



MIKE LUCKOVICH'S BEST CARTOONS OF THE YEAR

The AJC's renowned cartoonist shares his favorites from the past year, with humorous and sometimes poignant takes on big events and controversies.

OPINION, A17-18

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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AJC EXCLUSIVE

Biden vs. Trump: 'Anxiety is real'

New AJC poll shows many voters aren't lining up behind either major-party candidate for 2024.

By Greg Bluestein
gbluestein@ajc.com

From almost the moment former President Donald Trump jumped into the race, there have been signs many voters dread a potential rematch between the Republican and President Joe Biden.

takeaways from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's latest poll of registered Georgia voters was just how many say they aren't willing to support either of the contenders in a head-to-head rematch. "The anxiety is real. I'll tell you, Democrats are worried," said Lisa LaViolette, a home health nurse from Stone Mountain. "I wish we had someone on the Democratic

side who would just stick it to Trump. And I don't think Biden could do that. I just don't feel enthusiastic about him." The poll released this week illuminated the depth of voter disillusionment in Georgia, one of a handful of politically competitive states on the 2024 electoral map, as the first nominating contests in the race for the White House get underway. Most Georgia voters have a deep

Poll continued on A10

COMPLETE POLL RESULTS, A10



AJC POLL



WHO WOULD YOU VOTE FOR IF THE ELECTION WAS TODAY?

37%

Incumbent Joe Biden

45%

Donald Trump

12%

Don't know/ will not vote

6%

A different candidate

Homicides down – 'still too high'

Despite 21% decline, total exceeds pre-pandemic numbers.



In one of the last homicides of the year, one person was killed and another injured after an argument led to gunfire before dawn Dec. 15, on Georgia State University's campus in downtown Atlanta. JOHN SPINK/JOHN.SPINK@AJC.COM 2023

Mayor credits 'strong partnerships' for major turnaround.

By Alexis Stevens
alexis.stevens@ajc.com

After increasing for three years in a row, Atlanta's homicide rate dropped by 21% in 2023, a welcome reversal echoed in other major metropolitan areas. City leaders say joint efforts will be key in continuing the trend. "I don't put an 'S' on my chest as the mayor and say I'm going to solve all of this by myself," Mayor Andre Dickens said at a recent news conference. "It takes the faith community, the business community, the nonprofits, individuals, parents, etc. to pull this off. Strong partnerships." Authorities investigated 135 homicides in 2023, down from 171 in 2022, according to recently released crime statistics. It wasn't just Atlanta. The nation also had the largest single-year decrease in recent history. It's not exactly clear why. "We're still trying to explain the crime drop that started in the '90s with great

Homicides continued on A9

Homicides in Atlanta, 1985-2023

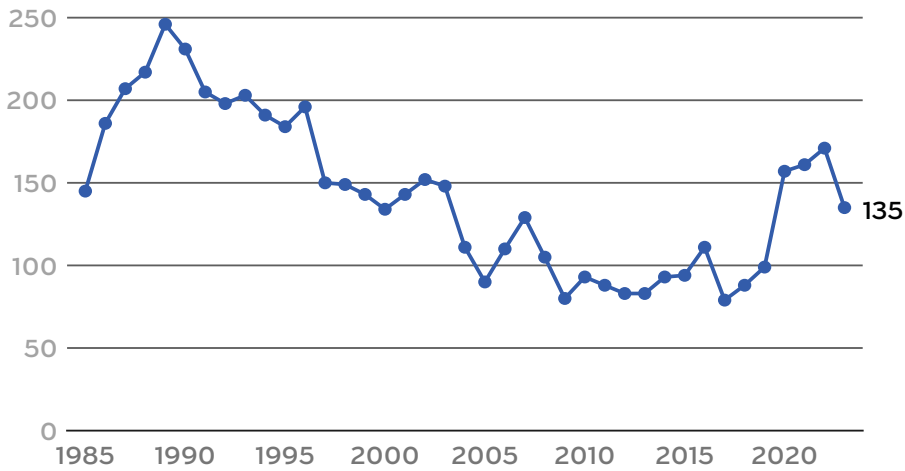


Chart: Stephanie Lamm

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation and Atlanta Police Department Reports

COMPLETE COVERAGE: INSIDE & AT AJC.COM

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Cities across the United States recorded a less deadly 2023. See how Atlanta compares to other cities. Page A9

TORPY AT LARGE: WHY THE CHANGE?

