

Baltimore City Students Share Views On Violence Through Creativity



Tonia Barmadia; Imani Barmadia, 1st Place Elementary School Winner; and their mom Amanda Barmadia during the Art Against Violence gallery show. Sponsored by The University of Maryland R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center Violence Prevention Program, the event was held April 10, 2019, during National Youth Violence Prevention Week. This year's Art Against Violence theme was "Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future." Featured artwork promoted themes of anti-violence, youth against violence, strength, resilience, and collective justice and healing. (See article on page 9) Photo: Ursula V. Battle

UMBC among honorees recognized for financial literacy education

By Stacy M. Brown

The University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) received the Outstanding Organization Award from the non-profit CASH Campaign of Maryland, Maryland Council on Economic Education and the Maryland State Department of Education during the sixth annual Financial Education and Capability Awards ceremony.

The Financial Education and Capability Awards Program highlights the dedication and success of public school teachers, community champions and outstanding organizations that deliver financial education throughout the state.

Other honorees include: the Melanie Stuart of "Middletown Middle School in Frederick; Mike Martin of Lansdowne High School in Baltimore County; Ronald Jennings of Café Montgomery in Montgomery County; and Daniel Zubrowski of Havre de Grace Elementary School in Hartford County.

"The award affirms that the work we are doing to increase awareness among our students about the importance of financial literacy and to provide our students with the resources and tools they need to make sound financial decisions is important and valued," said Dr. Yvette Mozie-Ross, vice provost of Enrollment and Planning Management at UMBC. "If our students are to realize the full financial benefit of their college degree, we know that it will be important that they make good, sound decisions along the way, including decisions that have financial implications."

Originally from the District of Columbia, Mozie-Ross moved to Prince George's County with her family where she completed high school. She moved to the Baltimore area to pursue an undergraduate degree at UMBC. She graduated from UMBC with a Bachelor's in Health Science and Policy; earned a Master's in General Administration from the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) and a Doctoral in Education Policy and Leadership at the university of Maryland College Park. She has lived in Anne Arundel County for 25 years.

"I started the Financial Literacy and



Yvette Mozie-Ross of UMBC & CASH Campaign of Maryland with Board President Sheldon Caplis. Courtesy Photo

Education Committee in 2012 with a colleague," Mozie-Ross said. "My colleague has since left the university but our work continues strong with 15 dedicated committee members including students, faculty, staff and administrators and a number of external partners."

Financial education focuses on a range of financial management concepts and

behaviors including budgeting, careers and income, credit, savings, financial decision-making, and understanding values and habits about money, according to CASH Campaign officials.

The awards were developed by the CASH Campaign, in conjunction with the Maryland State Financial Education and Capability Commission, to call attention to the importance of financial education to the lives of Marylanders.

"Good financial decisions are vital to strengthening the economic lives of all Marylanders, from youth to older adults.

We developed the Financial Education & Capability Awards to call attention to this important issue," said Robin McKinney, Co-Founder & CEO of the CASH Campaign of Maryland. "We congratulate these award-winning teachers, community champions and outstanding organizations dedicated to helping people understand the importance of making good financial decisions for a better financial future."

For Mozie-Ross, the award that UMBC received underscores the importance of financial literacy, which was impressed upon her as a child.

"Having been raised by my mom, a single parent on a very limited income, I learned first-hand how important it was to make sound financial decisions and to manage your finances," Mozie-Ross said. "My mother was frugal in her spending, understood the importance of saving and taught us the importance of delaying gratification.

"Her unapologetic no-nonsense approach to finances laid the foundation for me to live a healthy and well-balanced life financially and these were invaluable lessons and I am committed to passing these lessons on to others."

