

NORTH TEXAS | EDUCATION



David Woo/Staff Photographer

**Deyonna Davis, a teacher** and sponsor of the coding club at Barbara Bush Middle School in Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, helps sixth-graders Hemant Pacha (left) and Mikey Shands learn to code video games on their phones and computers.

## Building computer muscles

UTD-inspired coding clubs provide head start on technology, life skills

By **ELVIA LIMÓN**  
Staff Writer  
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IRVING — Hemant Pacha hopes to be a doctor and a part-time video game designer when he's older. But until then, the 11-year-old is keeping busy by learning how to code his own mobile video games.

His most recent creation has the player move a small yellow dot away from several black dots on a white backdrop, which the sixth-grader said was inspired by Pac-Man.

"My parents work with computers, so I thought it

would be cool to program my own game and start what I would be doing later in life," Hemant said.

Hemant is one of nearly 20 Barbara Bush Middle School students who participate in the school's Afterschool Coding Clubs for School Students (ACCESS) program. It was created by the University of Texas at Dallas Department of Computer Science and Technology as a way to introduce elementary and middle school students to the basics of computer programming.

UTD assigns about 75 of

its computer science students per semester to lead the clubs at 50 elementary and middle school across North Texas, including Barbara Bush in Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD.

Deyonna Davis, a career and technology teacher at Barbara Bush and sponsor of the coding clubs, said she's seen a range of students join the clubs — from those who have the latest technology to some who may not even have internet access at home.

"Everyone gets something out of this," Davis said. "Students who don't have exposure to computers can

be around computers while learning the basics, and those who do have that background knowledge can elevate the knowledge they already have."

Jey Veerasamy, UTD professor and director of its Center for Computer Science Education & Outreach, said the clubs last 10 weeks and cost about \$20 per semester. But a recent corporate grant of \$50,000 helped pick up the costs at certain schools — like Barbara Bush Middle — where many of the students live in poverty.

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SOUTH DALLAS

## Development gets hopes up near Fair Park

Council member wants to revive tax increment financing district

By **TRISTAN HALLMAN**  
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More than 12 years ago, Dallas City Hall promised that the creation of a new economic development tool in South Dallas would pump millions into "a mix of new housing, the restoration of historic structures, new retail and other commercial uses." There was also a promise of projects catering to transit and pedestrians.

But that tool, the Grand Park South Tax Increment Financing District, has yet to invest a dime in the area. The board that governs it hasn't met since 2010.

Now, bolstered by a few new developments in the area and a possible new operator for Fair Park, council member Kevin Felder is hoping he can get the TIF moving and give the long-blighted area the development it craves.

"If there is ever a case for a TIF, it is the Grand Park South TIF," Felder said.

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Rose Baca/Staff Photographer

**Two Podners barbecue** and seafood restaurant on Robert B. Cullum Boulevard has been one of the biggest recent business investments in South Dallas. Partner Fred Conwright said business has been good, and he hopes to begin work on adding a sandwich shop and a shoe store.

MLK SYMPOSIUM

## Minister says warning is best tribute to King

Barber says focus on Trump misses the ills of racism, poverty affecting country

By **MICHAEL GRANBERRY**  
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The Rev. William J. Barber II had just arrived in Dallas when news of the latest remark by President Donald Trump began to go viral. So, almost immediately, folks began asking the civil rights leader what he thought of Trump reportedly using a vulgar expression to describe Haiti, El Salvador and Africa.

In Barber's view, it's part of a larger conversation that's by no means limited to a single remark.

"I don't ever call this the era of Trump," said Barber, who will serve as the keynote speaker 7 p.m. Monday at Moody Performance

10 North Texas civic leaders reflect on how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s work has inspired them. **3B**



**WILLIAM J. BARBER II**

Hall. The downtown venue is the location for "Forward Together: 13th Annual MLK Symposium," which is sponsored by the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture.

Barber, 54, is a Protestant minister and political leader in North Carolina but one whose dynamism has drawn comparisons to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Not everyone in Dallas, where he was scheduled to make multiple appearances over the weekend, will agree with him.

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TEXAS | DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## Banned book policy gets review

Guidelines that blocked 'Color Purple' but not 'Mein Kampf' faulted

By **LAUREN MCGAUGHY**  
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AUSTIN — Texas prison officials are reviewing how to decide which books are banned in state jails and prisons.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice is reviewing

the agency's banned books policy, spokesman Jason Clark confirmed this week. The audit was initiated after *The Dallas Morning News* reported on inconsistencies in the policy, but Clark said "there was no single event that precipitated the review."

