destroying part of the brain often reduced the person to a non-functioning vegetative state. Electroconvulsive therapy (electroshock) remains a controversial treatment that many psychiatrists feel

is safe...however many former recipients of the treatment disagree. There is memory loss and irreparable damage associated with running currents of electricity through the brain. When Joseph and Rose Kennedy had difficulty handling their adolescent daughter Rose Marie's violent mood swings and her assertive behavior (sneaking out of the convent where she was being educated and cared for), Joseph chose to have a lobotomy performed on her at the age of 23. It left the middle Kennedy sibling with urinary incontinence and an infantile mentality, staring blankly at the wall for hours. Rose was devastated and considered it the first of the Kennedy family tragedies. Rose Marie spent the remainder of her life in an institution, permanently incapacitated.

Somatization Disorder occurs when a person persistently complains of pain or problems for which the doctor can find no physical cause. The ancient word for this "condition" was "hysteria," and it derived from the mistaken notion that a woman's womb ("hystera" in Greek) could detach itself and travel all around her body causing various pains. (Such was the state of medicine, folks.) Since it was mainly women who suffered from "hysteria" and became "hysterical," this disorder conjures up pictures of patronizing male doctors patting a woman on her hand and saying, "It's all in your head!" Patients with this disease will often consult several doctors in search of someone who can find the source of the pain. The standard treatment is, again, antidepressants. However, it points to the urgent need for doctors and nurses to take the patient's entire life into consideration, including their background, their belief system, and their environment...and not just their physical symptoms...when making a diagnosis.

Each year, the American Psychiatric Association's "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" is updated. New categories are added to reflect new interpretations of our mental health, and old categories are redefined or removed entirely, such as homosexuality, which was once considered to be a mental illness. But these remain our best attempts to define our observations of human behavior within the structured confines of the Western mind.

ON A (TOP-SECRET) MAGIC CARPET RIDE

If you've ever wondered whether or not the government is messing with our minds, you don't have to look any farther than the C.I.A. Beginning in the early 1950's and continuing at least through the 1960's, the Central Intelligence Agency conducted a covert operation known as Project MKULTRA. The project was designed to test the effects of certain psychotropic drugs such as LSD, mescaline, cocaine, heroin, sodium pentothal, and psilocybin mushrooms on the human mind. These


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experiments also involved electroconvulsive "therapy" as well as sensory deprivation and isolation to achieve a form of mind control. Numerous citizens from the U.S. and Canada were used as test subjects, and the "tests" were often conducted without the people's knowledge or consent. C.I.A. employees, military personnel, mentally ill patients, prostitutes, and members of the general public were drugged without their knowledge, although there were a few (college students, etc.) who consented to the trials. Some people who entered certain mental institutions for minor problems (post-partum depression or anxiety) were subjected to the devastating effects of being drugged against their will. The information that was gathered during these experiments laid the foundation for the C.I.A.'s "two-stage psychological torture method."

Some people were targeted for the mind-altering project due to their political leanings. Singer and activist, Paul Robeson, insisted that he had been a victim of Project MKULTRA at a time when the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. under J. Edgar Hoover had him under investigation, opening his mail and tracking his every move. It was the 1960's, and Robeson, who traveled extensively throughout Europe, was very

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vocal about civil rights and the treatment of Blacks in America. It's believed he was given an hallucinogenic drug at a hotel in Moscow, and the anxiety symptoms that he suffered as a result caused him to be checked into The Priory Mental Hospital in London. There, he was subjected to the mind depatterning process that was characteristic of MKULTRA. He was given electroconvulsive therapy and psychotropic drugs for two years before his son found out and was able to get him out. By that time, his health was broken. It was discovered later that the doctors who attended him were C.I.A. contractors involved in MKULTRA.

In 1973, C.I.A. director, Richard Helms, had all paperwork related to Project MKULTRA destroyed, thus hindering any real examination. Some files survived the destruction order, and in 1977, those files, along with the testimony of participants, were entered into an official investigation. At least one death was attributed to the project, that of Dr. Frank Olson, a C.I.A. scientist who worked with MKULTRA, but who had decided to back out due to his qualms about the project. Olson was slipped LSD and then pushed from his thirteenth-floor hotel window, an autopsy would later discover. On October 3, 1995, Bill Clinton issued a public apology for the harm that was done by Project MKULTRA.

WHAT BROUGHT US TO THIS PLACE...?

