



FORT WORTH BLACK NEWS

Kirk Franklin Honored by Fort Worth City Council



Gospel music legend Kirk Franklin was recognized by Fort Worth City Council for his lifetime accomplishments and work. Born and raised in Fort Worth, Franklin began his music journey as a young child learning to play piano. As a teenager he trained with the O.D. Wyatt Singing Chaparrals under the leadership of Jewel Kelly. Throughout his career the trailblazer won 20 Grammy Awards and is credited with revolutionizing the Gospel music sound.

After being presented with a proclamation by Councilmembers Deborah Peoples, Chris Nettles and Mia Hall, Franklin expressed how touching it was to be

honored by his hometown. The musician shared that he was a sensitive person and felt somewhat overlooked over the years when other artists were celebrated though he has been around longer.

“This is really kind of y’all because I love Fort Worth, and this is a beautiful moment to remind me that Fort Worth loves me. Thank you,” Franklin said to the council and a room full of supporters.

The honor from the city took place on February 10 following a vibrant Black History Month celebration in the corridor. Mayor Mattie Parker and other councilmembers joined in the photo honoring Franklin.



Former Mayor Pro Tem Gyna Bivens Passes Away

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African-American Roots Music Festival

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Scenes from Black History Month

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Heiskell Family Honored by UT Arlington



Local Attorney Michael Heiskell and wife, Anita Heiskell, recently received the Beacon of Excellence Award. The recognition was given by the University of Texas at Arlington for outstanding service in the community.

Both trailblazers have made history in their respective fields, with Michael being the first African-American lawyer to graduate from Baylor Law School and Anita being the first African-American named

Miss Memphis and Miss Memphis State University.

Michael currently serves on the Board of Regents at Baylor University and is senior attorney at Johnson, Vaughn & Heiskell, a law firm he cofounded in 1984. Anita is the owner of Prim, Poised & Proper, a social graces etiquette company and is former president of Jack and Jill - Fort Worth Chapter. Both continue to volunteer their time with boards and organizations that advance the community.

Forest Hill Mayors Youth Advisory Council Wins First Place for Community Service Project Award at Annual YAC Summit

Members of the Forest Hill Mayors Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) won the first place Community Service Award during a competition held at the end of January. A total of 16 students and local residents represented the city at the Texas Municipal League's annual Texas Youth Advisory Commission Summit.

Held at Mt. Lebanon Camp, this statewide event brought youth from cities across Texas to the area for two days of skill building workshops, inspirational speakers, a community service project, networking opportunities and fun.

Forest Hill members have been working since the inception of the MYAC in 2024 to be able to attend this summit. The group,



Forest Hill Mayor Stephanie Boardingham with members of MYAC

comprised of students from O.D. Wyatt High School and UPLIFT Ascend, meets monthly to coordinate city community services projects and fundraising efforts while learning the operations of city government.



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Soft Skills for Supreme Success

by Stae Hall, FWBN Columnist

Lead-In to Leadership



Aspiring to lead is often misunderstood. It is not simply about wanting the next promotion or positioning yourself for a new title. True aspiring leaders understand that leadership is not a destination - it is a daily practice. It is about preparing along the way and recognizing that, regardless of your official title, someone is almost always watching, learning, and drawing conclusions from your example.

Leadership cannot be practiced for the first time once you step into the position. By then, expectations are already set. The habits you have formed, the way you communicate, and how you handle pressure will already define you. That is why preparation must begin now.

Soft skills are the foundation of effective leadership at every level. Collaboration, time management, effective communication, and conflict resolution are not optional traits reserved for executives. They are daily disciplines. The goal is to stay ready so you do not have to get ready. It is far better to be prepared for an opportunity before it arrives than to receive it and realize you are not equipped to handle it.

One of the most effective ways to grow is to identify a leader whose style reflects the kind of leader you aspire to become. Observe how they navigate challenges, manage relationships, and communicate under pressure. When possible, seek mentorship. Learn intentionally rather than accidentally.

Equally important is taking advantage of everyday opportunities to activate your leadership skills. Lead meetings when appropriate. Volunteer for cross-functional projects. Practice clear and confident communication. Pay attention to how colleagues and supervisors respond to you. Their reactions often reveal strengths and highlight areas that may need refinement.