"All policies are periodically reviewed, and this one is no exception," Clark added.

The department has banned 10,073 books from state jails and prisons, including

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## HOW KING'S DREAM LIVES ON FOR NORTH TEXAS LEADERS

The life of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. has inspired countless people. We asked leaders in and around North Texas how King's work has inspired theirs.



### Liz Cedillo-Pereira

Director, Office of Welcoming Communities and Immigrant Affairs, city of Dallas

"It does not escape me that those things that I may have done or achieved may not have happened had Dr. King not lived. Dr. King led a movement in our nation that gave

us all permission to dream big dreams and judge based on the content of character and not based on color or gender. He didn't do it alone. He brought all people of good conscience together to work toward the fulfillment of that self-evident truth that we are created equal. We strive to bring these values to the core work of building a more welcoming, inclusive and equitable community.



### Byron Sanders

President and CEO of the educational non-profit Big Thought

"We know Martin Luther King Jr. for the seminal role he played in helping shape the conscience of our society in the 20th century. His pen, his voice, his presence was one of the catalysts that

sparked America's confronting her story that was at hard odds with her ideals — racial and economic inequities are not and should not be unchallenged in a nation that casts itself as one of liberty. That he did this between the ages of 26 and 39 years old has always impressed upon me the urgency to live within your purpose today and that youth is never an excuse for stasis. It is in fact power, particularly when grounded on a respect for the past and the voices who lived it."



### Bill Holston

Executive director, Human Rights Initiative of North Texas

"I am looking at a quote from Dr. King right this minute. It's a photo taken by my friend Dylan Hollingsworth of a protest sign. The quote is, 'Our lives begin to end the day

we become silent about things that matter.' I put this on my wall, because I wanted to have a reminder of the necessity for speaking up for those who need a voice. At the moment, that is people from El Salvador who are losing TPS. Being a voice for oppressed people is an essential thing for me."



### U. Renee Hall

Chief of police, Dallas

"Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is recognized as one of the greatest nonviolent leaders in world history. He was a pillar in communities all across America whose focus was equal rights for everyone. Dr. King once famously said, 'In-

justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' These words profoundly shaped my life and set me on the same spiritual path of leading a life dedicated to public service. I see a great parallel between the teachings of Dr. King and law enforcement. It is our legal duty and moral responsibility to serve others and ensure that everyone is treated fair and equal under the color of the law."



### John Wiley Price

Dallas County commissioner

"King had commitment, he sacrificed personally, and he had courage. That's the three-legged stool. You can't talk about King — whether it was the letters from the Birmingham Jail — it was all about commitment, it was all about sacrificing personally his family, and courage. All my heroes and heroines had commitment, sacrifice and courage. ... If you want to be informed, you have to keep busy. Martin Luther King is not a couch potato."



### Ronald Planks

Prosper ISD orchestra director and 2017 Trailblazer Award winner for Teacher of the Year by the Collin County Black Chamber of Commerce

"It goes without saying that Dr. Martin Luther King was a great orator in every sense of the word. His great body of work

proves this time and time again. His 'Dream' reminds me daily to pour all the love and knowledge I have into each of the young impressionable minds I have been so blessed to teach, regardless of the things that make us all so different. His tenets on the importance of our global connectedness, discovering your greatness by putting others first and staying awake in the midst of social change also inspire me."



### Imam Omar Suleiman

President of the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research and adjunct professor of Islamic studies at SMU

"Dr. King to me represents a movement, not a man. A movement that insists on justice even when attempts are made to pacify

it in the name of peace. A movement that moves beyond the flowery language of a colorblind society, and forces a necessary tension that we may deal with the intertwined issues of racism, poverty and militarism. If we are truly to celebrate the life of Dr. King, we must continue his protest beyond the parade. For the issues he sought to address are alive and well, but so is his inspiration."



### Eric Johnson

State representative, D-Dallas

"I am a 42-year-old black man who was born and raised in Dallas. Having grown up in West Dallas and Oak Cliff while attending Greenhill School — followed by eight years at Harvard, Princeton and the University of

Pennsylvania — I am blessed to have a truly diverse group of friends from around the world who are black, white, Christian, Jewish, rich, poor, gay and straight. The genius of Dr. King was his ability to see the truth at a time when so many others could not: That it really is the content of our character that matters."



