



GOOD GOVERNMENT

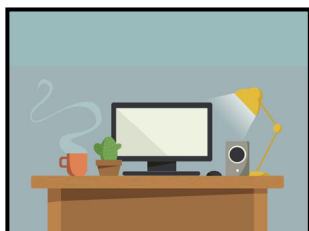
Committed to Honesty and Integrity in City Government

Kamau C. Marable — Editor-In-Chief

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FROM THE DESK OF THE IG

Fairy Tale Fraud?

So much of what we see and how we see life depends on our experiences. I can write and tell you what I think is a moving story. But whether the story was moving can only be deciphered by the reader and the listener. Their interpretation of the story in turn is primarily based on the summation of their experience.



IG Ellen Ha

Here is a good example. One day, one of my boys came home from school and asked, who is Cinderella? Having two boys, up until then the focus of our family discussions centered mostly on dinosaurs. So, my husband and I sat down with the boys and watched *Disney's* version of Cinderella.



As a little girl, I believed Cinderella was about having a fairy godmother who would make me beautiful. It was about going to a fancy ball, meeting the prince who I would marry and live happily ever after. I never thought much of the story beyond that. But as I was watching the movie with the boys with now my matured eyes and pragmatic sensibilities, I began to see other things.

In particular, I saw how a fair life can turn into a nightmare by a happenstance; how cruel people can be to one another; how a person, who is undeserving of the bad, can endure and suffer so much of it and yet still manage to hope and dream of beautiful possibilities. I also saw that while sadness can permeate through one's life and happiness may seem fleeting, one must continue to work hard, otherwise one may never get to the ball or find the owner of the glass slippers.

Once upon a time for me, the appearance of the fairy godmother and the transformation of the dirty Cinderella in a beautiful ballgown was my favorite part of the movie, as I still believed in the many magical possibilities of life then. However, this time around, I do not see the magic in the fairy godmother, but I see the hope she represents in the story. Hope is the ability to see the beautiful gown, even in your weary and tattered clothes. Hope is in the glass slipper that you carry through life's journey to find your dream, for dreams may not be achieved without effort and hope.

This time, as the movie ends, I am disappointed that Cinderella did not have the courage to tell the prince the truth and that it was he who went looking for her after the ball. I think if Cinderella had told the truth from the beginning, neither she nor the prince would have had to endure the post-ball agony. I think rather than relying on the prince to find her, Cinderella could just as easily have gone back to the castle to find the prince.

The story of Cinderella is not unique In fact, life is hard and challenging, but it is how you overcome those challenges in reaching for your dream that gives meaning to your struggles and measures your life's worth. So, keep moving forward, have faith in your own strength and don't give up because it is only you who can define and achieve your dreams.





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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

MEET...Kasha

By Beverly Murray



Kasha Graves

Tell me about yourself.

I have been happily married to my best friend Darius for 20 years. I am a mother of 4 beautiful daughters, a grandma to a fast-growing grandson, and a dog mom to Jake. I absolutely love being a grandma and enjoy every moment spent with him. I have always been family-oriented. I love my family.

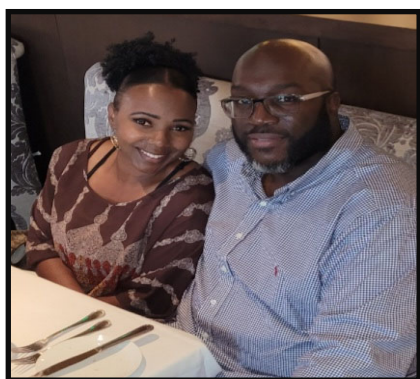
What do you like most about working for the OIG?

I've always worked for larger offices, but this is the smallest office I have worked for, and it seems to me like this office has more of a family atmosphere, but we are also very hard workers. I like the fact that we are on the same page when it comes to what our goals are for the office and that's honesty and integrity.

Tell me a success story that you are proud of in your career.

When I was working for Homeland Security, I came up with a better interviewing process that could cut down on the EEO complaints that were filed with TSA officers. I also used to work for the former Insurance Advocate under the former Governor Jennifer Granholm. One of the things I was really proud of was when I was seven months pregnant, I was going through conducting and coordinating for insurance hearings across the state of Michigan.

Can you tell me a little bit more about your work background? What are some of the other things that you've done?



Kasha and Her Husband Darius

I've been in the Executive Administration background for going on close to 30 years and mostly I started off with being in the automotive industry working under the executives. From there it was local government and state government.

