



New Barbie Doll Created to Honor Opal Lee

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Celebrating  
Black  
History  
Month

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FEBRUARY 2026



FORT WORTH BLACK NEWS

## Jayne Kennedy Shares Untold Hollywood History at The Dock



PHOTOS: [Above] Donna Craddock, co-owner of The Dock Bookshop and Terry Allen, FWBN Columnist & Taste of the South (City Men Cook) Executive Director [Right] Jayne Kennedy and Dionne Anglin, Moderator & FOX News Reporter. HASSON DIGGS, PHOTOGRAPHER



By Terry Allen, FWBN Columnist

An engaged, standing-room audience filled The Dock Bookshop Saturday evening for an extraordinary conversation with award-winning actress, trailblazing sports broadcaster, and cultural icon Jayne Kennedy, centered on her new memoir, *Plain Jayne*.

Held from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., the evening unfolded as both a literary event and a historic community moment.

During her on-stage conversa-

tion with Dionne Anglin and her private talk with FWBN Columnist Terry Allen and Executive Director of Taste of the South, Inc. (City Men Cook), Kennedy revealed that she was the first actress offered the role of Claire Huxtable on *The Cosby Show* - a revelation that drew audible response from the audience and re-framed long-held narratives about opportunity, timing, and representation in television history.

Kennedy also spoke candidly about the entertainment industry's rigid beauty standards, recalling how

her knees were once labeled "tomboy knees," and how such commentary underscored the scrutiny Black women endured - often unrelated to talent or performance.

One of the evening's most powerful reflections came when Kennedy cited a defining moment of inspiration: hearing a famous actress declare that every film she produced would include African American women behind the scenes. Kennedy empha-

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# BLACK PHOTOJOURNALISM

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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## Fort Worth's Own Opal Lee Gets Barbie Doll Made in Her Honor



A week before Black History Month Mattel announced the release of a Barbie doll made in honor of Opal Lee. Public excitement of the news caused the product to sell out within a few hours on Amazon. Lee's popularity spread across the country ten years ago when she began a walk to Washington D.C. to petition Congress for Juneteenth. It was her lifelong goal to make the holiday federally recognized on the calendar.

Five years later, she lived to see it signed into law by then President Joe Biden during a White House ceremony. "If people can be taught to hate, they can also be taught to love," Lee



has notoriously stated. Her organization continues to host the walk she started at age 89, symbolically each year to promote unity and celebrate the milestone.

The special doll is a part of Barbie's Inspiring Women collection. It is available on the Mattel website as well as online stores like Target and Walmart. Amazon may restock before this article is published.

## Our Mother of Mercy Welcomes New Pastor



Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church welcomed new pastor, Father Peter Wiafe-Akenteng to lead the south Fort Worth congregation. It is the first and only African-American Catholic church in Tarrant County.

Father Peter is from the Arch Diocese of Kumasi (Ghana) and was appointed by Bishop Michael Olsen, Diocese of Fort Worth.

Our Mother of Mercy celebrated 95 years of service in 2024 and is



home to many local community leaders. A focal point of Black history, the church operated a catholic school for many years on the Terrell Street campus.

## Judge Maryellen Hicks to be Honored

The Black Women Lawyers Association of Tarrant County announced plans to rename the organization in honor of Judge Maryellen Hicks on February 26, 2026.



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## Teen Mental Health Conference in Como

[Continued from Front Page 8]

and having a hand in taking care of many of them has played a significant role. My grandparents, who raised me, had me in charge of certain responsibilities since I was nine years old. It also led to me being an educator for the past 26 years. I served in youth ministry and community groups as a leader back in Louisiana for nearly 15 years working with children and families from various backgrounds. All these experiences were preparation for what I am doing now as a for-profit and nonprofit leader working with teens and young adults.”

**Q: Please share how your personal and professional journey prepared you for what you are doing now?**

**A:** “My professional experience has been a huge catalyst. However, I feel the journey of seeing so many young people hurting and not having the village I had growing up continues to push me to live out my purpose during these challenging times for our young people. Having many former students or mentees reach out and express their gratitude for what I did for them is continued motivation.”

**Q: As someone who works with teenagers, what advice would you give adults to bring out the best in the young people they encounter?**

**A:** “The most practical and effective advice I would give to adults would be to listen more than they speak to bring out the best in the young people they encounter. A huge misconception is that this generation are not great at expressing themselves verbally. I find that when they are given safe space and truly feel they are being heard, you will receive authenticity and transparent communication from them.”