When gaps become evident, address them through continuing education, workshops, or professional development opportunities. Investing in yourself is never wasted. The return shows up in increased confidence, competence, and credibility.

Another powerful way to strengthen your leadership muscle is by mentoring someone newer to the team. Teaching and guiding others forces you to sharpen your communication, patience, and emotional intelligence. It provides real-time feedback on your ability to lead.

Leadership is not about waiting for a title. It is about embodying the qualities of a leader long before anyone hands you the nameplate.

Stae Hall is a published author, career trainer, transformational speaker and life coach.

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Sunday, March 29, 2026
2 - 4 p.m.

HER STORY ON DISPLAY:

SHAPING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN THE ARTS

Bailey Howell
Miss Juneteenth USA

Karen Shields

Glenda Thompson

Sheran Goodspeed-Keyton

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Community Bids Farewell to Former Mayor Pro Tem & District 5 Councilmember Gyna Bivens



She was like the community's big sister, and it will take some time for Fort Worth residents to say goodbye to former Mayor Pro Tem Gyna Bivens. The respected and loved council representative for District 5 passed away in February after a battle with illness.

Bivens served on the City Council for over ten years and earned a reputation for championing community-driven growth and economic development. She won the trust of her constituents and colleagues in public service.

Before her career in government and nonprofit leadership, Bivens excelled in media and corporate communications. She began as a broadcast journalist, reporting for NBC affiliates in Lubbock and San Antonio. After moving back to Fort Worth, she worked at KKDA-AM (Soul 73) as news anchor; KBOX-KMEZ, and KRLD-AM News Radio in Dallas as assignments editor; and later served as Bureau Chief for Dallas's FOX 4 News.

Her corporate career included serving as a spokesperson and municipal liaison for Oncor Electric and as Public Information Manager for the City of San Antonio, where she led crisis communications and launched Texas's first municipal cable access television program.

During her tenure on the City Council, Bivens spearheaded initiatives that reshaped Fort Worth neighborhoods. She led a

historic Council initiated rezoning effort of 400 properties that fueled a housing boom in the Stop Six community - a cornerstone achievement that contributed to the City of Fort Worth and Fort Worth Housing Solutions securing a \$35 million HUD grant for the redevelopment of Caville Place.

She also advocated for Lakes of River Trails as a future economic engine, ensuring that the area was positioned for commuter rail service and future commercial development. After redistricting in 2022 brought Woodhaven into District 5, she engaged residents with the long-underutilized Woodhaven TIF 13, encouraging neighbors to participate in public meetings and shape how multi-million-dollar funds would be invested in their community.

In addition to her public service, Bivens served as President and Executive Director of North Texas LEAD.