What is something that you like to do in your free time?

One thing I really love, and I always enjoyed and had a passion for was interior designing. I did some projects around my house, some years ago and would like to do more projects in the future. Interior design really has become more of a passion, something to do on the side. But the interior design that something I would like to do more down the line because I have always liked to help people and I can see myself working with a nonprofit organization to turn vacant houses in the community into homes for homeless people to live in.

Do you have a type of movie or book that you enjoy?

Kasha Graves: I do like watching cult classic movies. With the Covid lockdowns, one thing my family did was Friday night movie night. Even my younger daughters, except one, like to watch classic movies. One movie we like is Coming to America. We also watch classic TV shows like Martin and my husband has my youngest daughter, Taylor, watching Family Matters.

If you had a superpower, what would it be and why?

I used to say I want to be able to read people's minds, but there are some challenges that could come with that. It is because sometimes you think you can read a person from the outside and what they are actually thinking, and who they are is a totally different character from inside. I think one thing people would say about me is that I am a giving or sweet person because I love helping people. I think I could read a person's mind sometimes, especially when dealing with a lot of mental illness in the world, I feel like maybe that could be helpful as far as eliminating some of the tragedies that occur in the world.

What is your dream vacation?

So, one of places on my list to visit is Paris. I always wanted to go there and my daughter Taylor is going there next year with her French class. I was planning to go with her but it's so expensive so we will see. From what I hear it is a romantic environment I always wanted to visit the Eiffel Tower.



Myree, Taylor, Mare'a, and Darielle



Braylon



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RED FLAGS OF PUBLIC CORRUPTION



Grant Fraud

By Jennifer Bentley

A grant is one of the ways the City can fund ideas and projects to provide public services and help the economy. Grants are usually for a specific amount of money and is given to an organization or person for a particular purpose such as home improvements, starting a business, or education. Grant fraud may occur when an award recipient attempts to deceive the City about their spending of grant money.

Red Flags May Include:

- ❏ Falsifying the information provided in grant applications or proposals.
- ❏ Influencing City employees to award a grant or contract to a particular company, family member, or friend.
- ❏ Charging personal expenses as business expenses against the grant.
- ❏ Charging for costs that do not relate to the grant.
- ❏ Charging for inflated labor costs or hours.
- ❏ Charging for labor costs that were not incurred such as charging for fictitious employees, contractors, or consultants
- ❏ Billing more than one grant for the same work.
- ❏ Misrepresenting a project's status to continue receiving City grant funds.

As always, these red flags should not be taken alone as evidence that fraud is occurring. However, please contact the OIG if you see any of these red flags.



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AROUND THE INSPECTOR GENERAL WORLD



Waste: Hotel Rooms for City Employees at Mardi Gras

By Kelechi Akinbosedede

The Office of Inspector General for the City of New Orleans conducted an investigation into an allegation that the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office (OPSO) improperly obtained hotel rooms at the Omni Royal Orleans Hotel for Command Staff during Mardi Gras in 2023.

To increase parade route security at Mardi Gras, the City of New Orleans requested that the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) and outside law enforcement agencies assist with parade security and other law enforcement functions during Mardi Gras. Under a cooperative endeavor agreement between the City and OPSO, the City would pay for single lodging expenses for officers from outside law enforcement agencies who traveled more than 35 miles to work the Mardi Gras Detail from February 16, through the day after Mardi Gras Day, February 22, 2023. However, under the agreement neither NOPD personnel nor OPSO Command Staff were to be provided lodging expenses.



The OIG issued a subpoena for hotel reservation records on the hotel pertaining to the rooms reserved by the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office. According to the records, OPSO reserved 13 rooms for 7 nights from February 14, 2023 to February 22, 2023, which means 90 nights were purchased. Of the 90 nights secured and paid for by the OPSO, 37 nights were used by OPSO staff. Four employees stayed six nights or more, three employees did not occupy a room at all, and six employees stayed three nights or less. The total charge for the rooms was \$18,174, while the total charge for the unused rooms was \$11,046. The OPSO Director of Finance Elizabeth Boyer confirmed that the OPSO credit card was used to pay for the hotel rooms. And the credit card will be paid using the general funds of the OPSO.

The OIG interviewed several staff from the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office. As found during the investigation, former Assistant Sheriff Kristen Morales spearheaded the idea for rooms to be provided to OPSO Command Staff and Sheriff Susan Hutson approved it. Some OPSO employees did not use the rooms, some employees believed the rooms were unnecessary, and other employees felt the length of stay was excessive. A consensus during the OIG interviews regarding the hotel rooms pertained to the incorrect assumption the New Orleans Police Department provided rooms for their command staff.