**Q: How would you describe T.O.R.C.H. and your organization?**

**How can people support it or be a part of the programs you offer?**

**A:** “The T.O.R.C.H. Teens Program is a non-profit organization that is geared towards providing interactive speaking engagements to middle and high school teens. It’s Social Emotional Learning ( SEL ) curriculums that I create and we have Teen Ambassadors that serve as the “face” of the program, representing the organization in the community.

The mission of the organization is to equip, guide and support this generation to navigate smoothly through various teen life challenge areas. We also provide scholarships each year to our seniors based on their work in promoting Youth Mental Health and Leadership and Influence. It is a component of the T.O.R.C.H. Brand, which falls under my for-profit, New Focus Family & Youth Consultant, in which I operate under my Certified Family Life Educator ( CFLE ) credentials. This allows me to teach preventive and research-based strategies to strengthen various social and family issues.”

Anyone interested in supporting the program or the conference may reach contact Woods directly: [info@torchteensprogram.org](mailto:info@torchteensprogram.org) or (682) 304-0725.

### Conference Details:

Every Mind is Valuable Mental Health Youth Conference

February 21, 2026  
11:00 am to 3:30 pm  
Como Community Center  
4660 Horne Street  
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

[www.torchteensprogram.com](http://www.torchteensprogram.com)

## Jayne Kennedy Speaks at Dock Bookshop

[Continued from Front Page]



sized that this commitment to inclusion beyond the camera deeply shaped her own values, reinforcing the importance of ownership, access, and decision-making power.

At the close of the program, Terry Allen formally presented Jayne Kennedy and the owners of The Dock Bookshop with official, sealed HISTORYMAKER Resolutions on behalf of City Men Cook and *Fort Worth Black News*. The resolutions recognized their enduring cultural impact, leadership, and commitment to storytelling, literacy, and Black excellence. The presentation marked the occasion as not only a

successful author event, but a documented moment of historical significance.

Kennedy’s reflections traced her groundbreaking journey - from becoming the first Black woman to win Miss Ohio USA, to redefining sports broadcasting on CBS’s *The NFL Today*, to pioneering the fitness industry with her *Love Your Body* programs. Now inducted into the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture as part of its *Television and the Media Landscape* exhibit, Kennedy’s influence continues to resonate across generations.

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# Entrepreneur Flips the Script, Empowers Others with Optimism



Her outlook is as cheerful as the colorful outfits she often wears, but it wasn't easy getting to this point. Na'Kedra Rodgers has overcome the odds

that many people face, including unmerciful teasing, little encouragement and challenging situations. Now she shares that victory with others by showing women and children how to walk in confidence and purpose. Known as Optimistically Ke, you can find her inspiring words through books and speaking engagements.

"The woman being described in this article is confident, happy, courageous, has direction and believes she's operating in her calling; however, this wasn't always the case," Rodgers stated. "I was teased a lot when I was younger. My cousins made it hard for me. Every time we were together, they called me names and made fun of my features."

Rodgers said she was bullied by people who she thought were supposed to love her, and it didn't stop there. Friends in her life also used harmful jokes directed at physical appearance. She soon discovered that negative verbal expressions do have the power to cause emotional pain in others.

"Whoever said sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me was not telling



the truth," Rodgers explained. "I was quite bothered by being the butt of peoples' jokes all the time, but I survived."

The motivational speaker learned to change her perspective, flip the script and put a positive spin on what was being said about her.

"The truth is not everyone is going to like you

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 9]



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Wangechi Mutu, *The Seated III*, 2019. Bronze. 82 7/8 x 37 3/4 x 33 3/4 inches. Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, The Friends of Art Endowment Fund and Museum purchase. © Wangechi Mutu



The AMEN Corner:

# Faith & Inspiration

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

- Psalms 26:7



## You Can Make It If You Try

By Arnita Ware

**"Whether you think you  
can, or you think you can't  
- you're right."**

~ Henry Ford

Just when it seems like you've been up, you've been down, maybe even almost leveled to the ground...you MUST know you can make it if you try! If you believe in yourself, you're already halfway there.

Think about all the things you've always said you wanted to do, but were afraid to start.

Well, I'm here to remind you:

**"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."** ~ Lao Tzu

Big goals can feel overwhelming, but progress only happens if you take that very first step.

These quotes show us that one requires a **mind-set**, while the other requires **action**. Sounds familiar to the scripture... "Faith without works is dead." (James 2:17) Together, these truths show that great achievements are built on confidence and the courage to start, no matter how small the beginning

may seem.