For more information about the CASH Campaign, visit: www.cashmd.org



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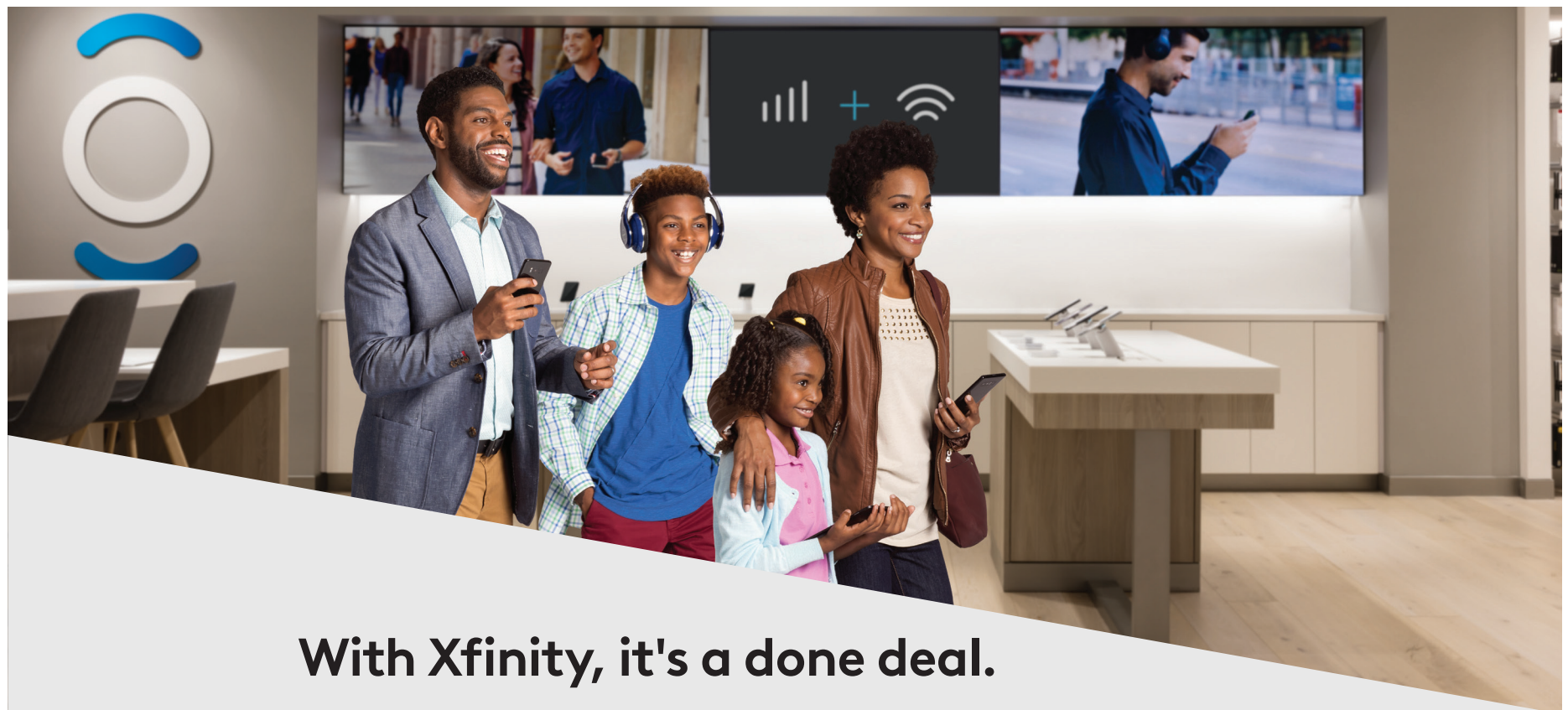
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From The Ashes...

The near destruction last Friday of 850-year Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris to fire is unarguably a major loss to the Catholic Church, Parisians and visitors from around the world who have had experiences associated with this ancient icon. International media coverage of the fire, the history and subsequent efforts to raise funds and take preliminary steps to rebuild the church have been wall-to-wall, around the clock. Clergy, politicians, dignitaries, celebrities and Catholic pilgrims - worldwide - have weighed-in with commentary, prayers and regret.

While there should never be competition to determine whose loss is greater or more significant when it comes to faith or religious-based calamity, it is difficult to ignore when the whole country seemingly pauses to recognize the accidental burning of a church in Europe, while three African American churches in one state, within 10 days, intentionally burned, are reported as a matter-of-fact, almost a footnote in the 24-hour news cycle.

Unfortunately, it is typical in America for blatant crimes committed against African Americans, individually or as a community, if reported at all, to be announced with little or no fanfare, or any context regarding the larger implications or ramifications associated with sometimes heinous acts.

In Louisiana, St. Mary Baptist Church in the Port Barre, was torched on March 26th; Greater Union Baptist Church, set ablaze on April 2nd, and Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, burned on April 4th, both of Opelousas, the Parish seat. All three churches were within 10 miles of one another.

The accused arsonist in each case, Holden Matthews, the 21-year-old son of a deputy sheriff, directed his wrath towards African American Baptists, referring to them as "a bunch of brainwashed people trying to find happiness in a religion that was forced on their ancestors just as it was mine."