It's natural to take heart when we see the homicide rate drop, but numbers don't tell the whole story. Page B1

AJC.com

Only at ajc.com: Take a closer look at each of the 135 homicide cases investigated by Atlanta police in 2023.

Same trusted voice. New look. More content.

You may notice your Sunday AJC looks a little different today. We've updated our look and refreshed some design elements to reflect our transformation from a storied daily newspaper into a modern media company. You'll also notice expanded content offerings — all designed to better serve you and enhance the value of your subscription. For example, in today's paper you will find two special sections: ■ Everyday Heroes celebrates 52 inspiring people — and a dog named Reggie — whose acts of kindness have

helped make our communities better places to live. ■ Health & Wellness delivers practical advice that will help you live healthier and happier. You'll find simple tips for taking better care of your body, your mind and your spirit. Our mission is to be the most essential and engaging source of news for the people of Atlanta, of Georgia and of the South. While our look has changed, our commitment to deeply reported, credible journalism is the same. There's more in store in 2024. We'd love to hear what you think at LetterFromThePublisher@ajc.com.



We're quickly becoming U.S. soccer capital

Best players in the world are headed to metro area to compete and train.

By Doug Roberson
doug.roberson@ajc.com

Ten years ago, soccer in Atlanta was more of a hope than a passion. There was no Atlanta United. There was no Mercedes-Benz Stadium. There were occasional matches featuring clubs from other countries and national teams but nothing that made the city stand out as a soccer hotbed. In a very short time, a combination of factors have turned Atlanta into the capital of soccer in North America. Atlanta United, owned by Arthur Blank, took the city by storm with a fanaticism that hasn't abated. FIFA announced that 2026 World Cup matches would be played in Atlanta. The schedule will be released Feb. 4. The SheBelieves Cup, featuring the U.S. women's national team, will be played here in April. The Copa America, featuring some of the best men's national teams, will kick off in Atlanta in June.

Soccer continued on A8

Local minister dedicates life to saving homeless

His daily mission during freezing weather is getting them to shelter.

By Reed Williams
reed.williams@ajc.com

The Rev. Siegfried Darcell White thinks often about a man he used to see sitting outside a liquor store in southwest Atlanta. People would pass the man on their way inside. Sometimes he was out there overnight. One day in December 2014, the man was found dead lying behind the store near the intersection of Campbellton Road and Childress Drive. From that day on, White has dedicated his life to saving as many unhoused people as he can from dying in the cold. "Not on my watch" is his mantra. "I don't want you to freeze to death out here,"

Homeless continued on A14



Rev. Siegfried Darcell White, with Not on My Watch Ministry, says helping the unhoused is his life and who he is. ARVIN TEMKAR/ARVIN.TEMKAR@AJC.COM

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# HOME & GARDEN

DECOR

## Rethinking heritage design

Once based largely on standard European style, the aesthetic now is becoming more diverse.

African, Asian and other cultural traditions are honored in homes as residents celebrate relatives and roots.

By Felicia Feaster  
For the AJC

For generations the words “heritage” and “traditional” in home decor tended to signify European design: Chippendale desks and French provincial sideboards and recognizable symbols of predominately British or French historical style. But as with so many other things shifting in our culture, design is undergoing an overhaul in just what constitutes heritage. These days interior designers are incorporating Black, Asian, Native American, Indian, Hispanic and many other elements of homeowners’ cultural heritage into their home decor.

Influential designers such as New York-based Sheila Bridges have played with tradition in witty new ways. Her Harlem Toile wallpaper turns a hyper-traditional toile wallpaper pattern on its head. Traditional toile features vignettes of European pastoral life. Bridges mashes up toile’s historical tropes and the boom boxes, basketball and jump rope that she uses as cheeky shorthand for “Harlem” in her revisionist toile.

For Atlanta interior designer Amber Guyton of Blessed Little Bungalow, heritage is multifaceted, a combination of her roots in Lowcountry South Carolina and her African ancestry.

Visiting Charleston as a child, Guyton was entranced by the sweetgrass baskets, rooted in West African traditions, made by South Carolina craftswomen and considered some of America’s oldest handicrafts with African origins.

Guyton just launched a line of six wallpaper patterns for Chicago-based design company Mitchell Black that incorporate heritage. One of those wallpaper designs, Lowcountry Sweetgrass, is inspired by those traditional baskets and connects the designer to aspects of her heritage as both a Southerner and as the descendant of enslaved people.