**Don't despise small beginnings. (Zechariah 4:10)**

The Lord promised to never leave you nor forsake you. I know you can make it, but you've got to have faith and at least TRY!

What does it even mean to try?...You might ask. To try is to attempt to do or accomplish something. To make an attempt or effort; to strive. Right?

I dare to take it a little further...give it your best effort, maximum effort...the best you can do. Give it ALL you've got. Make your NEXT shot your BEST shot.

Nothing beats a failure, but a try! So, why not make a decision and tell yourself I'm going to do this... I'm gonna give it a try with my best foot forward!

**Turn up, show up, and do the BEST that you can!**

Give it the old college try . . . meaning make a sincere effort, even if you're not sure if you will succeed; but at least you will have given it a try.

*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:*

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## City of Forest Hill Prepares for 80 Year Celebration

Even if you don't know the history of Forest Hill, you have likely driven through the city many times. You can't miss it, traveling down Interstate 20 which cuts right through the 4.2 square mile town. It is home to over 14,000 residents and holds the record for electing the first African-American mayor in Tarrant County in 1985, Donald Walker.

Established in 1946, the city is observing 80 years of being officially incorporated this spring. A City Council Celebration and Reception takes place on March 17 at 5:30 p.m. inside City Hall.

Forest Hill began as a small farming community in 1860 and gradually grew into a village that has now become a full city with restaurants, a bank, library, senior center, event center and other amenities. Starbucks, Luby's and QuickTrip are likely the most recognizable indicators to

people in nearby neighborhoods.

For years, the city was known as a suburban bedroom community where upwardly mobile African-Americans moved to find nice housing at a reasonable cost. The population continues to evolve with a wide range of races calling the city home.

Though Forest Hill remains somewhat a rural city, economic development is a major focus. Hundreds of businesses have located to the area and Trinity Habitat for Humanity announced plans to build 114 new homes. The organization purchased land to develop a new neighborhood with mixed-income homeownership opportunities. Their goal is to expand access to attainable homeownership for essential workers and hardworking families.

The public is invited to join in the Forest Hill 80 year celebration next month.



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**Black History Month Celebration**  
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**City Council Celebration & Reception**  
Tuesday March 17  
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## Youth Mental Health Conference

*Features Teen Trauma Specialist & Sessions on Thriving*



Lontage Woods

A unique event focusing on teen mental health is coming to Como Community Center in Fort Worth. Founded by longtime education professional Lontage Woods, the *Every Mind is Valuable Mental Health Youth Conference* has sessions for both teens and adults. It's a free event providing strategies and resources to empower and support teens on their mental health and wellness journey. Woods shared details and insight with FWBN through Q&A:

**Q: What motivated you to host a mental health conference in Fort Worth that focuses on the youth?**

**A:** "The motivation comes from seeing the dire need to have meaningful conversations about youth mental health and breaking the stigma of several myths about what it truly means. It is part of an overall initiative through the T.O.R.C.H., which stands for - Tackling Opposition with Resilience Character and Heart Brand."

**Q: What topics will the speakers cover and what can attendees expect to experience?**

**A:** "We have four dynamic speakers facilitating our sessions. The two teen sessions will be covering *Teens Thriving Through Tough Times* and *Teens Mastering a Healthy Mind and Body*. I am particularly excited about our adult sessions: *How to Help Teens Find Calm* and *How to Help Teens Overcome Hurt*. We will also have both a teen and adult panel featuring Mayor Mattie Parker and a national youth advocate from Austin on the teen panel. Both panels will feature a teen trauma specialist and Doctoral Candidate in Cognitive Psychology who is doing research on the behaviors of the teen brain. Attendees can expect to receive informative and practical ways to better understand youth mental health."

**Q: You seem to have a calling that centers around encouraging teenagers. How was this developed in you?**

**A:** "My upbringing of being the oldest grandchild of nearly 40 first cousins



[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4]

## Optimistically Ke [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5]

and sometimes that includes people in your immediate circle; however, I'm still going to win. God says that I'm fabulous. I'm fearfully and wonderfully made so I go with that!"

Empowering thoughts and spiritual growth are a part of what Rodgers imparts to audiences who encounter her energy. She's hosting a conference in Fort Worth called "Transformation: Ready, Set, Glow," where the goal is for women to leave with a different mindset than they entered and to be hopeful about their future. It's scheduled for February 21, 2026 at Fort Worth Botanic Gardens.

"Women can expect to feel the move of the Holy Spirit. They will have the opportunity to connect with other like-minded individuals who are in various stages in life but all looking to continue the transformation journey, Rodgers said. "Women can expect to receive instruction on how to walk out the transformation process after the event ends."