Matthew pleaded 'not guilty' at his arraignment last Monday. He's accused of starting the fires with gasoline and has been charged with hate crimes. It's been speculated that his motivation, in part, resulted from the influence of the 'black metal' music genre. Matthews is a member of a black metal band called Vodka Vultures.

Though not nearly the age of the Notre Dame Cathedral, each of the three African American churches were over one hundred years old. Evidenced by the church leadership of the Civil Rights Movement, these African American churches represented the bedrock of former slaves seeking their deliverance into freedom in America.

As a 2000 year-old city, 850 year-old Notre Dame is to Parisians and Catholics what a 125 year-old Baptist church is to Africans brought in bondage to America 400 years ago. More than a sacred place of worship, the African American church is the only institution controlled by slaves and former slaves that provided the faith, courage and support to deliver African Americans from bondage.

If the hellish treatment of Jews by their Nazi occupiers in Germany during World War II, sending six million to their deaths by the mostly grisly means, can rightly be The Holocaust, what terminology can describe more than twelve million souls absconded from their ancestral homes in Africa and perishing under brutal slavery over the course of 400 years?

Attacking and destroying African American churches in America in 2019 signals that a system that enslaved African Americans for more than 250 years, maintained them in Apartheid (Jim Crow) for 100 years, and has fought the equal rights amendment for 50 years, has not relented to equality.

Paying scant attention to African American church burning is a stark indication of how far we've yet to rise.



Letters to the Editor:

Editor:

Drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States.

Those with loved ones who are using opiates or heroin need to be aware that opiates are the main contributors to this problem. With drug dealers across the United States mixing new and powerful synthetic drugs into street opiates such as heroin, the chance of accidental overdose has exponentially increased.

The drug Fentanyl, U-47700, and Fentanyl can be 50 to 100 times more powerful than heroin, making the risk of a fatal overdose much higher. Drug dealers have been using this drug to increase the potency of their heroin at a lower cost.

These new drugs are increasing the risk to any who abuse drugs as drug dealers press drugs into pills and selling them under the guise of being something else. Today, those who abuse drugs truly are at risk as there is no telling what drugs they are taking. This is why drug rehab for heroin addiction is so important.

Now more than ever, it is essential to help those you know who are addicted to alcohol or drugs. Trying to help some-

one with an addiction can be more than frustrating. And although you just want to help, many times they fight against you as if you were the enemy. Don't be surprised if your loved even accuses you of contributing to their addiction. Hear them out and take their words into consideration but at the end of the day realize getting them sober and continuing to live is the most important thing.

These drugs have made it potentially life threatening to be an abuser of any types of drugs. Get yourself educated. If one of your loved ones is struggling with addiction, get them into treatment. Don't wait until it is too late.

There are many different approaches to the challenge of how to help a substance abuser. For free information, learn the steps of how to get someone into treatment for heroin addiction. You can also visit <http://www.narcononnewliferetreat.org/drug-abuse-information/heroin-addiction-and-abuse.html> or call 1 800-431-1754 to get help for your loved ones.

Luke Nichols
Denham Springs, LA

Mental Health and Me

From fear of diagnosis to living happily with “disorders”

By Jourdan Taylor

Looking back, at twenty-two years old, throughout my life there have been several extended periods of time where I felt much lower than my usual low. This depression might last anywhere from a few weeks to a few months of my teenage life. Realizing that you may be living with depression at a pubescent age is terrifying. I lived in a way that neglected my fundamental needs for affection and attention, for fear of what I might discover had I searched inwardly, and for fear of asking for help. At such a young age, when something feels “off” within, it’s very difficult to pinpoint why you might feel that way. Teenagers are too unfamiliar with ourselves and our mental health to properly seek aid from those that can actually make us feel better. We struggle with expressing ourselves in a healthy way.



Jourdan Taylor

Youth in this country are sent off to live on their own at eighteen. Often times, we move to an entirely new city, take up residence on our own or with other teenagers, and we’re not properly trained on how to take care of ourselves. When a child is in foreign territory, left to their own devices, it’s actually very simple and easy to do damage to our emotional health by coping with stress improperly. This is the time when many young adults take to alcohol, drugs, and other poor methods of dealing with anxiety and depression. For this reason, it is my own personal belief that we should teach mental health as part of our primary and secondary education process, so that less people make it to college unprepared.