So, what are the causes of mental illness? The theories (because, for all of the research, no one actually knows) run from one area of life to another. There are those who argue that mental disease is inherited. Genetic science has shown that abnormalities in many different genes can cause a susceptibility to be passed on without actually developing the disease. Other factors come into play, such as the environment. Stress, abuse, and traumatic experiences all can trigger the development of mental disorders. For example, there are numerous studies of multiple or split personalities (Dissociative Identity Disorder) that seem to indicate it was some traumatic event that caused the mind to shatter into several different pieces, each with a unique personality. Severe childhood abuse can cause a portion of the mind to remain childlike, frightened and unable to cope with the adult world. When a situation occurs which is similar to the event that initiated the trauma, the mind retreats into that "personality." Sometimes a personality is developed specifically to handle that type of situation while the primary personality is unaware of

what's happening. When the abuse is ongoing, the mind can become quite fragmented.


Another interesting study of environmental factors in mental illness links experiences of victimization with paranoia. The more a person or group is exploited and victimized, the more likely they are to develop feelings that others are out to do them harm. And in a related study, it was found that persons of Afro-Caribbean and Asian descent living in the British Isles are disproportionately more likely to be diagnosed with paranoid delusions, even though the Blacks living in the Caribbean do not have a higher rate of paranoid delusions than any other group. It all depends on where you live. And, as the saying goes, "It's not paranoia if they really are out to get you!"

Biology is another factor in mental illness. This line of thinking places mental disorders in the physical or chemical makeup of the brain. One theory holds that a microorganism known as *Toxoplasma gondii* is involved in the development of schizophrenia. That parasite, whose primary host is cats, causes Toxoplasmosis in humans. This usually mild disease can cause neurological damage and may affect behavior in susceptible individuals. If this parasite is found to be linked to various psychiatric disorders, it would mean that a baffling disease like schizophrenia could be

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cured with a round of antibiotics. Other theories point to chemical or hormonal imbalances as the possible culprits. Chemical imbalances can also be achieved through substance abuse.

...AND WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

With the history that the field of psychia-

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try has, it's best to tread lightly. There are too many stories of people being held or treated against their will. And, while medications have replaced some of the more inhumane methods, some of the antipsychotic drugs have been called "chemical lobotomies." The criticism has been that by labeling practically

every aspect of the human personality as a "disorder," psychiatry seeks to "normalize" all behavior and punish deviations from the norm.

For those who are incapacitated by an illness of the mind, therapy often helps. There are different forms of therapy (psychotherapy, cognitive behavior therapy,

self-help groups, etc.) and it's necessary to find a group or therapist you trust and with whom you feel comfortable. Getting to the root of the problem and working through past traumas are tools that a good counselor or therapist should use to the patient's advantage. That, and Time...which heals all wounds.

However the most helpful tool is to approach each case from an individual angle, looking, not from a prescribed book of symptoms, but at all of the possibilities this person presents. In Peoria, there is a homeless man who lives in a small, makeshift tent sewn from pieces of burlap. Most residents have seen him at one time or another...he walks around wearing clothing made of canvas with pieces of bones and other discarded items on a string around his neck, and he uses paper correction fluid to paint designs on his face. He's often seen talking to himself as he walks. Some have said that he's schizophrenic. Others have said he's an alcoholic (which is a mental disorder according to the American Psychiatric Association). But people who have taken the time to talk to him have said that he's very lucid, and often spouts his own brand

of philosophy, talking about the state of the world and what we need. And he has enough sense to throw an unlit Molotov cocktail at the Courthouse in order to get himself arrested so that he can spend the cold winters in jail each year. Yet, he has refused all offers from relatives to come and live with them. And when people give him money, he turns right around and gives it away; he has no use for it. Local restaurant owners feed him and downtown tourists take their pictures with him.

We don't know quite where to pigeonhole him. He's a challenge to our rational way of thinking. He forces us to examine our own lives and our own state of mental health. After all, we are the ones who spend the majority of our lives working at jobs we hate in order to buy things that will either sit collecting dust or get sold after we die. On which side of sane does this man, Willie York, sit? As he puts it, "We're all playing the same music, folks...I'm just banging on the other side of the drum."