The OIG found that the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office use of the hotel rooms constituted a wasteful and unnecessary use of public funds. The OIG recommended future expenditure of taxpayer or public funds be scrutinized in order to ensure the funds are appropriate and relate to the successful completion of any OPSO mission. According to the OIG, "the wasteful expenditure of any funds, taxpayer or public, must be prevented."

To increase transparency, the OIG recommended that the OPSO adopt the Budget, Requisition, and Accounting Services System (BRASS) replacing the OPSO's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system which is an outdated purchasing system.



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HAPPY HOLIDAY SHOPPING

By April Page

The holiday season is fast approaching and with it comes two of the biggest shopping events of the year: Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Black Friday often involves intense shopping and occasionally, crowded stores, long lines, and even some good-natured camaraderie among shoppers.

One Black Friday I joined the early morning rush to grab deals. Amid the chaos, I met a group of people who turned the long lines into a festive atmosphere. We shared stories, played games, and even exchanged shopping tips. It transformed a potentially stressful day into a surprisingly enjoyable and communal experience.

Unfortunately, gone are the days of the annual Toys' R Us Toy Book. I remember standing outside for 4 hours waiting to snag one of 10 Sing and Snore Ernie's at KayBee Toys in 1996. My son was so happy to see Ernie under the tree that year. My sense of pride and accomplishment warms my heart to this day!

Here are a few tips that will hopefully help you navigate this Holiday Season successfully:

Black Friday vs Cyber Monday

Which one truly offers the best deals and steals? Join me as I delve into the showdown between these two.

Black Friday: The In-Person Spectacle

Date: November 24th, 2023

The tradition: Early morning lines, doorbusters, and in-store excitement.

Best for: Those who love the thrill of the hunt and the experience of in-person shopping.

Cyber Monday: The Digital Delight

Date: November 27th, 2023

The Convenience: Exclusive online deals, easy price comparisons, and virtual cart filling.

Best for: Tech-savvy shoppers who prefer to snag deals from the comfort of their own homes.

The Myths and Realities:

Myth: Black Friday is all about electronics

Reality: Appliances, home goods, and personal care items are often discounted.

Myth: Black Friday sales are only available in stores.

Reality: You can find online deals on Black Friday. However, online deals are better on Cyber Monday. If you are looking for "out of season" items, Cyber Monday is the way to go!

Myth: There are limited time offers: Some sales may last beyond black Friday.

Reality: Some retailers offer sales as early as November 1, 2023.

Myth: Black Friday offers the lowest prices of the year.

Reality: Sometimes prices drop further later. Not all sales are genuine (some are inflated).



I am looking forward to braving the cold weather for Black Friday Sales. I am also looking forward to logging in to my favorite shopping websites on Cyber Monday, from the comfort of my home!



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Congratulations!

By

Edyth Porter-Stanley



Newly elected Association of Inspectors General Board Member- Kamau Marable

Congratulations to Kamau Marable, Deputy Inspector General, who was elected to the 2024 Association of Inspectors General (AIG) Board of Directors on September 1, 2023. Mr. Marable participated in the establishment of the City of Detroit Office of Inspector General, and has served as Deputy Inspector General for over 11 years. This experience affords him an in-depth understanding of the OIG community. Marable holds a Bachelors in General Studies-Concentration of Political Science and

Communications as well as a Masters in Political and Public Communication from Wayne State University. In addition, he possesses extensive governmental experience as Legislative Director to City Council members including a former City Council President and as Legislative Affairs Executive Assistant to a former Mayor. His understanding of government from the Legislative and Executive branches of government is invaluable to our office and will be essential to his contributions as an AIG board member.

The AIG is a non-profit, membership organization for agencies and professionals in the inspector general community. The AIG's mission is to promote "excellence in the inspector general community by establishing and encouraging adherence to quality standards, sponsoring professional development and networking opportunities, certifying individuals in IG-specific disciplines, supporting offices in governmental and external relations, and inspiring governmental entities to embrace the inspector general model as an effective tool in the fight to combat waste, fraud and abuse."

Please join the entire City of Detroit OIG staff, and members of the AIG community of approximately 200 offices, as we congratulate Mr. Marable on this admirable accomplishment.



Colleagues at the 2023 AIG Annual Training Conference