When I turned twenty, I felt it was time to take matters into my own hands.

I was determined to find some type of treatment that could change the way I felt emotionally into more consistent positivity. Just feeling like I was being proactive about seeking treatment helped dispel the helplessness and frustration that accompanies anxiety and depression. I decided to enroll into a therapy course with other teenagers and adults. I made it known to the people charged with my care (my parents, siblings and external family members, my employer) that I would need some time and space to make sure that I was healthy enough to give them all the version of myself I felt they deserved.

But, I was still nervous. I was uncomfortable with the thought that there might be something “wrong” with me. I was afraid to confront the parts of myself I didn’t like. I was fearful that the medical professional assigned to my care wouldn’t be a person I felt like I could trust and show vulnerability to. I was worried that, by finding a therapist who could diagnose me, my worst fears about the person I might be would come to light. That I really was alone, and unique from anyone else. That I’d never feel “better”.

I had been living under the impression that no one else felt the way I did. I felt that my depression was my own, not to share with anyone for fear of “bringing them down”. It had never occurred to me that people might actually want to help take care of me. The outpouring of support from my closest friends and family was so refreshing and made me feel so good about myself, that I never

turned back from my mission to treat myself better. I continually confide in those who are here for me— my therapist, my lovely girlfriend, my parents my siblings, and my friends. I make it clear that I rely on their support, and I support them too. I remember to say nicer things to and about myself, because I can clearly remember the people I care about saying those things to me too— and meaning them.

Not enough people talk about their journey to discover better mental health. It’s a very stigmatized topic amongst youth, amongst African-Americans, and many marginalized groups that already struggle with “fitting in”. There are so many of us who live each day with some form of mental health issue, and would love to feel accepted, seen, and supported by the general public. By talking about what goes on in our minds, we can help dispel the notions that people living with depression feel. There’s no shame in seeking help with mental illness, a ton of people live with depression, anxiety, and worse every single day. It is important to have a dialogue about these issues so that our young people don’t grow up feeling alone and misunderstood.

I currently live with severe mood disorder, general anxiety disorder, and major depressive disorder— and I’ve never been happier.

If you feel like you need someone to talk to, please don’t hesitate to reach out to your loved ones and/or a medical professional.

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A homecoming could be in store for Baltimore product Hakeem Butler

By Tyler Hamilton

With the 2019 NFL Draft less than a week away, the dreams of many prospects are drawing closer. Being able to play in the NFL is an awesome feat in itself, but playing for the home team would make things even sweeter.

That's exactly what former Iowa State wide receiver Hakeem Butler has the possibility of doing. Butler is one of college football's most productive wide receivers having posted 60 receptions for 1,318 yards and nine touchdowns.

The dynamic playmaker visited with the Baltimore Ravens before the draft. At 6-foot-5, 227 pounds, Butler ran a 4.48 second time in the 40-yard dash. His size, speed, and big-play ability are exactly what Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson needs for Baltimore's offense. The Ravens have an unproven group of wideouts that would be boosted by the potential that Butler brings. His basketball background and big frame make him a major red zone threat.

While at Iowa State, there were many times where the quarterback threw the ball in Butler's direction even when he was covered knowing he'd come down with the ball. Butler plays receiver like a bully when it comes to making contested catches and throwing defensive backs off of him. The rugged style is a part



Iowa St wide receiver Hakeem Butler catches a pass during the field drills at the NFL Combine in Indianapolis. Courtesy Photo/NFL.com

of 'the dog' that was instilled in him from his early days in Baltimore.

"Baltimore, everyone knows it's a rough place but it taught me a lot. You gotta be a dawg. You can't take no days off. You gotta go out there and eat. It's a dog eat dog world. Every day I take that with me," Butler said

at the Combine.

Butler's roots are in Baltimore, he grew up in East Baltimore. But he moved to Houston and went to Travis High School in Fort Bend, Texas after his mother lost her fight with breast cancer.

Baltimore has not fared well when selecting wide receivers in the first round over the years. Names such as Travis Taylor and Breshard Perriman come to mind. They hold the No. 22 overall pick and won't draft again until the third round (pick No. 85). If they don't take Butler with their first-round pick, GM Eric DeCosta will have to orchestrate a trade to get back into position to select him late in the first or early in the second round. Moving down from pick 22 and acquiring more picks while taking Butler is always an option as well.