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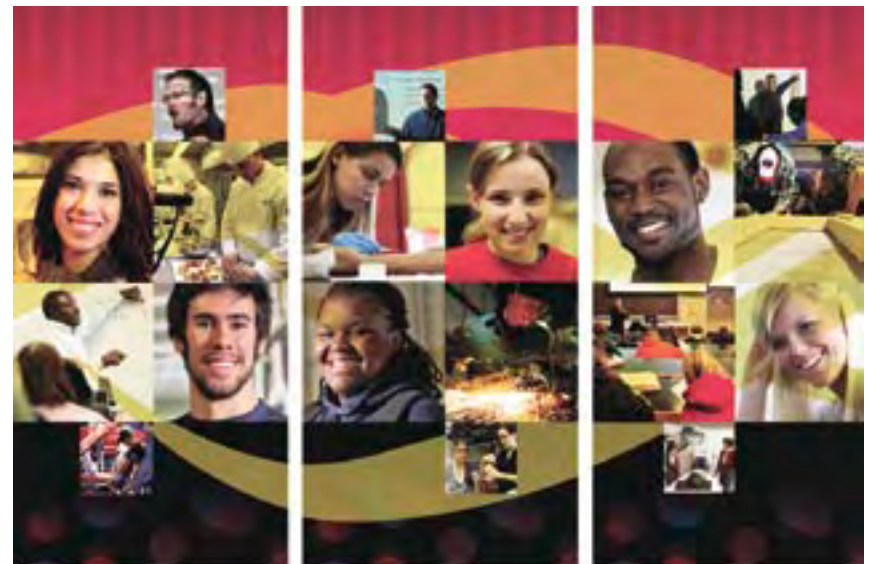
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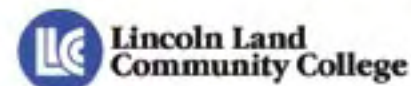
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So now you're sitting in the car holding your cell phone and trying to figure out how to apologize. You tried texting her 8 times, but kept erasing the message because it just didn't sound right. It's no use calling because you know how she gets when she's mad at you. She told you a thousand times what upsets her, but you kept pushing the limit until you cussed each other out, she broke the dishes your mama gave you, screamed it's over, you grabbed your keys and stormed out of the house in a fury. You really feel like crap and don't know how to make things right. You start scrolling through the contacts in your phone and stop on your ex's phone number. (sigh) You stare at it, shake your head and begin smirking because you know she'll do a lot more than just answer the phone if you called, but do you really want to open that door again? (sigh again)

Now I'd be the last one to say I've never been in this position before. In fact, every man I know has been confronted with this situation at one point in his life. So you had a fight. You're sitting in a cold car in a grocery store parking lot wondering why women have to be so complicated all the time. If they just didn't make menstrual cycle mountains out of molehills, the world would be a better place. It seems like you just can't get it right. Seventy percent of everything you do seems to never be good enough for her right? So you begin to reminisce about the good times you had with good ole Keisha. Keisha wasn't

FOR THE FELLAS

Love Should Bring You Home

by Jack A. Daniels

hot headed like your current woman. She knew how to make you feel like a man, didn't sweat the small stuff and knew exactly how to make you well you know. So the question is, "Should you really make that call?"

In essence, arguments typically stem from unresolved underlining issues within the context of relationships. The majority of the time what you're arguing about isn't the culprit the catapulted you into compromising conversations. Psychologically, ignorance leads to frustration, frustration escalates to anger and anger leads to isolation which is why you then find yourself sitting in a grocery store parking lot trying to figure out ways to make yourself feel better. Trust me I get it. What's problematic about the heightened level of your emotional state is that it leaves you feeling vulnerable, weak and prone to attacks from the subtle suggestions of your ever-present ego. Simply put, you want to feel better so reaching out to the closest person who is available to stroke your ego back to stud status is the psychological warfare wean-

ing you towards another woman. Keisha is the perfect person for the job and she'd delightfully listen and let you lay your head on her pillow with no questions asked. But come on fellas, you knew Keisha wasn't good for you then and she definitely ain't good for you now. She has the same annoying habits, attitudes, beliefs and expectations that made you dismiss her in the first place!

The truth is you have a good woman at home who loves, honors, respects and has your back no matter what. Sure you don't get along all the time, but you know the blame isn't all on her. I always say that the decisions we make determine our destiny. Have the courage to do the right thing by being man enough to swallow your pride, admit your wrongs, apologize and start rectifying what needs work in your relationship. Giving in to the vulnerability, rejection and yearning to have your ego stroked so you can temporarily feel better isn't a viable solution and will only lead to bigger problems in the end. Keisha doesn't have the answer to your problems; you do.

So the next time you find yourself debating on whether or not rekindling an old flame due to your need to feel needed, remember to trust the God-given voice within you that tells you to, "Don't do it." Some doors need to be kept closed. In fact, you should have thrown away the key long ago. Ok, maybe not thrown it away, but at least don't make it so easy to find! OR so easy for your woman to find! Why would you still have her number in your phone anyway? Come on now Man up, go home, apologize and enjoy the women we love and the women who love us.

"Keep the faith, keep making it happen and remember to stay out of your own way!"