### Harry LaRosiliere

Plano mayor

"Dr. King's teachings and the way he lived affected me in many ways. First of all, he served as what I would call a virtual role model. He was someone who provided me a pathway for service for the betterment

of the community. He taught me to be a servant leader and to look after those who are underserved or forgotten, and to be a champion for basic human rights, which everyone deserves. Dr. King was consistently selfless. He has inspired me to be consistent in my words and actions and to have resolve in my integrity and faith."



### The Rev. Peter Johnson

Civil rights activist

"It's in my commitment to nonviolence. Martin Luther King reminded us that Jesus commanded us to love your enemy. I haven't committed any violence against white people. I haven't knocked anybody

in the mouth because of the influence [King] had on my young life. I was able to focus my anger to get things done nonviolently."

# State

## HOUSTON

# Waterways jargon is own language

Vessel Traffic Service workers team to monitor bustling ship channel

HOUSTON — The Coast Guard sent Wesley Felix to Houston and assigned him to a group monitoring vessel traffic on the Houston Ship Channel.

Memorizing docks, buoys and radio checkpoints proved relatively easy for the California native.

Figuring out the thick Cajun accents of mariners steering towboats and barges from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway was another matter.

"I completely didn't understand what they were saying, whatsoever," he said.

From the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston Vessel Traffic Service building at Ellington Airport, civilians and service members work side by side to monitor the busy Ship Channel with cameras, radar and the automatic identification system that ships use to share their location, vessel type, speed and route.

VTS workers are in constant communication with a diverse group on the waterway to help provide safe navigation.

"A lot of these guys on the radio are used to talking to each other on the radio, and so they speak really fast," said Lt. Jessica Flennoy, a VTS watch supervisor.

There's somewhat of a language barrier for those on the water, too. Towboat captains, for instance, can struggle with military jargon, said Jim Guidry, executive vice president of vessel operations for Houston-based Kirby Corp., the country's largest operator of tank barges. A towboat captain from Louisiana might be speaking to a Russian ship captain and then a Coast Guard member from New York.

"Everybody's speaking a common English language that no one understands," he said. "Everybody gets used to it."

Brownwater University, sponsored by the Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association and the American Waterways Operators, helps bridge the divide. The 2½-day session is held in Houston at least once a year to bring together the towboat industry, Coast Guard and Houston Pilots. It's an opportunity to meet each other in person and learn about the different workplaces.

*Houston Chronicle*

# Banned book policy gets review

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ing Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Color Purple* and the 2005 bestseller *Freakonomics*.

Another 248,281 titles are on a list of approved books, which includes Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

Free speech and criminal justice advocates have said the policy is ill-defined, leading to unpredictable and illogical decision-making that infringes on inmates' rights. Texas House Committee on Corrections chairman James White, R-Hillister, is glad the audit is underway.

"Obviously people that are well-read, that like to read, are less likely to engage in criminal conduct," White told *The News*. "That's why we've urged — and we're glad — that TDCJ is taking on this task to look at this policy."

According to department policy, a book, magazine or other publication can be banned if it contains:

- Information on the manufacture of explosives, weapons and/or drugs.

- Material that a reasonable person would construe as written solely for the purpose of communicating information designed to achieve the breakdown of prisons through offender disruption" such as strikes or riots.

- "Graphic presentations" of illegal sex acts, "such as rape, incest, sex with a minor, bestiality, necrophilia or bondage."

- Sexually explicit images. "Naked or partially covered buttocks" does not constitute reason for automatic disapproval. Staff review medical journals, reference materials, art books and other publications containing nudity on a case-by-case basis.

- Information on criminal schemes or "how to avoid detection of criminal schemes."

Books can also be banned for how they're manufactured. If a book's binding, cover or other parts can be used to hide contraband, it won't be allowed.

Mailroom staff at each prison are the first to review publications. They get to decide which books are banned and which are approved. Inmates can appeal their decisions to a panel of prison administrators. If the panel agrees the publication doesn't pass state guidelines, it goes on the banned list and the inmate can sue, pay for it to be sent to someone outside the prison system or allow it to be destroyed.

*Ana's Story: A Journey of Hope* by Jenna Bush, the daughter of George W. Bush, is on the banned list because it mentions indecency with a child, the department says. So are *A History of Pubs and Pub Signs* by Alex Cobban, which contains information about the manufacture of alcohol, and several graphic novels and art books, including *Game of Thrones* comic books and some titles from *The Walking Dead* that contain nudity or sexual images. *The Big Book of Angels* and a book of Shakespearean sonnets are banned because they contain nude images of children.