As he stood at the podium during the Combine media session, Butler imagined what his mother would say if she were here to see him make it to the NFL.

Added Butler, "She'd be immensely proud of me. She'd be crying tears of joy. She'd be wearing my jersey and hoping I get drafted by the Ravens. I know she's looking over me always."

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Grants Aimed at Helping Treat Older HIV Patients

By Stacy M. Brown

This year, for the first time, more than half of people living with HIV in the U.S. will be older than 50.

In Baltimore, health officials said that number is likely even greater.

After listening to healthcare providers, advocates and aging individuals living with HIV, officials at Gilead Sciences, a California-based biotechnology company that focuses on antiviral drugs used in the treatment of HIV and other viruses, said they realized more resources were needed to address their needs.

The company announced the Gilead HIV Age Positively initiative, where officials handed out grants totaling \$17.6 million to 30 different organizations in the country, including \$700,000 for the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) where Baltimore's Melanie Reese serves on the board of directors. "HIV is no longer a death sentence and it hasn't been for quite some time," said Reese, who also serves as executive



Melanie Reese, board of directors, Association of Nurses in AIDS Care and executive director of the Baltimore-based nonprofit, Older Women Embracing Life.

Courtesy Photo

director of the Baltimore-based nonprofit, Older Women Embracing Life – or OWEL.

"Until fairly recently in the HIV epidemic, there's been little awareness of the presence and impact of HIV/AIDS in

the older population; this has been particularly true regarding women," Reese said.

Health statistics have revealed the number of people living with HIV over the age of 50 is expected to grow beyond the current estimate of 50 percent to 70 percent by 2030.

Reese and officials at Gilead said people living with HIV are facing a new set of challenges as they age, as do the healthcare providers and the broader community of allies who support them.

"A lot of people didn't know these statistics primarily because there isn't a lot of talk about HIV," Reese said.

"Just as the general population is aging, so are those living with HIV. In Baltimore, it's actually over 50 percent but with medication that has improved over the span of time, people are living longer and it's easier to take the medicine regiment," she said.

As the nation observes Minority Health Month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported disproportionately high rates of infection in the black and Latino communities. Latinos are approximately 16 percent of America's population, but represent 26 percent of new HIV diagnosis. African Americans represent only 13 percent of the U.S. population, but account for 43 percent of all HIV diagnoses.

This has led to the challenge of aging with HIV disproportionately affecting these communities," Reese said, noting that the grants – part of the "Age Positively" initiative – should help ensure organizations from healthcare clinics to advocacy groups are lifting up programs that help those aging with HIV.

Several of the organizations receiving "Age Positively" grants are both led by minorities and creating programs to support minorities aging with HIV, Gilead officials said.

Grantee organizations are working to improve care coordination, increase resources for a better well-being, expand education and inform policy, officials said, adding that those aging with HIV have unique needs that not all providers are equipped to meet.

The grantees work to make sure people aging with HIV receive care tailored to their needs through continuing education and training programs for doctors and nurses, co-location of medical services innovative models of care, and other strategies, according to a news release.

As a recipient of the grant, ANAC will continue to promote the health and welfare of people affected by HIV by creating an effective, engaged network of nurses in AIDS care and studying, researching and exchanging information, experiences and ideas leading to improved care and prevention, Reese said.

The organization also will provide leadership to the nursing community in matters related to HIV and AIDS infection and its co-morbidities while continuing to advocate for effective public policies and quality care and promoting social awareness concerning issues related to HIV and AIDS.

"What I'd like for everyone to do is to take the test because it's not the end, it's only the beginning and I'd like everyone to know that everybody has an HIV status either positive or negative," Reese said.

"They should know that there's a continuum of care in place to help those who are positive to become virally suppressed and healthy and there's a continuum of care to keep individuals negative so they'll never have to go through the trauma of being diagnosed with HIV," she said.



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The Rev. Dr. Ruth Travis

Taking on 'Big C' and Looking for a Knockout

By Ursula V. Battle

The Rev. Dr. Ruth Travis is in the ring with an opponent nicknamed "The Big C" (Cancer), and she is determined to deliver a knockout blow.

"Victory," said Dr. Travis. "Cancer might have knocked me down, but it didn't knock me out. I am determined to keep fighting."

Dr. Travis is the retired Sr. Pastor of Ebenezer African American Methodist (A.M.E.) Church in South Baltimore. She is also a retired Baltimore City Public School physical education teacher, and an eleven-year breast cancer survivor.