Jack A. Daniels is the Author of "The Man's Handbook for Choosing the Right Woman" Speaker, Syndicated Columnist and Counselor based in Atlanta, GA. Go to www.100hearts.net for more information about his powerful new docu-series & project for women, "Healing 100 Hearts in 100 Days Challenge." Jack can be contacted for interviews, speaking engagements, questions or comments concerning this column @ www.presspause.org



BREAK THE MOLD!

by Kris Calmese

In our society, we have been coaxed into the validity of separation. Segregation, racism, reverse racism, racial slurs, the census, and the terms minority and majority have filtered our unified awareness dramatically. The stereotypical aspects of religion, political stance, and financial status have somehow become the "characteristics" that determine our "initial judge mentalities" and have somehow become intertwined with the optical assessment of another's skin's amount of melanin. To call one another these "colors" is judge mentality at its most

direct. These complexions were, at the start, the result of the environmental effects upon age of each respective nationality. What they have become are divisional boundaries that have grown into a socio-cultural foundation of distraction. Over time, mankind has managed to create a division that is not only manifested from continent to continent, but has gone so far as to create division from street to street, all over the world. The actual "grid" of this world is an uncountable number of atoms, electrons, and protons that are the building blocks of ALL matter, including each and every cell that is a part of the human body, and they all collectively exist.

The phrase "we are all connected" is exactly that, the building blocks of life; the tools and cofactors with which our Creator used. What we "see" can determine what we think, only if we lead with the "judgmental mind." But in all reality, skin color does NOT define the energy, power, or life. We hang onto these "concepts" with sheer ignorance to the fact that we ALL have the exact same "building blocks" that make us so incredibly powerful individually. But what we have fooled ourselves into thinking is that small groups of focus are abundantly powerful. The TRUE fact is, an overall togetherness is not only abundantly powerful, it is infinitely limitless, and

perfect. Consider the ocean and its so-called "single existence." If the ocean were to be broken up into lakes and rivers, there would be plenty of life for absolute sure. But the depths would prevent the water from reaching the surface of land. But as the ocean is "re-connected," its full together existence would reach the height of land and home an unfathomable level of life and growth, continuously. Inside the human body, each performance is naturally effortless, and responsive.

It is said, "If we only see with our eyes, then we will be easily fooled." This quote is within our everyday thought processes and assessments of one another. There is a limit to our division's power; although it is great, there is DEFINITELY a limit. But there is no limit to the Power of the Atomical Electrical Grid that is us All. Yes, the brain-washing is deep. Yes, it is easy to continue in its path. No, it is not the limit, nor is it the only option in Life. Let's propose a culture of Togetherness for our children to collectively, one day, "break the mold." It is far greater to build "together" than to fight apart.

Kris Calmese is the owner of Kalmese Fitness in Bourbonnais, Illinois



MORE THAN HALF OF UIS STUDENTS

Volunteer in the Community



Giving back to the community through civic engagement is important at the University of Illinois Springfield. More than half of the nearly 5,000 students at UIS spend time volunteering every year.

One group of students, the Black Male Collegiate Society, spends one hour a week mentoring students at Springfield Public School's Matheny-Withrow Elementary School. The mentoring program, which is organized by Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Illinois Capital Region, is an attempt to introduce positive male role models into the lives of the young students.

"I think that having positive male role

models in their lives will essentially put them a step ahead in life," said Shomari Jackson, a sophomore majoring in accounting.

UIS Black Male Initiative coordinator and graduate student Anthony Thomas-Davis approached Big Brothers Big Sisters about the partnership. He says it benefits UIS students as much as the children, because the men-



tors gain valuable experience.

"A lot of these guys don't have opportunities to be involved in any type of developmental mentoring programs," said Thomas-Davis.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Enrollment Specialist Yvonne Wapniarski says, before the UIS group she had only interviewed four African American men who wanted to be mentors in the past seven years.

"Very few times is there a productive male role model in the children's lives, especially African American men," she said.

Wapniarski says 90% of the households Big Brothers Big Sisters work with are headed by a single female who is below the poverty level. That is why having these positive black male mentors is so important.

The UIS mentors plan to meet with the children every Friday during lunch for the rest of the school year. They often talk about school, homework and what is going on at home.

"Basically he uses me as someone to vent to, so if there's an issue or a problem that's happening or going on he can talk to me about anything," said Jackson.

Jackson says he was fortunate to grow up with a positive male role model in his life. Now he is happy to give back to these students.

"It gives me the feeling of helping someone and being a positive role model. Whenever I feel like I can help somebody else it makes me feel good," he said.

For more information on volunteer efforts at UIS visit the Volunteer and Civic Engagement Center website at www.uis.edu/volunteer/.