Descriptions of incest landed *The Color Purple* on the no-no list, and *Freakonomics* was banned for "racial content" — it contains sections discussing crime reduction after the advent of legal abortion and the working conditions of crack cocaine dealers.

But *Mein Kampf* was approved, as are two titles by former Ku Klux Klan grand wizard David Duke. The criminal justice department said Hitler's Nazi thesis was not banned because it conforms to the state's guidelines.

"*Mein Kampf* is on the approved list because it does not violate our rules," Clark told *The News*. It's unclear how long it will take the state to complete its internal review of the policy. Any changes will be brought before the Texas Board of Criminal Justice for review and approval.

*Twitter: @lmcgaughy*

# Speaker issues 'national call for moral revival'

Continued from Page 1B

Some will disagree strongly and label him partisan, but Barber, who gave a stirring speech in support of Hillary Clinton at the 2016 Democratic convention, says he seeks to deliver a warning cry, in tribute to King.

"Because I'm a person of faith, I declare every era the era of God," he says. "Trump is the symptom of a greater moral malady in America right now. Dr. King, in his last years, talked about America being sick with racism and classism and materialism and militarism. We are still deeply, deeply impacted by that sickness."

It misses the point, Barber says, to indulge in this "focus on Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump, Trump. Prior to Trump getting in office, we had seen years of voter suppression and racist redistricting, like we haven't seen since the era of Jim Crow."

The truth, he contends, is that Trump policies have affected millions of whites in a negative way. He cited the lack of Medicare expansion in states such as Texas, a severe inequality in wages "and the attack on our health care system."

In other words, "if the only place you see Trump's racism," Barber says, is in the widely quoted word referring to Haiti,

El Salvador and Africa, "you're missing the racism entirely."

Barber comes to Dallas as part of his re-energized Poor People's Campaign, the last movement of the civil rights era, which effectively ended after a sniper gunned down King in Memphis, Tenn., in 1968.

That effort attempted to push Congress into passing an economic bill of rights, including a package of guaranteed income, equitable housing and funds for poor communities. This time, Barber says, the aim is broader: To unite disenfranchised groups in the U.S., regardless of color, class or gender. He calls it "a national call for moral revival."

He brings the effort to Dallas under the auspices of Repairers of the Breach, which he serves as president. Its mantra is "Building a Moral Movement." As it says on its website, "Some issues are not left versus right, but right versus wrong." He wants to show people of all colors, he says, that white supremacy is limited not to the actions of a racist few in Charlottesville, Va., but in policies that suppress people of all colors.

Born in Indianapolis two days after King's March on Washington in 1963, Barber moved to North Carolina when

he was a boy. His father, who once taught at Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, in the Piney Woods of East Texas, got a call from a friend who wanted the elder Barber, a clergyman, to return to his native North Carolina to help in the transition to integrated schools after the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

So many years later, Barber says, "What we don't need is another celebration of the life of Dr. King, or a commemoration. What we need is to re-energize the principles of the movement and deal with the issues of racism and classism that are still very much with us. Too many people talk in platitudes about Dr. King and not about his prophetic vision," which in Barber's view foresaw the perils of America in 2018.

If King were alive now, he says, he would be "standing with DACA, with all immigrants. He would challenge a tax reform bill that transferred \$2 trillion from the poor to the wealthy. He would be dealing head-on with health care and the resegregation of public schools. He would challenge a nation that spends 54 cents of every dollar on a military."

He would preach from every mountaintop, Barber contends, that a continuation of such poli-

cies will guarantee "a spiritual death."

Barber warns against "loving the tomb of the prophets but not the prophets themselves. It is dangerous to isolate Dr. King. Dr. King was all about 'we.'"

As for Dallas, the city hosting him on Monday night, Barber worries about "its serious depths of poverty, its tendency toward resegregation."

And he scolds those who say of Trump that "he's something new, we've never seen this before."

He cites President Ruth-erford B. Hayes as having "rolled back the victories of civil rights" and President Woodrow Wilson, "who loved watching *Birth of a Nation* in the White House, long before Steve Bannon showed up."

The so-called Southern Strategy, which Barber says had its roots in the presidency of Richard Nixon and is "based entirely on racism," was used once again to staggering effect by Trump, who he points out lost the nation's popular vote by more than 3 million ballots.

Even so, he says, "the Southern Strategy is a dying mule. And a dying mule kicks the hardest."

*Twitter: @mgranberry*