

“HATS OFF TO HER” Continued from Front Page



Forward Times Associate Publisher Chelsea Lenora White with her mother, Forward Times CEO/Publisher Karen Carter Richards.

Forward Times and The Doll House Country Club.

She reflected on how witnessing her grandmother’s journey led her to recognize the need for a space to support women who are balancing multiple roles. “I realized that so many women, including myself, were juggling so much – careers, motherhood, marriage and personal ambitions,” she said. “There needed to be a place for women to feel seen, celebrated, and to have their cups filled.” This realization birthed the *Hats Off To Her* event, which aimed to create an environment where women could authentically share their stories while receiving tools to enhance their well-being.

Fifty dynamic women from the community were invited to participate in the evening, with a special focus on hearing from the women featured in Forward Times’ *Hats Off To Her* Women’s History Month Special Edition publication. Chelsea Lenora served as moderator for the panel discussion, where these incredible women shared insights into the many roles they juggle and the challenges they face.

Among the panelists was former Forward Times intern Amarie Gipson, a cultural curator and writer, who reflected on how Forward Times helped her find her voice.

“Forward Times is the place I first found my voice and realized that I had a voice, and that people were listening and that it was important to speak up,” Gipson reflected. “I identify as a writer. Everything that I do is an extension of my writing process.”

Gipson earned a following with her viral *Physical Therapy* dance parties, using the money to launch *The Reading Room*, an independent reference library for Black art & culture. She started by scanning and cataloging 325 of her own books on her website. That work paid off and in March 2023, Gipson shared: “I had my first in-person pop-up experience at Sanman Studios, where the Reading Room lives right now.”

Some may want her to resume those dance parties, but Gipson resists the pressure to do what others want: “Having autonomy over both my creative practice, but also my life, is really important.”

Dara Landry, a passionate literacy advocate and co-founder of Class Bookstore, shared her journey from being a reluctant reader to co-founding a Black-owned bookstore. She emphasized the importance of preserving Black stories and building community through literature.

“In 2015, we read a statistic that there were less than 39 Black-owned bookstores in the country,” Landry said. “And so, we set out to figure out how we could change that.”

Dara and her husband, Class Bookstore co-founder David Landry, visited Black-owned bookstores to gather insights. By 2020, they were ready to open their own—until the pandemic brought everything to a halt.

Disappointed, they pivoted to Zoom. But by November, Landry recalled, “We really felt that if Amazon can deliver books, so can we.” Determined to move forward, they launched their business online, meticulously cataloging their inventory.

After building their presence digitally, the couple took the next step, opening their physical location in Third Ward on Sampson St. in December 2022.

Dr. Montra Rogers, an esteemed educator, discussed how she found her purpose in education after years of uncertainty. From teaching social studies to becoming a curriculum expert, Dr. Rogers spoke about how purpose transcends degrees and titles, focusing instead on the impact we have on others.

“Nobody ever tells you what you’re supposed to do after college,” she noted. “They say: ‘Get a job’...No one talks about purpose; no one talks about *why*.” Finding her *why* took time, even after two degrees.

“See, purpose is not about the college degrees. It’s not about the doctorates, the titles. It’s about how what you do impacts others every day,” Dr. Rogers shared.

Dannette K. Davis, the owner of Kay Davis Associates, spoke about her unexpected transition from theater to managing construction projects. She shared how her creative background helped her navigate the challenges of running a business, and how she found herself guiding her company to success.

Davis said her motivation comes from a deep love for what she does—whether it’s furniture, theater, or her *Trending Tuesdays* podcast. “All the things you love, you find a way to make them part of your life,” she said. “Because if you want to survive, you better like what you’re doing.”

Hazel T. Ramsey, registered nurse and licensed funeral director,



Hats Off To Her honorees proudly hold their framed newspaper pages from the Hats Off To Her Special Edition, gifted in their honor.



Hats Off To Her honorees participate in panel discussion.



Assuring Hands Chair Massage & Wellness treated Hats Off To Her guests to complimentary massages.

reflected on her decades-long career journey, emphasizing the value of embracing change and growing through each chapter of life. Asked how she challenges herself and stays motivated, Ramsey answered: “Well, I don’t actually challenge myself; I just do what I feel.”

Ramsey shared that nursing provided her with a great living to support herself and her children, even after going through a divorce and becoming a single parent. Though she initially deferred her dream of becoming a funeral director, the pandemic pushed her to pursue it. While working full-time as a registered nurse, she attended the Commonwealth Institute for Funeral Services and graduated at the top of her class, becoming a licensed funeral director and embalmer at Mabrie Memorial Mortuary. She encouraged the audience to follow their passions, regardless of others’ opinions. “I’m way past the people-pleasing stage,” she said.



GO3 Vodka mixologist Tiana served tasty signature cocktails at the event.

Tausha Quan Sanders, founder of *Her Grails*, shared her story of creating sneaker-focused experiences for women. Originally from Nebraska, she moved to Houston in 2015 to work for Sneaker Summit. “I was there for five years, and they do buy, sell, trade sneaker conventions.” At one convention, 250 vendors were present, but there was only one woman-owned vendor. Dismayed, she decided to start a women’s division of the company in 2018. By 2020, she no longer worked there and had to change the name to *Her Grails*. “Best thing that ever happened to me,” she said.

“At the core, we try to highlight, support, inform and showcase women in any industry,” Sanders said. That means tailoring events towards women and aiming to work with female vendors, venues and photographers.

Finally, Tay Powers, multitalented entrepreneur, DJ and producer, spoke about her work supporting creatives from the South through her collective, Emergent and Co. Asked: “How do you ensure that people don’t pigeonhole you?” Tay Powers answered: “The long and short of it is that I don’t. I can’t. I can’t control what other people think of me. But what I can control is my output.”

A couple of years ago, Powers began to sense that the perception of her was one-sided – but realized that was because of what she’d presented to the world. “The only

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CLASSIFIEDS

LEGAL NOTICE

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for the legal sale of malt beverages and wine for off-premises consumption only(BQ) by Danilo Villavicencio for Rincon Latino Supermarket LLC, to be located at 4111 Fairmont pkwy suite #101, Pasadena, Harris County, Texas 77504. Officers of the said corporations, Marlene Duarte and Danilo Villavicencio are owners.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Request for Proposal – Houston-Galveston Area Council – Public Services – Lease-Purchase Financing – LP07-25

H-GAC is soliciting responses for selecting qualified providers of lease-purchase financing products and services to make them available to Customers of the HGACBuy Cooperative Purchasing Program under blanket type contracts.

To view the solicitation documents, visit <https://www.hgacbuy.org/bid-notice>.

Response Deadline: May 1, 2025 @ 12:00 P.M. CDT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Request for Proposal – Houston-Galveston Area Council – Community & Environmental – Livable Centers Study: Fresno – TRN25-01

H-GAC is seeking qualified contractor services to conduct a study and develop a plan to further the goals of the Livable Centers program in Fresno (referred to as “sponsor” or “local sponsor” in this document). The Contractor will develop a plan that addresses the application of the Livable Centers program goals in the specified study area. Since this project requires a range of research, public engagement, transportation, and planning expertise, a team of specialized firms is permitted.

To view/download the solicitation documents visit <https://www.h-gac.com/procurement>.

Response Deadline: May 8, 2025 @ 12:00 P.M. CST