“In developing this wallpaper collection, it was really important to me to create what I didn’t see in the world and also celebrate it,” Guyton said.

“I did my ancestry almost a decade ago,” added Guyton, who discovered that her roots in South Carolina and Mississippi “trace back to slavery and the African countries that I have roots in: Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali, Ghana.” Another one of her Mitchell Black wallpaper patterns, Tribal Traditions, was created to express the beauty of that African ancestry.

Guyton also often helps her clients incorporate objects, photographs or design elements that connect to their personal or cultural heritage. She came up with the idea for an Indian client to display her grandmother’s saris in shadowboxes. Another client worked with Guyton to create a dedicated “legacy room” featuring a grand aunt’s piano and a collection of photo albums. Rather than storing photos away in an attic, Guyton said, “she’s going to use this room to celebrate her heritage and her legacy.”

Guyton recommends blowing up family photos for display, “shopping” relatives’ homes for a beloved heirloom you can show in your own space or highlighting a family member’s beloved collection of



Amber Guyton’s clients celebrate their heritage in this room decorated with tribal masks and a photograph of family members. COURTESY OF BLESSED LITTLE BUNGALOW/BRITTANY BAH PHOTOGRAPHY



The red sofa and the modern twist on a Tibetan tiger rug are elements of Asian design that Jessica Davis has incorporated into her family’s home in Buckhead. COURTESY OF ATELIER DAVIS/EMILY FOLLOWILL



Designer Amber Guyton’s wallpaper Tribal Traditions, created for Mitchell Black, celebrates African style and heritage. COURTESY OF BLESSED LITTLE BUNGALOW/MECCA GAMBLE PHOTOGRAPHY

**‘Shopping vintage is always a nice way to try and find something that speaks to your past but that might be from your cultural heritage.’**

Atlanta designer Jessica Davis of Atelier Davis

coins or quilts as part of your interior design. You can also take inspiration from vintage colorways and paint a room in the hues of your father’s childhood baseball team uniform or grow hydrangeas in your garden in honor of a grandmother who loved them, as Guyton does.

Like Guyton, Atlanta designer Jessica Davis of Atelier Davis thinks that even if you

don’t have the original objects you grew up with, resale sites or antique stores offer the opportunity to re-create a treasured heirloom piece.

“Shopping vintage is always a nice way to try and find something that speaks to your past but that might be from your cultural heritage. And then I love to look on Etsy as well, because there are so many makers from around the world. So it’s sort of a global market, where you can find things that might speak to your heritage.”

Davis grew up surrounded by artwork and decorative objects that her parents collected on their travels that she has now incorporated into her own Buckhead home. Davis has made her Chinese American heritage (her mother is Chinese and her father is from Texas) a component of her interior design practice.

“I come from a very artistic family, and my parents have

always had really interesting Asian antiques,” Davis said. “And I grew up in Hong Kong. So in my entryway I have a rug which is something that my dad collected when he traveled on the Silk Road in China in the 1980s.”

Davis grew up with a strikingly modern NychairX by Japanese designer Takeshi Nii in her parents’ home. Although her parents no longer had the chair, Davis tracked one down at a store in Santa Monica, Calif. “I thought it was a cool nod back to those memories.”

Davis also has a snuff bottle collection (these relics of China’s Qing dynasty contained powdered tobacco) that references her Asian heritage. She has also incorporated Asian influences into her home with a rich red sofa and a modern take on a Tibetan tiger rug.

Davis observes more and more of her clients requesting artwork or furnishings that reflect their cultural heritage.

Several of her clients feature work by African American artists such as Atlanta’s Shanequa Gay in their homes.

Davis recommends rethinking the original purpose of an heirloom piece to make it work in your interior design. For instance, she turned her grandmother’s collection of embroidered handkerchiefs into throw pillows in her home.

Though some people make their homes into showrooms, “most people want it to be very personal and custom and feel collected,” Guyton said. “And a big piece of that is celebrating who you are and where you come from.”

Felicia Feaster is a longtime lifestyle and design editor who spent 11 years covering gardening, interior design, trends and wellness for HGTV.com. Felicia is a contributor to MarthaStewart.com and has been interviewed as a design expert by The New York Times, Forbes and the Associated Press.