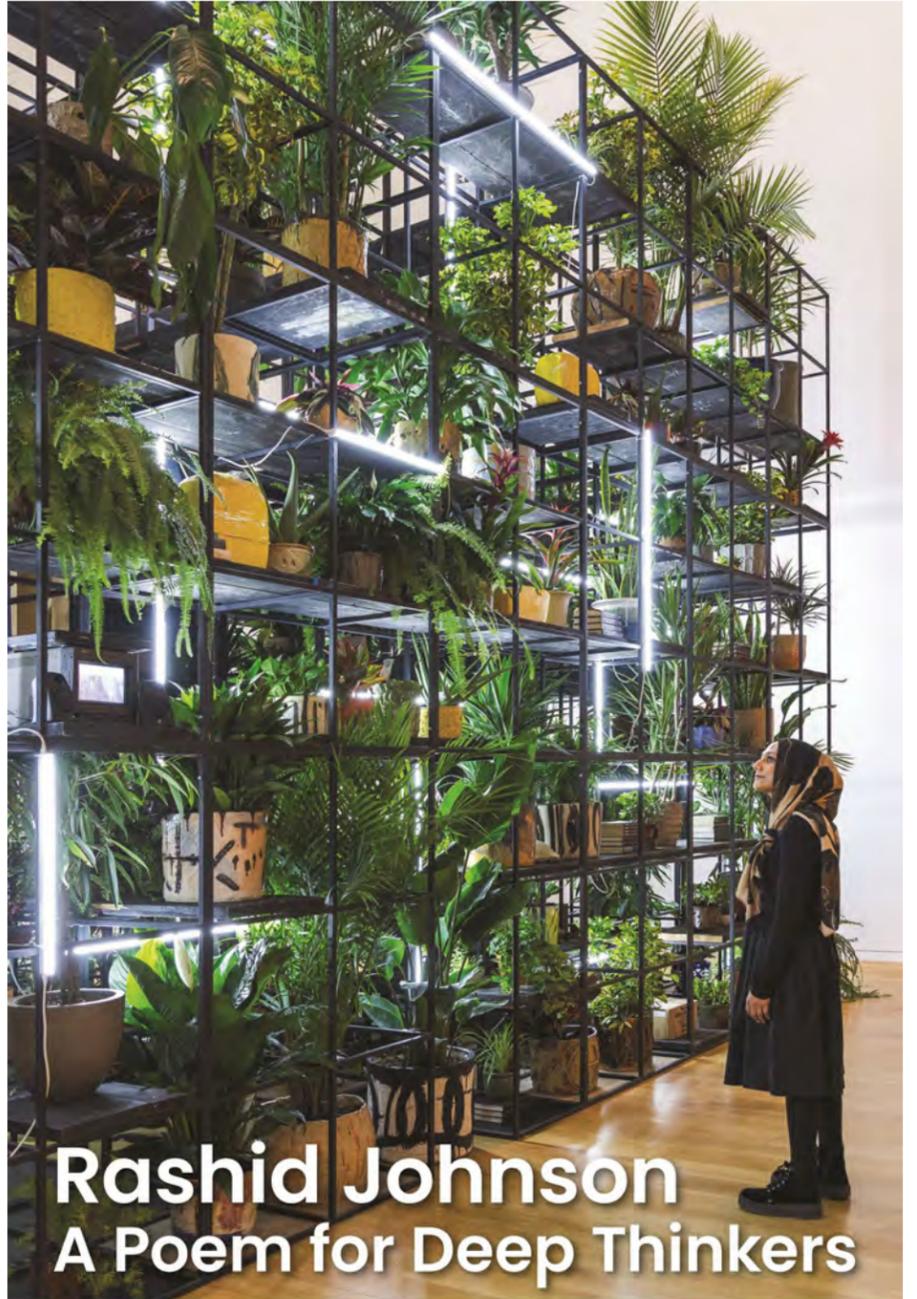
Bivens credits her success to mentors including her mother - Betty Green Bivens; her father - the late Reverend Roy Bivens (who always reminded her "Your Name is Bivens, and in this town, that name means something"), as well as John Jenkins; Carlos DeLaTorre; and Rick Ericson.

A full weekend of memorial services and celebrations were held in Bivens' honor near the end of February.

The City of Fort Worth Celebrated Black History Month at City Hall on February 10, 2026 featuring community performances & businesses.



Scenes from the City of Forest Hill Black History Month Celebration Held at the Forest Hill Convention Center



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Pictured: Rashid Johnson, *Antoine's Organ*, 2016/2026. Steel, grow lights, ceramic, plants, wood, shea butter, books, monitors, Persian rugs, and piano. 189 x 338 x 126 1/4 inches. Collection of the Artist. © Rashid Johnson. Installation view, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth



The AMEN Corner:
Faith & Inspiration

“That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, & tell all thy wondrous works.”

- Psalms 26:7

Use What You've Got

By Arnita Ware

“Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

~ Coach John Wooden



ing them. Or the person compares themselves to that other person or the gift that the person has, and they wish they could do it or be like the other person.

You have your own gift to use, and you should start there. Just don't compare yourself to the other person. Simply use what God has given you.

In fact, when it comes to competition...we should only be competing with ourselves, trying to become a better version of who we were the day before.

Didn't God say to Moses...“What is that in your hand?” (Exodus 4:2-9)

Use what's in your hand . . . that is . . . what God has entrusted you with.

Remember...use what you've got!