"Since I was birthed by a mid-wife on a farm in Georgia, my life has been all about survival," said Dr. Travis. "My sister rescued me from a burning house when I was a child, I survived the heat of picking cotton at age seven, and my mother died when I was 15. 'I had never stepped foot on a college campus until I went to Morgan. I was a first-generation college student, and now I have six degrees. Breast cancer happens to be another challenge I've had to face and fight during my life journey.'"

Dr. Travis was diagnosed with breast cancer in February 2001 at the age of 62.

"I will never forget that day," said Dr. Travis, who is now 73. "My biopsy results came back, and the doctor called me and said I had abnormal cells. I was celebrating my birthday that day at McCormick and Schmick's Restaurant. I had to go to the restaurant and fake it. I was celebrating my birthday, but inside, I was falling apart. I never expected to get that call. I had gone for a mammography, but had no signs of breast cancer or history of breast cancer in my family."

Dr. Travis had a digital mammography, which allows a radiologist to capture and manipulate images so abnormalities can be seen more easily. She said that was the key to early detection and treatment.

"I was diagnosed at stage zero," said Dr. Travis. "I didn't have a lump because the cancer was in my milk



The Rev. Dr. Ruth Travis is an eleven-year breast cancer survivor. Courtesy Photo

duct. The cancer was the size of a coffee granule. I asked God 'how long do I have to live?' I was thinking that way because there is no cure for breast cancer. But then, instead of thinking of the word 'cancer', I started thinking about other words that began with the letter 'c'. I said, 'Christ, cake, car...anything that kept me from going to the 'd' word for death.'"

She added, "I heard God say, 'this is not sickness until death.' That was the beginning of my journey."

Since her diagnosis, Dr. Travis has undergone a lumpectomy. A lumpectomy is surgery to remove can-

cer or other abnormal tissue from the breast. According to the Mayo Clinic, a lumpectomy is also called breast-conserving surgery or wide local excision because—unlike a mastectomy—only a portion of the breast is removed.

"Through my journey, I have led women to Christ, and to get mammograms," said Dr. Travis. "Any kind of cancer is devastating, but you have to stay positive and have faith. People would never know I had cancer if I didn't tell them."

Pastor Travis is the founder of The Journey Continues (TJC), breast cancer survivor group. She is also working on a book, and aggressively working on opening a "Pink House."

"Women are diagnosed with breast cancer, go through surgery, check-ups and other procedures as part of their treatment. But what do you do with that time in-between? I want them to come to a Pink House, which will be a beautiful pink home where women with breast cancer can come for a night or weekend of restoration and relaxation. It will also be a place for seminars and conferences. There is no place like this anywhere," she said. "Now a lot of younger women are getting cancer. Many don't get mammograms. I want to reach them. I want to concentrate on reaching women in the Park Heights area. When God first showed me the vision for a Pink House, it was so broad. I asked him to break it down. I saw all these pieces and this house, but now all of the pieces are coming together."

Dr. Travis says the "Pink House" will cost an estimated \$800,000. She is currently looking for sponsors, and hopes to break ground in spring 2020.

"I am concentrating on God and the Pink House," said Dr. Travis. "I want my sisters to experience this joy of surviving a deadly disease without a cure. We are still here and there is a reason why we are still here. My mission is the Pink House. That keeps me going, and I plan to keep on fighting."

For more information about the Pink House, visit: www.ruthtravis.com

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Baltimore City Students Share Views On Violence Through Creativity

By Ursula V. Battle

Standing in front of her artwork on display at the Historic Memorial Episcopal Church, located at 1407 Bolton Street in Baltimore, Taylor Foreman told the group that had gathered there: “I grew up in Baltimore my whole life. I never really got impacted by violence until my freshman year in high school when my father was killed.”

Foreman, a graduate of Baltimore Polytechnic Institute added, “I didn’t like to address it emotionally. I just put it in the back of my head. It happened four years ago. I tried to put those emotions aside and not address them. But talking about it through my art really gave me an outlet to express my feelings about my father’s death.”

Foreman, who is a freshman at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), spoke to attendees during the Art Against Violence gallery show. The event was sponsored by The University of Maryland R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center Violence Prevention Program.

The event was held April 10, 2019, during National Youth Violence Prevention Week, which seeks to raise awareness on effective ways to prevent or reduce youth violence.