Attendees will also have the opportunity to engage in real, open and honest conversations about mental health. If they come ready to receive, organizers hope "their spirits will be set at the conference to be in alignment with God and they will leave glowing and eager to walk and shine in their purpose."

In addition to speaking and hosting conferences, Rodgers is a college-educated healthcare professional, holding a Master of Public Health in Biostatistics, currently working as a data analyst. She was drawn to the field of encouraging others during the 2020 pandemic when the country shut down.



"We had nothing to do but watch the news as they gave us a count of the thousands of lives lost due to Covid-19. We're still dealing with the aftermath today and adjusting to our new normal, but not everything from that time was bad," she recalled. "I started seeing people's creativity reach new levels as they began to generate their own revenue and streams of income. Entrepreneurship was on the rise as individuals started businesses such as meal prepping for others, preparing fine dining inside people's homes, mobile spas, party planners and so forth."

Rodgers wanted to be a part of creating something special too but felt none of her skills could reach people who were stuck at home. After feeling self-pity for awhile she had a revelation that changed everything.

"God stepped in and my purpose was about to be revealed. I stopped focusing on my problems and issues and shifted my mindset to look for ways to encourage others. People needed hope and something positive to hold on to, so I sat in front of my camera phone on April 16, 2021, and recorded my first inspirational video. The rest is history."

Na'Kedra is now a published author who writes in both nonfiction and children's genres. Her books include *Kneeling Earnestly for Transformation: 30-Day Devotional* and top selling children's book *Optimistically Mommy and Me*. She is a devoted wife to Kelvin and a loving mom to Chloe and Harley.

For more information about her books or conference, visit <https://nakedrarodgers.com/womens-conference>

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**5. Plan for Comfort and Practicality:**

Dressing well also means feeling comfortable. Choose clothing and shoes that will allow you to participate in the event activities without discomfort or distraction.

Following these essential etiquette guidelines helps you convey respect, confidence, and awareness. In the end, the goal is to blend style with consideration for the occasion and its hosts.

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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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**Love♥Relationships♥Marriage**

with Dr. Sheron C. Patterson

**UNWANTED VALENTINE GIFT****Dear Dr. Patterson,**

I can't believe I'm even writing to you. Valentine's Day is coming, and I planned to give my wife her favorite: flowers, chocolates, and clothes. She beat me to the punch this year, and gave me something else... an infection. Yes. That kind.

We were already in a rough patch - no talking, no touching, but I still believed we could fight our way back. Then I went to my doctor with an issue and walked out with a diagnosis, and a whole lot of betrayal.

When I confronted her, she cried, apologized, and swore it was a one-time mistake. She says she wants to fix our marriage. But how do I rebuild trust when I got an antibiotics prescription for Valentine's Day?

We've been married six years, no kids. Why stay? I am one foot out of the door.

**- Burnt Hubby****Dear Burnt Hubby,**

An STD is not just a medical issue. It is a breach of safety, trust, intimacy, and covenant. And you have every right to feel hurt, furious, humiliated, and confused - because this wasn't a small slip. This was a seismic crack.

Are you walking out? Can you get past this? Sometimes men have greater difficulty forgiving infidelity than women. Her cheating may be a blow to your ego and self-esteem. And there can be societal judgement on the man who stays with a cheating woman.

You may wonder why women cheat? The reasons include emotional neglect, lack of intimacy, feeling unappreciated, revenge and bore-

dom. None of these are an excuse.

She broke trust. Now she has to earn it back. Slowly. Repeatedly. Consistently. Tears are not transformation. Apologies are not accountability. That includes: full honesty about what happened, no defensiveness, and no excuses. You need transparency with her phone, schedule, and location until trust stabilizes. If she refuses any of this? That tells you everything you need to know.

This Valentine's Day should be about recommitment to truth, not chocolate-covered lies.

Here's the bottom line: Marital infidelity doesn't automatically end a marriage - sometimes it begins the real, honest work of rebuilding it. You are not foolish for wanting to save your marriage. You are not weak for being hurt. You are not obligated to stay - but you should try.

- Dr. Sheron Patterson

**Got questions?****I have answers?**

Send to [patterson52@icloud.com](mailto: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.*

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Support for the Kimbell is provided in part by Arts Fort Worth and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

Head, possibly a King (detail), 12th–14th century, terracotta with residue of red pigment and traces of mica. Kimbell Art Museum, AP 1994.04



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MARCH 27, 2026 - APRIL 26, 2026  
WRITTEN BY [illegible]  
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