MAYOR MIKE HOUSTON

Rolling Up His Mayoral Sleeves and Digging In!

by Mike Pittman



things that I'm happiest about. We carried that everywhere we went. The reception I think was extremely good. I think most people realize that the City has major financial problems and they're looking for somebody to fix those problems and to be truthful in what needs to be done. I think they realize there are going to be some hard decisions made and it just simply needs to be done and move forward.

CCC: Were you surprised by your margin of victory?

MH: *In all honesty, I wasn't really surprised. We had anticipated that we would be somewhere in the neighborhood of 45 percent. We were a little over 47 percent and that was in the ballpark. In all honesty, I would have*

given anything to hit 50 percent.

CCC: What do you plan on doing your first day in office?

MH: *We will be working in terms of the budget. I, in fact, met with Bill McCarthy and we discussed the approach to the budget in terms of having an outline in terms of how we plan on constructing it and moving forward with it. The inauguration is actually going to be on Friday, April 29 and we will be officially starting on that Monday morning, however, when I walk away from the inaugural ceremony, I will officially be the Mayor and responsible. But the official start will be Monday morning. Bill has asked for a copy of the budget. I received a copy of the budget from Mayor Edwards this week. We are starting to look at it and go through it so that when we hit that first day we will have some groundwork laid. One of the things that we will need to do is work with the staff in the office of Budget and Management, and we have some excellent people that are there. There are a number of*

people that have been there for a number of years. I think that they really understand the finances of City government and they know what needs to be done. I think it's going to be a matter of listening to them as we develop plans.

CCC: This is a different form of government than you had previously served under. How do you plan on working with ten different Aldermen as opposed to working with three different commissioners?

MH: *Under the commission form of government, one of the things that happened was you had members of the City Council that had executive functions as well as legislative functions. So, the Mayor controlled about half of the City's budget and the commissioners controlled the other half. Plus, you had a specific commissioner for City Water, Light and Power, and in addition to having those executive functions, we were also the legislators. In this form of government, the Mayor has total control of the executive. I think from that aspect it will be easier dealing with the executive function of City government. Under the old form, the Mayor only controlled 50 percent. People still held you accountable for everything that was being done. This way you are being held accountable, but you also have control. I think having a legislative body that is only a legislative body, it will also be easier to work with. My approach is going to be to communicate one-on-one on a regular basis with the members of the City Council and to pro-actively communicate with them what I'm thinking and what I'm going to be presenting and what's going on and do that on a regular basis as well as meeting with them as a City Council and really trying to have their buy-in as to the direction that we are taking. And I think that personally, I am very happy with the makeup of the City Council. I think the new members of the Council will be good members of the Council that I will be able to work with them as individual Alderman as well as the current members of the City Council. I think that the existing members of the Council that have been reelected are good, dedicated people. I anticipate being able to work with each of those people. I think together with the new members and with the current members we will have a good City Council and that we will actually be able to move the City forward.*

CCC: You talked about the budget. You actually have a budget that is already in place. How do you plan on managing that budget?

MH: *Actually, what we had said all along is that we intend on re-doing the budget within the first 30 days and resubmit a new budget to the City Council. One of the things that I realize is that when you adopt a budget, for practical purposes, you are setting a priority for a 12-month period. We will be adopting a budget that will be at the end of the first quarter of the fiscal year. In fact, we will have almost a third of the year gone by the time that budget is adopted. We are coming in on the end of the first quarter, and it's going to take another 30 days to put something together and take it to the City Council, so more than a third of the fiscal year will have already passed. But for the remaining two thirds, it will be the new Mayor and the new City Council that are actually setting the priorities and not the old Mayor and the old City Council that had set those priorities. So, I think it is important that we redo the budget and present it to the new City Council for their approval.*

CCC: You talked during the election on healing the racial divide. Have you given any thoughts on how you will accomplish that?

MH: *I think that as Mayor, I'm probably in the best position to do that. And I think that one of the things that we have to begin to look at is that Springfield is one community. It's not a west side, east side or a north side. We really need to come together and work together. And I think that, as we talk in terms of providing services, it's important that we are providing the same services in all sections of the City of Springfield so that no one part feels that they aren't getting enough and another section is getting more. I think we need to open up the City in terms of employment. I think the reality will be that there will be very little in the way of employment opportunities in the foreseeable future in City government because I think we are going to have to right-size City government. I think that we will be eliminating positions within City government. I think that where someone has a job eliminated, they should have the first opportunity to come back. I'm not sure that we're going to see a lot of opportunity for people to come into City government unless they have a particular skill. I think that we want to, as we talk in terms of hiring police officers and fire fighters, we've talked in terms of making 25 percent of our hires minorities. I think that that kind of thing will help. I continue to plan to be visible in all parts of Springfield. One of the things that I also plan to do is to take one night a month where I stay in the office from, say, 5 to 7 o'clock pm, and anyone that wants to come in can come in without an appointment for a 10 minute period of time and talk about whatever they want to talk about. If they have something that is going to require some additional research or that type of thing, we will take their names and get them turned in. I plan on being accessible to people on a*

