



GOOD GOVERNMENT

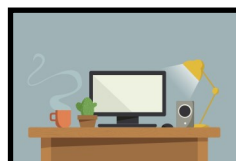
Committed to Honesty and Integrity in City Government

Kamau C. Marable — Editor-In-Chief

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FROM THE DESK OF THE IG

200 POUND BAG



IG Ellen Ha

As a child, growing up in South Korea in the 1970s, I was taught both at school and at home that any actions I take in life would reflect my family and community. In fact, I remember just shortly before my family immigrated to the US, a customs officer at the airport telling me that from that moment on, I would be representing the country of Korea to

the rest of the world. I was only 10, but I understood what he meant: people will judge how good or bad Korea is based on my conduct. I remember feeling important, but I also felt as if he had just given me a 200-pound bag to carry for the rest of my life.



Back in 1975, there weren't that many people who looked like me in Detroit or in the metro-Detroit area. So, everywhere I went, I stuck out like a sore thumb and every time I stepped out my house, I carried that 200-pound bag. And, each time I encountered a new person, I remembered the words the customs officer told me. It still reverberates within me.

After 49 years of carrying the extra 200 pounds, I should have gotten used to the extra weight. However, the fact is the weight of the bag kept increasing over the years. That is how life is for those of us who carry the bag. We carry the weight of the bag, because sometimes, it is an honor and privilege to be given the bag. So, each time the bag feels heavy, I remind myself that while the bag had been given to me, ultimately, it is I who chose to take on the weight and carry it.



To be honest, in times of despair, there were moments when I thought I would be crushed by the weight and there were moments when I wanted to unload. But, in reality, the weight did not crush me, rather carrying the bag for all those years made me stronger. I did not unload the weight, because over the years the weight had somehow become a part of me. So, to my fellow bag carriers, I say, until we can't, let's continue to take on the weight given to us and carry the bag, as far as we can go.



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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

MEET...Ellen

By Beverly Murray



Ellen Ha, Esq.

Tell me about yourself and your family.

I've been married for 28 years. I have two boys: one is 26 and one is 24. I can't believe it but I've been a lawyer for more than 30 years now. And I just cannot believe I'm about to finish out my term here as the Inspector General.

What inspired you to become the Inspector General?

I wanted to make a difference and I thought this position would be a great segue into making a difference while also trying out something different. I enjoyed my old job at the Law Department but wanted a position with a more direct impact in City government. In this particular job, I feel as though I can make positive contributions.

What do you think your legacy is as Inspector General?

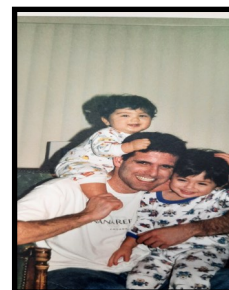
My predecessor James Heath worked so hard to get the debarment ordinance ready and unfortunately, he was not able to utilize the ordinance to do a debarment. He essentially handed me the completed debarment ordinance. I believe my legacy will be the debarments of various contractors with the city of Detroit because I got to do the first debarment ever and so far we have debarred 28 companies and individuals.

What do you enjoy outside of work?

I was not a traveler growing up. I think the furthest my parents and my family went was to Niagara Falls. But after getting married I went to Orlando, Florida for the first time in my life. Now I enjoy traveling because it has allowed me to see the world in a much broader perspective. It showed me that the problems that I encounter every day is not really a huge problem in comparison with the problems that we face in the world.

What are some of your favorite travel/vacation memories?

I have to say I think my favorite travel experience was going to Egypt with my family. I had read about it, and I've seen films and movies that contained part of Egyptian history, but I did not realize the depth of history and the diversity of the culture. In Egypt, it really made me appreciate human beings and what we are capable of doing. It's not the beauty and the glamor that you see of the Pharaohs and the Cleopatras but the real beauty is in the individual contributions made by each person who etched and painted the story of mankind. The collective work of each person presents a bigger picture and is forever preserved for all to see and appreciate the wonders of life.



Ellen's husband Roger and two sons



Ellen's sons, Teddy and Anthony

What's a cause your passionate about?

I'm very passionate about human rights and how we should coexist as one human being with another human being. There's beauty in each of us in that we are uniquely different from one another. But, if you strip apart all the differences in physical characteristics we possess, underneath, we are all one and the same. We are all humans who want and should be treated with dignity and respect. I guess I'm very passionate about being true to one another.

What is something that you are proud of about yourself?

What I'm most proud of is when I was very young and in elementary school I had an incident at school. I remember when one of my teachers had to leave the classroom, the teacher picked me to write down and report the names of any individual who spoke while the teacher was out of the classroom. When the teacher came back and asked me who spoke, I said no one because, no one spoke. And when she asked me the second and third time, my answer was the same. She told me that if I didn't give up a name that I would be punished. So, my friends got up and they all pointed to this little boy. The little boy was picked on because he always had tattered clothes. And he never had lunch. I assumed he came from a very poor family. But I told the teacher that that boy did not speak, that nobody spoke. So, I was punished. During recess, my friends came over to me and asked why I didn't just give up that boy's name and why I was protecting him. I said I wasn't protecting him. I didn't know him. I was just merely telling the truth.