Arnita Ware is a published author & speaker. Book Entitled: Look Through the Window. She is also an educator, life coach, a Lifetime member of Strathmore's Who's Who Worldwide, & the founder of Just Write:

www.justwrite4insight.com
justwrite4insight@gmail.com

Life often focuses on what we lack, but our real progress comes from making the most of what's already in our hands. Our talents, skills, and resources - no matter how small they seem - are enough to start moving forward. Every effort counts, every step matters, and every little contribution adds up.

Use what you've got is just an encouragement to get you to focus on what you *can* do, and watch how far those small actions can take you.

I used to hear a kid sing his favorite song at church all the time. *Faith, faith, faith, just a little bit of faith.* (Repeat) *You don't need a whole lot, just use what you've got, faith, faith, faith, just a little bit of faith.*

In life, we have likely witnessed at one time or another someone talking about how good someone is at doing something, possibly admir-

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MAR 15 / JUL 5



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Black Photojournalism is organized by Carnegie Museum of Art. Kwame Brathwaite (1938-2023), *Changing Times*, ca. 1973, inkjet print, The Kwame Brathwaite Archive, © Kwame Brathwaite



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Ask Anita

Sneezing and Coughing in Public Spaces



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*Anita C. Heiskell,
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Anita Heiskell is the founder and owner of Prim, Poised and Proper, LLC., a full-service Etiquette School located in Fort Worth, Texas that focuses on social graces, dining etiquette, business etiquette, along with image and presentation skills. Heiskell also offers Pageant Preparation and training. She is certified from The Social Skills School of Protocol and has over 25 years experience in the etiquette field.

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Proper etiquette for sneezing and coughing in public is essential for maintaining hygiene and showing respect to those around you. First, always cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing. The best method is to use a tissue and dispose of it immediately. If a tissue isn't available, sneeze or cough into the inside of your elbow rather than your hands to prevent spreading germs through touch.

Avoid sneezing or coughing openly in crowded spaces, and if possible, step aside to create distance from others. Wash or sanitize your hands promptly after any sneeze or cough to reduce contamination. It's also polite to excuse yourself if a sneeze catches you unexpectedly and to avoid touching shared surfaces immediately afterward.

Maintaining awareness of your surroundings and practicing considerate hygiene helps protect public health

Love Relationships Marriage

with Dr. Sheron C. Patterson

ELECTIONS ROCKING THE MARRIAGE



Dear Dr. Patterson,

This election season is rocking my marriage. My husband and I have been married for 25 years and have what I thought was a solid marriage. Now, out of the blue, he changed political parties, and turned on me because I would not join him! He is combative and hostile now. It feels like he left the political party and left me too. Could these differences end our marriage?

- Left Behind

Dear Left Behind,

Whew! What a mess! Yes, political differences are not only shredding our nation, marriages get mangled too. When election season arrives, some married couples discover an uncomfortable truth: they do not vote the same way.

The good news is that 25 years of stability means a foundation is present. The two of you must realize the impact of politics on your marriage and decide what you truly want and be prepared to work for it. But healthy marriages are not built on identical ballots. They are built on respect, communication, and shared values that run deeper than party lines.

First, understand the distinction between political preference and personal character. A vote does not automatically define someone's morality, intelligence, or love for their country. Problems arise when partners equate disagreement with betrayal. Instead of saying, "How could you support that?" effective couples ask, "Help me understand what matters most to you about that candidate or issue." Curiosity lowers defensiveness.

Second, establish conversation boundaries. Not every dinner needs to become a debate stage. Agree to limit political talk to certain times—or pause discussions when voices rise. The goal is not to avoid hard topics, but to protect the relationship from

contempt. Research consistently shows that contempt - not disagreement - is what erodes marriages. Boundaries also means no ridicule and name calling.

Third, couples who thrive amid differences anchor themselves in shared priorities. They may disagree on policy, yet agree on faith, family stability, financial stewardship, or community service. When partners intentionally name what unites them, political contrast feels less threatening. A shared mission - raising children, building a legacy, serving others - provides perspective.

Never forget, political seasons are temporary; marriage is meant to be long-term. Candidates change. Administrations shift. Cultural conversations evolve. Married couples can vote differently and still stand united- because the strength of their bond rests not on political agreement, but on mutual respect.

