

as Space Force Service Chair, National Security Studies Department Chair, and Assistant Professor at the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy. In each of these positions, Col. Gardner has distinguished himself as an individual who leads with full intention to serve the community at large.

Col. Gardner has demonstrated exceptional leadership, courage, perseverance, and hope throughout his career. His retirement is a well-earned milestone over the course of his professional life. We thank Col. Gardner for his remarkable service to our country, and I know his beloved niece, our dear sister and friend, Cora Faith Walker, would be incredibly proud of her uncle and his outstanding career. On behalf of Missouri's First District, I send my heartfelt congratulations to Col. Gardner on his retirement after 30 years of service in the U.S. military.

CELEBRATING GENERAL EDWARD GREER'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. VERONICA ESCOBAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the distinguished life and extraordinary military career of General Edward Greer, a remarkable individual whose legacy has left an indelible mark on our nation, as he approaches his 100th birthday.

Born in the coal-mining town of Gary, West Virginia, General Greer's journey began at West Virginia State College in 1942, where he enrolled during an era of racial segregation. However, his education was interrupted by World War II, leading him to serve in the 777th Field Artillery Battalion, an all-Black unit. By the war's end, he had risen to the esteemed rank of Master Sergeant. Returning to civilian life, General Greer resumed his studies at West Virginia State College, where he met and married Jewell Means. Their union, forged on May 31, 1948, endured for more than 72 years.

Commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Regular Army in 1940, General Greer sought stability in the military, serving with distinction for 33 years. His early assignments in Japan coincided with the outbreak of the Korean War, where he earned the Silver Star for valor. Promoted through the ranks, General Greer's military career traversed Germany, Oklahoma, Kansas, and the Pentagon, witnessing the Army's integration and earning promotions to Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Colonel. His family grew to include three children: Michael, Kenneth, and Gail.

In 1970, Colonel Greer served in Vietnam before becoming a trailblazer in military history. Selected for promotion to Brigadier General in 1972, he joined an esteemed group of Black officers, contributing to the integration of the Army's general officer ranks. Retiring in 1976 after 33 years of dedicated service, General Greer made El Paso his home. With his beloved wife Jewell, he became an active member of the community, engaging in real estate sales and contributing to various civic boards.

The Greers' post-Army life was a testament to their commitment to service and community.

It is with profound gratitude and respect that we honor General Edward Greer's legacy, a legacy that exemplifies the highest ideals of duty, honor, and love for our great nation, and wish him a very happy 100th birthday.

HONORING THE LIFE OF BISHOP CARLTON PEARSON

HON. RO KHANNA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Mr. KHANNA. Mr. Speaker, today, we honor the selfless life of Bishop Carlton Pearson who passed away last November at the age of 70. Bishop Carlton Pearson was an evangelist, ministry leader, author, and award-winning singer. He was raised in San Diego, California with five siblings. He is survived by them, his wife, and his two children.

An expert in many crafts, his congregation often praised his diverse passions and the limitless communities impacted by his work. He preached what he called a gospel of inclusion. He saw all human life as an integral part of a broader community. He was welcomed in Synagogues, Islamic groups, Atheist and Agnostic organizations, and a variety of other spiritual communities. He felt a mandate to strive for peace through an emphasis on inclusion in spirituality and interfaith fellowship.

I commend him again today and emphasize his teaching that we don't have to go along to get along. That we can mind many of the same things without necessarily having the same mind about everything. We honor the life of Bishop Carlton Pearson, the legacy he left won't be soon forgotten. I include in the RECORD this Rolling Stone Magazine memoir about how he has inspired generations to come.

HOW BISHOP CARLTON PEARSON INSPIRED A GENERATION OF SINGERS AND GOSPEL ARTISTS

(By Meagan Jordan)

Bishop Carlton Pearson, a renowned preacher, singer and composer, known for his Live At Azusa albums, died on November 19 after a battle with cancer in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

His theology, known as the "gospel of inclusion," preached against homophobia and embraced the LGBTQ community, but cost him his congregation and approval within the evangelical community. However, his message of inclusion and his denial of hell has become a model, and his impact in gospel music continues to inspire new generations of artists.

"He has an album of hymns that people would sing in the Black church for communion like 'I Know It Was The Blood,' or his version of 'Precious Memories,' gospel artist and former Destiny's Child member Michelle Williams tells Rolling Stone, referring to Pearson's Live At Azusa 2: Precious Memories album from 1997. "He amplified those songs and made them mainstream for church."

Pearson was born and raised in San Diego, California, where his father and grandfather were preacher men in a storefront "heaven or hell" Pentecostal church. After graduating high school, he attended Oral Roberts University, an evangelical Christian University, where Oral Roberts, a white preacher who had the leading religious television broadcast in the Seventies, was the school's founder. Roberts mentored Pearson as he navigated the ministerial realm.

Pearson left the school before graduating in 1977, starting his own church, Higher Dimensions. With over 6,000 members, it would make him one of the first Black mega church pastors, bringing Black churches into a mainstream space in the Nineties and 2000s.