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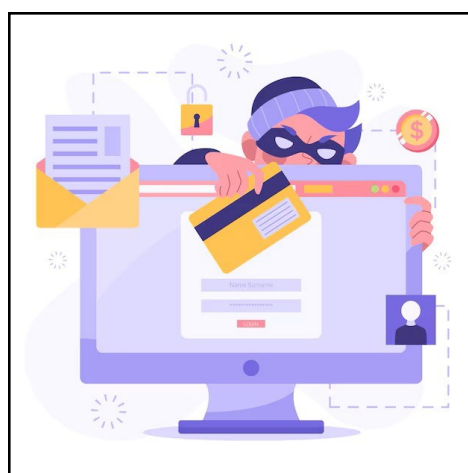
DON'T BE A VICTIM COMMON FRAUD SCAMS

By Jennifer Bentley

A common fraud scam is known as the Impostor scam. This is where a fraudster pretends to be someone you know or trust to try to convince you to send them money. They might even claim they are with the IRS or another government agency. These scams can be communicated in many different ways, including via emails, text messages, phone calls, and social media. They messages may ask you to 'confirm' or 'update' confidential personal information such as bank account numbers. In other cases, the communications might be an offer to help victims of current or prior frauds to recover any losses. Some scams may request that you pay taxes on prize winnings or fill out an insurance claim. Impostor fraudsters may also claim that you have an unpaid debt and threaten you with an arrest or a lawsuit unless you immediately pay what they claim you owe.

Here are some tips to make sure you don't fall victim to the Impostor fraud scam.

- Government agencies do not make unsolicited calls asking for money or sensitive personal information to be provided over the phone.
- Government agencies will never threaten you, or demand that you pay by gift card, wiring money, or digital currency.
- Do not open emails from people you do not know. If you are unsure if the email you received is legitimate, contact the sender in a different way.
- Even when you think you know the sender, be careful with links and web addresses. Fraudulent website addresses may be nearly identical to that of a legitimate website. Be on the lookout for a slight variation in the spelling or logo.
- You can always visit the company's website that you have typed in to complete the request instead of clicking on a link.





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AROUND THE INSPECTOR GENERAL WORLD



Refunding the Refund

By Kelechi Akinbosede



In May 2022, the Baltimore City Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a referral from the City's Department of Finance regarding the issuance of an erroneous \$2,014,571.63 refund to an incorrect company. A City vendor who processes multiple City bill payments improperly processed a payment that was supposed to satisfy the property tax for an unnamed company. The vendor accidentally applied the company's payment of \$1,008,905.89 to a property tax bill for a different company.

When the Department of Finance attempted to reverse the payment from the wrong company to the correct company, the software system for property tax bills duplicated the payment, issuing a check for \$2,014,571.63 to the wrong company. The owner of the company deposited the check into their bank account.

The OIG issued several subpoenas for the company owner's bank information. The OIG's investigation revealed that the owner had spent approximately \$58,000 of the deposited funds on purchases and had an overdrawn balance. The OIG found that the City cannot recover those funds. After the bank placed a hold on the owner's account for the remaining balance, the owner returned \$1.9 million back to the City by wire transfer. The Department of Finance provided information that assisted the OIG in referring this case to the appropriate law enforcement entities to pursue a criminal investigation against the owner. The OIG's report recommended that the Department of Finance examine both the payment vendor's contracts and the software vendor's contracts with the City's Law Department to determine if any financial loss protection exists. The report also suggested that the Department of Finance coordinate with the software vendor to create better refund processes to prevent future erroneous refund issues. In response to the OIG's recommendations, the Department of Finance reported that they had updated its policies to require a review before refunds of over \$10,000 are issued.





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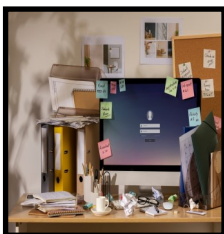
SPRING INTO CLEAN

By April Page

Refresh Your Space

Spring has sprung, and it's the perfect time to rejuvenate your home workspace and your office workspace. A clutter-free and organized home or office workspace not only boosts productivity but also creates a positive environment to get your creative juices flowing! Here are some tips to refresh both spaces:

Declutter Your Desk



Start by clearing off your desk surface. Remove any items that are not essential to your daily work. File papers, recycle unnecessary documents, and put away office supplies. Recall how you felt after cleaning your room on Saturday morning, while your mom played Luther Vandross.

Organize Your Files

Take some time to go through your filing cabinets and digital files. Purge any outdated documents and organize the remaining files in a logical manner. My mother always used to remind me of the old adage “If you haven’t touched it in 2 years, toss it!”



Clean Electronics



Your computer, keyboard, mouse, and other electronics can harbor a lot of dust and germs. Use compressed air to blow dust out of your keyboard and wipe down your screens and surfaces with electronic-safe cleaning wipes.

Refresh Your Decor

A few simple updates to your office decor can make a big difference in how you feel about your workspace. Hang up inspiring artwork or invest in comfortable chairs or desk accessories. Decorative storage is both functional and aesthetically pleasing for a home office. A personal favorite of mine is “Footprints in the sand.” Make the space your own.



Review and Reorganize



Take this opportunity to review your workflow and make any necessary adjustments. Are there any processes that could be streamlined or automated? Are there any tools or technologies that could help you work more efficiently? Use this time to optimize your workspace for maximum productivity. Maybe consider moving your home workspace to an area in your home that is specific to your needs. The kitchen table or bedroom is not always optimal. Your workspace should be separate from those two spaces. Being intentional with where you work will help you stay organized, and chances are there

won't be a mix of clutter. Finally, clearing the clutter helps to ensure that you have quick access to the most current and useful information. Refresh your office space to create a more pleasant and productive work environment. In the words of the great Whitley Gilbert, “Relax, Relate, Release!!!”