You two can do this!

- Dr. Sheron Patterson

Got questions? I have answers?

Send to patterson52@icloud.com

You will remain anonymous and we'll share the answer right here in this section of *Fort Worth Black News!*

Dr. Sheron C. Patterson is available to enhance your relationships as a life coach. She is also available for speaking and preaching engagements.

For speaking, counseling or coaching inquiries, please reach her at patterson52@icloud.com

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Did You Know? Fort Worth Native Jayn Bell Higgins Sang with Sounds of Blackness



Fort Worth native Jayn Bell Higgins was a soprano in the Grammy Award-winning Sounds of Blackness for 23 years. The group got their big break performing at a venue where Janet Jackson, Terry Lewis and Jimmy Jam were in the audience - to their surprise! Janet suggested signing them to their new label Perspective Records, a collaboration with A&M Records. They were signed and Jam & Lewis and Gary wrote their signature song, "Optimistic". The song and the album, *The Evolution of Gospel* gave them their first Grammy win in 1992.

While on tour with Jam and Lewis' second signed act, Mint Condition opened for them. They later toured with Luther Vandross and Sinbad for five months on the Power of Love tour. She and the group toured 57 United States cities plus Europe. They went on to win two more Grammy



Awards, four Stellar Awards, one Emmy nomination, the International Time for Peace Award, the International Dance Music Award, five NAACP Image Award nominations and one NAACP Image Award. The group also performed at the White House for President Bill Clinton and President Barack Obama.

In local history, Higgins was the first African-American in the Texas Girls' Choir. When she joined, the choir lost a third of its membership and sponsors because a Black child showed up.

Outside of music, Higgins worked as a licensed School and Clinical Psychologist for over 40 years. She is an alumna of the University of Texas at Arlington, University of North Texas, and earned a master's degree at Howard University. She currently serves with the Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society.

Q&A with the Creator of PoJazz: Zemill . . .



Why did you choose the name Zemill or would you say it chose you?

I would say the name chose me. My father who was not a large part of my life and I hadn't seen in about 20 years gave me the name. It means Joyous Melodies in Hebrew. He said he had seen some of my work over the years and that he knew he hadn't given me much but if he could, he would have given me that name because he said my music, words and melodies moved him and touch people's souls. I felt the sincerity in his voice. At first I said I'm not of that faith and he said I didn't have to be. I thought about it, looked up the name Zemill and it felt right. I've been writing and performing under that pseudonym since that moment.

You created what has become known as PoJazz. How would you describe what it means and what happens when several artistic elements are combined?

PoJazz is the blending of Smooth Jazz, Smooth R&B, Neo Soul and Splash of Spoken Word. The words and music will lift your heart, stir your spirit and warm your soul. You blend those elements with the creativeness of the incredibly talented Joel McCray, my Hall Of Fame Musical Director who sets fire to the Piano and you have a vibe that takes you on a musical journey to a place somewhere between groovy and chill. Again, it's a Vibe thing!

What inspired you to become a poet and performer?

Good Question. I'm blessed to say I was born with the gift of music and poetry. I inherited that from my father. I inherited my work ethic, drive and strength from my mother. Given these dynamics, I was in-

spired by those who've said my words touched their lives, thus encouraging me to share my gift with the world.

You held on to your gift of creative expression for a long time before launching what was in your heart. What advice would you give to others who think it's too late to pursue their dreams? What advice would you give to them to protect that dream?

Again good questions; my advice would be to always stand on what you believe. Your dream is your journey. Plan it, Command it and most Assuredly Stand in it! Protect your privacy. Not everyone is going to cheer for you. Find three people who do. Serve them and keep moving towards not just followers and fans but those who value you for your work and what your gift means to them. Be appreciative, steadfast and disciplined. Trust The Process.

Zemill's upcoming event is scheduled for March 28 in Las Colinas where the audience will experience sultry sounds, live and original music. Performers include Joel McCray is on keyboard and Musical Director, Fulton Turnage on saxophone, Mark Harper on guitar, Will Brooks on bass, Jaquita L. Jones on drums and our Songstress Ms. Deon Q.

For information, visit AttentionRequired.com.

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