"In the Seventies, here in the West, the church was on a decline," says Larry Reid, a pastor, media personality and friend to Pearson. "You had evangelistic campaigns all over the U.S., but it was fading away and Black people were not leading it. We were the musicians and the singers. But Carlton Pearson created a stage called Azusa and brought Black Christians in and the white stations would play clips from his platform."

Pearson's Azusa Conferences, which were inspired by the 1906 revival that took place on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, were a hybrid of preaching and music. It gave preachers, like Joyce Meyers, Michael Pitts, Bishop T.D. Jakes, and gospel heavyweights, such as Donnie McClurkin, the Clark Sisters, and the late Lashun Pace, agency and a platform to showcase their talents and introduce them to a wider audience of people. The conference, which was held at Pearson's old university, Oral Roberts, would host thousands of guests. For those who could not attend, they were taped and sold via VHS, which gave way to many successful careers in television ministry and gospel music.

"I had always known his music for many years before I became an artist," says Ricky Dillard, a renowned gospel artist and composer, known for his choirs and directorial abilities. "He had a choir with him and that was influential to me. He was out here doing it at an A-1 level, so everyone was a fan. If you're a gospel music lover, there's no way that you could not have heard the music of Bishop Carlton Pearson."

Pearson's album *The Best of Azusa*. . . Yet *Holdin' On* is a staple in the Black community. On the 14-track album, featuring songs from his Azusa conference days, he has an oratory track called "Mother Sherman Story," in which he recounts a question an elderly mother from his home church would ask him, even as dementia began to set in: "You yet holding on?"—The album's title.

"That meant many things," explains Williams. "It meant keep holding on to your faith and also meant keep holding on to your morals and your standards."

In the late Nineties, Pearson—who not only studied his bible but also studied its roots, foundations, and original language of Hebrew—came to a realization that would shake the foundation of his faith and his social standing within the church.

"When my little girl was an infant, I was watching the evening news and the Hutus and the Tutsis were returning to Rwanda from Uganda,?" Pearson recalled on an episode of *This American Life* from December 2005. "I'm watching these little kids with swollen bellies, their skin is stretched. . . Their hair is kind of red from malnutrition and they have flies on the corner of their eyes and mouths."

Pearson thought of his baby, who is now 27 year-old Majeste Pearson—a pop and gospel singer—and his big screen television and the plate of food he was in the middle of eating. Knowing the culture of the people on the screen and assuming they were not all Christian, he said, "God, I don't know how you can call yourself a loving, sovereign God and allow these people to suffer this way and just suck them right into hell." Pearson heard a voice saying "Can't you see they're already there? That's hell. You keep creating that for yourselves, I'm taking them into my presence." Pearson had a realization: "We do that to ourselves and to each other," he recalled in the podcast episode.

The next Sunday, he shared his revelation to his congregation, urging them to stop

telling people that they weren't "saved." Instead, he wanted them to send a message that they were "safe with God."

But this new theology of inclusion and universalism marked his downfall within the evangelical mainstream. Congregants left the church. Preachers like T.D. Jakes spoke out against him; Jakes told *Charisma Magazine*, a popular Christian publication, that Pearson was wrong and had incorrectly interpreted the Bible. Many churches and leaders turned their backs on him. He lost his church, both its members and the building. He was banned from hosting the Azusa conference at the Oral Roberts institution and Roberts, his former mentor, remained silent. At the time, Pearson was also running for the Mayor of Tulsa, the city with the worst race riot in 1922 known as the Black Wall Street massacre. He lost.

"I told Carlton that if he told them he believed there was no such thing as hell and damnation, he will reduce this weapon of fear based religion, which is the foundation of religious institutions money," said Bishop Yvette Flunder, a friend of Pearson and a same gender loving preacher and singer who sung with The Hawkins Family. "His colleagues and the College of Bishops that he was a part of put him on blast and said he was a heretic and excommunicated him."

Charisma Magazine didn't let the issue rest. According to Reid, they wrote about Pearson for two years, demonizing his theology and teachings.

"He was deeply hurt and felt betrayed," his children Majeste and Julian Pearson wrote in an email to Rolling Stone. But Pearson stood by his beliefs. "He internalized a lot of it, resulting in him becoming physically sick. Around that time, he had his first bout with cancer. We were nine and 11 when we knew it was our last service."

While no longer popular in the mainstream church, Pearson's ministry continued through his church New Dimensions, where he preached against homophobia and embraced the LGBTQ community as members. He challenged scriptures used to demonize and oppress their existence. He also authored books like *The Gospel of Inclusion and God Is Not a Christian*, Nor a Jew, Muslim, Hindu. . . . God Dwells with Us, in Us, Around Us, as Us. He also was a minister to many in person.

"Bishop Pearson's ministry was a mirror for me," says Dillard. Back in 2005, Dillard had met Pearson leaving an event and felt inclined to give him a ride back to Atlanta.