continued on page 20 >

Mike Houston is the current Mayor-elect of the City of Springfield Illinois. He served as Mayor from 1979 to 1987. He was easily reelected with almost fifty percent of the vote in a four-way race. He plans on making this his final run for Mayor. Mike is married to Carolyn Houston and has two daughters and one granddaughter.

CCC: First of all Mike, congratulations on your victory.

MH: *Thank you very much.*

CCC: You received almost 50% percent of the overall vote, and you did exceptionally well in the black community. Why do you think your message resonated so well with the voters?

MH: *The message that we had resonated all over the city of Springfield, that's one of the*

Mayor Mike Houston: Rolling Up His Mayoral Sleeves and Digging In!

continued from page 19

regular basis; no matter who they are, they can come in and meet with me. I think those are the type of things that can help in healing the racial divide that currently exists. And there is no question that they currently exist.

CCC: You were quoted a couple of days ago on eliminating "make work jobs." How do you plan on identifying those jobs?

MH: *What we have talked about, and we talked about this the day I did my official announcement, I was the first candidate to talk about it and others copied it later, but what I've said is that we are going to do a personnel audit. What I mean by that is that we are going to review every position in government to see exactly what services each position is providing to the citizens of Springfield or to City government. And where those services are non-existent or questionable, those are going to be the first jobs to go.*

CCC: Would you say that administration will be business-friendly?

MH: *I think that we will be very business-friendly. One of the things that we talked about during the campaign is that we have to change the culture, and we need the attitude*

and atmosphere in City government so that when someone wants to make an investment or to create or retain jobs, it's really a matter of saying, "What do we have to do to make this happen?" as opposed to putting up barriers.

CCC: You stated during the election that you intend on serving one term, so this is a Mike Houston swan song. What would you like to leave as a legacy for your last term?

MH: *I really would like to change the way City government operates. I would like to take the politics out of City government. I'd like to restore the City to good financial health. I would like to deal with the serious problems that we have, which includes our streets and sewers, and do it on a comprehensive basis. I would like to re-vitalize our poor, inner city neighborhoods and work with the neighborhood associations to help them revitalize the neighborhoods that they live in. I really want to see some progress made in rebuilding east Springfield. I think that one of the first things that we have to do is put the infrastructure in place to make that happen. I'd like to have a decision made in regards to what we are going to do with Hunter Lake. I don't want to be sitting here four years from now being in the same position. It's a matter of if we can move*

forward, then we should move forward; but if we are not going to move forward, then we need to be looking at another alternative for water supply and begin selling the land that we currently have. Hopefully over the next couple of years, we will have some resolution on the corridor that the high speed rail will use, and hopefully have that well under way.

CCC: Currently the Far East Side T.I.F stops at, I believe, 15th street. Would you be in favor of extending that T.I.F. to abut the downtown T.I.F. or, vice versa, extend the downtown T.I.F. to abut the Far East Side T.I.F.?

MH: *To be honest Mike, I haven't looked at that. I would have to look at the specifics of that and look at what advantages or disadvantages there would be in terms of doing something like that. I haven't explored that at all.*

CCC: You actually retained the Director of Planning and Economic Development as well as offered a position to Bill McCarthy. Do you plan on keeping any other members of the current administration?

MH: *There are existing members of City government that I plan on retaining. I have not had conversations with them. There are people that I have identified in my own mind that we would like to approach, but I haven't approached as of yet. There are a couple of people that I have made approaches to, and some cases, they are in the process of thinking and, depending upon if they decide to join City government, that would sort of determine a structure that I have. If that person would decide not to join us, then I would probably have a different structure.*

CCC: I had an opportunity recently to interview the Mayor of the City of St. Louis, Francis Slay, and he talked about how the building permit process in the City of St. Louis is probably one of the best, if not the best in the nation in terms of issuing building permits. Have you given any thought to ways that you can streamline other areas of City government?

MH: *I think that one of the things that is also being done is that Peoria has set up a one-stop shop, and I think that we want to take a look at that. I think it is important to realize that when someone is doing something, time is money. On large projects, it is extremely important to be able to move, because on a large project, you are going to lose the winter months. How fast someone can get started may determine how fast they can get something done. So, I think we need to look at our permitting process to streamline those. I think that is true in terms of things that may have to come back to the City Council as well as just looking at permits in general to intend to streamline that entire area.*

CCC: What can we expect to see the next four years?

MH: *A lot of change.*

CCC: Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

MH: *I'm excited in terms of the challenge in front of me. In all honesty, it is scary and there are no ifs, ands, or buts about this. We worked very hard during the course of the campaign. As I said to Bill McCarthy earlier this afternoon, I'm doing this because I really want to see a change in City government. Change in the way we approach City government, and I want to do it in a way that I think is correct. That really is what I am focusing on. I think that not only can we bring good government to the City of Springfield, I think we can really improve the delivery of services and do a better job using our existing resources in terms of providing services to the people.*

CCC: Thank you for your time, Mike.

MH: *Thank you, Mike.*



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Local Events, Comments and Announcements



CARFIT PROGRAM TO HELP OLDER DRIVERS IMPROVE SAFETY
APRIL 28
APPOINTMENTS BEING TAKEN NOW FOR FREE PROGRAM

CarFit, a free educational program designed to help older adults improve their driving safety by ensuring their cars are properly adjusted for them, will be held Thursday, April 28, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Koke Mill Medical Center, 3132 Old Jacksonville Road in Springfield.

The program is open to drivers who are at least 55 years old and own a registered vehicle. Appointments are required by calling (217) 331-5426.

Faculty and students from Lincoln Land Community College's Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) program, driving experts from AAA and staff members from Memorial Rehab Services will ask drivers several questions and lead them through a 12-point checklist to ensure they are

using their vehicles' features properly, such as seat belts and mirrors.

"Our goal is to help older drivers ensure that they can continue driving safely for as long as possible," according to Eve Fischberg, professor and academic fieldwork coordinator for the LLCC's OTA program. "This is not a test of their driving abilities or a mechanical inspection, and it only takes a few minutes."

Results of the CarFit program since it began in 2005 have revealed:

- More than one-third (37 percent) of older drivers had at least one critical safety issue that needed to be addressed.
- One in 10 drivers was seated too close to the steering wheel.
- About 20 percent of drivers did not have a line of sight at least three inches over the steering wheel.

Sponsors of the event are the LLCC OTA program, Memorial Rehab Services, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), AARP and AAA. The CarFit program was designed by AOTA, AARP and AAA.



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EDITORIAL

War! What Is It Good For?

by James Clingman

That question was posed in a song by Edwin Starr during an earlier generation, and we are asking that same question now. Well, it's good for raising the price of oil, gasoline, and diesel fuel, isn't it? It's good for hypocritical politicians to rail against the same actions they refused to challenge when their guy was spending a billion dollars per week in Iraq — 5000 Americans dead because of a big lie. So now we ask what good is this latest war. The answer: "Absolutely nothing," just like Edwin Starr refrained back in 1969, that is, unless you are a war profiteer.

Yes, here we go again with this never-ending charade of managing the world, dethroning dictators we don't like, interfering in another country's internal affairs, getting in the middle of a civil war, and the resulting benefit of that old stand-by: price gouging. Tax payers are paying for the wars and the result of wars. We are suffering through one of the worst depressions in history while our heads of state are slashing budgets in an effort to balance them on the backs of the poor and so-called middle class. And we believe Libyans have it bad?

Remember when fuel prices were sky high a few years ago? We blamed George W. Bush, suggesting he could make a few calls to his Saudi buddies and get those prices down to a reasonable level. Who are we to call upon now? Oh yes, that's right, Barack Obama. Funny, I haven't heard him speak out about the high price of gas lately. He should have paid Hugo Chavez a visit during his trip to South America to make a deal on some Venezuelan fuel.

How about those vaunted reserves we keep hearing about. Economists say that all we need to do is hint we will use them and the price of gas will fall precipitously. Here's an even better question. Why didn't the folks who run this country buy a couple of billion dollars' worth of oil when it was \$40.00 per barrel and add it to our reserves. Isn't oil a futures commodity? Such puzzling issues to wrestle with these days, all while we are slowly but surely going down the proverbial tubes.

The real kicker is the fact that Libya's share of the world's oil market is a mere 2%. How can prices at the pump rise by 75 cents in such a short period of time simply because the people in Libya rebelled against their leader? Could it be manipulation, or maybe just greed? In case you haven't noticed,

we are being played like a saxophone in the hands of Charlie Parker. I wonder how long we will take it. I wonder how high the price has get before we take some kind of collective action against our local gasoline outlets.