"Something very powerful happened in our moment together. I was seeking God in a different way and I had come up with translations that I needed confirmation from. I felt low in spirit that I was not meeting the standards of the Word of God. Bishop said something to me that changed my life that day. He said 'As others have judged you, you have now taken on their judgment and you are judging yourself.' It spoke to my heart."

RECOGNIZING LEAP OF KINDNESS

HON. PATRICK RYAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Mr. RYAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the Ulster County Chamber of Commerce's Leap of Kindness Day, on February 29, 2024.

Leap of Kindness Day was started in 2016 by the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce and has taken place on February 29th each Leap Year since. The goal of the day

has always been to spend the extra day we are given every four years doing acts of kindness. This initiative has spread throughout the U.S., Canada, and Ireland to help those in need.

Leap of Kindness Day offers community members a chance to do something kind for someone else. It motivates organizations, businesses, and communities to donate clothing, food, and money to local not-for-profit organizations.

This day keeps communities rooted in their values and spreads love to neighbors. Growing up in Ulster County, I have seen how giving, dedicated, and kind my neighbors in the Hudson Valley are to those around them. I hope that everyone can take part in such a great initiative, participating alongside their communities to help others, not just today but every day as we all work to spread more kindness.

I want to recognize Ward Todd and Jess Davis, President and Vice President of the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce, for their work to make Leap of Kindness Day such a meaningful day for our community.

COMMEMORATING THE 32ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE KHOJALY MASSACRE

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 32nd anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of people in the town of Khojaly, Azerbaijan.

On February 26, 1992, Armenian armed forces massacred over 600 unarmed people—including 106 women, 63 children, and 70 elderly people—and left less than 2,000 survivors. Hundreds more became disabled due to their injuries. More than 100 children lost a parent and 25 children lost both parents. At least 8 families were entirely killed. This was the largest killing of ethnic Azerbaijani civilians during the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Although a cease-fire was negotiated in 1994, it is my hope that Armenia and Azerbaijan can come together and find peace. Long-term peace, security, and regional cooperation would greatly benefit the region and the world. As Azerbaijanis throughout the world commemorate the massacre and continue to grieve the loss of loved ones, I hope they can find peace amidst this tragedy.

HONORING THE LIFE OF GERALD "JAY" CIMINO

HON. DOUG LAMBORN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the God-honoring life and generous impact of a Pikes Peak community stalwart—Gerald "Jay" Cimino, who died of natural causes on February 24, 2024, at the age of 87. Jay truly was a pillar of the Pike's Peak region, both as a well-known business innovator in the automobile industry as well as a be-

loved and visionary community builder. Jay's leadership of the Phil Long dealerships impacted the automobile industry across the state of Colorado and his love for others led to the creation of numerous veteran-focused groups such as Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center.

Born in Trinidad, Colorado, Jay joined the Marine Corps out of high school. Following his service to our Nation, he moved back to Trinidad and attended Trinidad State Jr College and finished his bachelor's degree in business administration at the University of Denver in 1960. Wasting no time after graduation, Jay married his wife, Emily, and they took an active role in their community. Jay became General Manager of Phil Long Ford in 1975 and rose up the ranks to President and CEO of the Phil Long Family of Dealerships. Throughout his time in the automobile industry, Jay lived out the exemplary values of community and customer service as no one had done before him. This emphasis on community service was the basis for how Jay used his time to make and do better for everyone around him.

Jay invested in the economic growth of his hometown of Trinidad as well as his adopted home of Colorado Springs throughout his time at Phil Long Ford. Whether it was bringing automobile dealerships to new communities, creating academic scholarships, or helping build community-focused buildings, Jay took great pride in providing new opportunities and services for others.

Perhaps Jay's most impactful initiative was his creation of Mt. Carmel Health, Wellness and Community Center, Mt. Carmel Center of Excellence of Colorado, and Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center which provides access to medical care and career change resources to our community and specifically our veterans. Jay truly modeled for all of us how to properly serve in the most caring and generous way for those who have served our nation.

Jay and his wife Emily of more than fifty-five years enjoyed the blessings of their four children and eight grandchildren. The legacy of the Cimino family continues to have an impact in the Pike Peak region following in the steps of Jay's vision and passion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues in Congress join me in honoring and celebrating the exemplary life of Jay Cimino whose fingerprints on the Pike Peak region will remain for the rest of time.

HONORING KENNY AND TRACEY BARR

HON. JIM BANKS

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Kenny and Tracey Barr for their fifteen years of service to Northeast Indiana's homeless veterans at Shepherd's House.

Shepherd's House is a not-for-profit facility in Fort Wayne, Indiana founded in 1998 to house homeless veterans who struggle with substance abuse and mental health issues. It has been described as a "lighthouse" and a "beacon of hope in a sea of isolation" by the veterans who have benefitted from their work.

The Barrs serve on staff currently as Directors of Veteran Outreach and Intake Specialists. For twelve of their fifteen years there,