I don't know about you, But I am sick and tired of the convenient wars, the lies, the hypocrisy, the billions spent (or stolen), and most of all, the lives lost or destroyed because of oil. Now we find ourselves in Libya, "liberating" the people from a guy who has been in charge for 42 years, a guy who lately had become our "friend," a guy who has been doing the same thing the same way for four decades, and now we are insisting he leave because he is mistreating his people. I wonder why we haven't insisted he leave years ago. This country is a real piece of work.

They say Kaddafi is killing his own people, so we have to go in and stop that. Yet we stood by and watched Rwanda and the Sudan. We watched North Korea and Iran. And now we are watching Yemen and Bahrain do the same things. What's the difference?

Our sanctimonious approach to other countries where internal violence occurs is something to behold. Our memory is very short however. Kent State, Fred Hampton, Amadou Diallo, Kenneth Walker,

and Roger Owensby, just to name a few. And, if you go back to the 1920's, what about the hundreds of Black folks killed by government supported white citizens in Tulsa, Oklahoma's Greenwood District, better known as Black Wall Street?

Yes, the hypocrisy abounds without shame. The money keeps rolling in and the ignorant consumers keep falling for the same three-card Monte trick that fills the pockets of the affluent and keeps those less fortunate wondering how to pay for a fill-up. It used to cost me about \$11.00 to fill my gas tank back in 1997 or so. Today that same amount of gas for that same car requires more than \$50.00 to fill 'er up. Yes, I still have that same car (375,700 miles and counting).

The bad news is that forecasters say we are definitely looking at \$5.00 per gallon gas next year. We know the politicians will not stop the senseless wars, so what YOU prepared to do about this economic crisis? I still say that until consumers change our behavior the rip-offs will continue.

Until we start shutting down some gas stations on a local level by refusing to buy from them, thereby, gaining the leverage to negotiate with other stations for a lower "collective" price for our affinity groups, gas prices will drive us to the poor house. One-day national demonstrations are cute but ineffective. Let's get real; our action has to be on a local level. Organize a critical mass of consumers and start talking to a local gasoline chain about cutting your members a deal, and only support those who support you. Start your own gasoline war, and you'll know what it's good for.

Regular exercise gives you so many amazing benefits, but let's face it, some days you may get too busy, too stressed and simply too tired to fit exercise into your day. Here is a list of my top 10 reasons to exercise. Pull out this list and read it when you're having one of those days.

1. To Prevent Disease

Exercise has been proven to reduce the risk of just about every single health problem known to man, from stroke, heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis. Exercise is also a great defense against Type 2 Diabetes, which is one of the most widely growing diseases in the United States today.

2. To Look Great

Exercise firms your body, improves your posture and even makes your skin glow. Looking your best is a wonderful result of regular exercise.

3. To Lose Weight and Keep It Off

Exercise burns fat and prevents future fat storage. If you want to have a thinner, healthier body, exercise is the answer.

4. To Have More Energy



FITNESS

10 Reasons to Exercise

by Lyle Johnson CPT

Anyone who exercises regularly will tell you that they are more energetic, not easily upset and are more peaceful.

5. To Sleep Better

Exercise boosts energy levels, but also wears you out. It makes you feel more alive during the day and sleep like a baby at night.

6. To Age Slower

Exercise is one of the most effective ways to fight aging. When you age your body loses muscle and bone, the loss of both is drastically reduced with regular exercise. Exercise also helps reduce inflammation.

7. To Ease Depression

Exercise has been proven to reduce depression sometimes even as effectively as prescription drugs. Just chalk this up as yet another amazing benefit to exercise.

8. To Stay Mentally Sharp

Not only is exercise smart for your heart and weight, but it can make you smarter and better at what you do. Exercise has been shown to improve memory and other cognitive functions. It also seems to have a protective effect against Dementia. John J. Ratey, MD, an associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and author of A User's Guide to the Brain says "exercise is really for the brain, not the body. It affects mood, vitality, alertness, and feelings of well-being."

9. To Reduce Sick Days

People who exercise regularly are 50% less likely to call in sick to work. A regular exercise program reduces colds and upper respiratory infections.

10. To Boost Confidence

Being fit, feeling healthy and having energy are all building blocks to having great confidence. There is no better confidence booster than sticking with a regular exercise program.

Lyle Johnson is a certified personal trainer and owner of St. Louis based MVP Fitness; he gives workshops and runs MVP Boot Camp. He is also the author of Get Fit 4 Christ. Before engaging in any exercise program, consult with your doctor. The materials and comments discussed in this article are to be considered general information only and may not apply to your particular health situation. For more information, log onto www.getfit4christ.com or www.mvpfitness.net. He can be reached at lyle@mvpfitness.net or call 866.487.4MVP (4687).



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