This year’s Art Against Violence theme was “Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future.” Featured artwork promoted themes of anti-violence, youth against violence, strength, resilience, and collective justice and healing.

Current Baltimore City students were allowed to participate, and over 100 submissions were entered. A panel of judges chose one elementary, middle, and high school winner and a runner-up, who were all recognized during the gallery show. The works of all of the submissions were on display.

Amanda Barmadia is the mother of Imani Barmadia, who won 1st Place in the elementary school category.

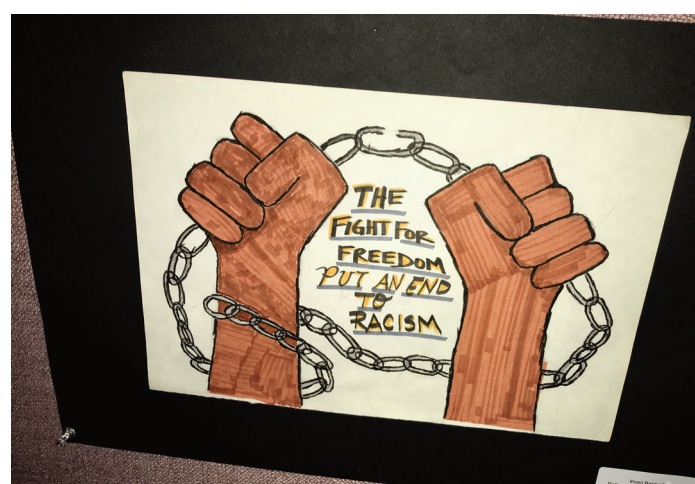
“I am very proud of my daughter,” said Barmadia. “She loves art and the Art Against Violence program is great. It allows the kids to see that art can be anything you want it to be.”

Through art, the program gives kids an outlet to articulate their feelings and be part of the conversation about violence in Baltimore and throughout the world. By using art, the University of Maryland R. Cowley Shock Trauma Center also seeks to inspire Baltimore City residents to reduce hostile and risk-taking behaviors that lead to violent and traumatic injury.

“We want to spread these messages of hope to young people before they lose someone to violence,” said



Taylor Foreman, a freshman at MICA, stands in front of her artwork. Foreman lost her father to violence four years ago. Photos: Ursula V. Battle



Imani Barmadia's submission took home 1st Place honors for the Elementary School category.

Erin Walton, Program Manager for The University of Maryland R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center Violence Prevention Program. “The goal is to engage youngsters across the city. Art Against Violence is in its sixth year. Even at the elementary level, there is very graphic imagery. Art reduces the overall long-term effects of the trauma.”

She added, “We wanted to involve MICA students, which included Taylor. “They have made a career out of art, and we also wanted them to encourage our students.”

Taylor took questions during the event, and also was on hand to speak to the young artists at the conclusion of the program. This year’s event also included food, a poetry reading, door prizes, and a Spoken Word performance by David Ross, a Violence Prevention Specialist with the University of Maryland R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center Prevention Program.

“We are always excited to offer our community space to artists to showcase their art,” said Father Grey Maggiano, Rector of the Historic Memorial Episcopal Church. “This is our third year hosting it. We are happy to be involved in this project and support these great young artists.”

The Artwork was on display at the church through April 19, 2019, and will be on display from April 22, 2019 to April 28, 2019 at University of Maryland Medical Center’s Midtown Campus.

For more information about Art Against Violence, visit their Facebook page under Art Against Violence.



Artwork of the talented artists was on display during the gallery show.



This artwork by MICA student Tyler Ballon is on display at the Historic Memorial Episcopal Church. Ballon participated in the Art Against Violence event last year, and subsequently sold his painting to the church.

Keeping Your Sanity: Getting Started in the Music Business, Part III

By Imani Wj Wright

Being an independent artist is a beautiful thing. Yes, you are your own boss, and yes, you are free from any binding record label contracts, but- do not take the word independent, too literally. Independent does not necessarily mean alone, and in this case, it shouldn't mean alone. There are so many aspects to becoming successful, and building a productive/loyal team around you is crucial.

What's a productive team? First things first, you have to understand your own energy, and then find those who match it, or maybe even exceed it. How badly do you want it? How many hours a week do you rehearse, plan, or study your craft? All of these questions are important to ask yourself as you want people who reach your level of dedication. Secondly, identify your needs. Are you disorganized and need someone who is willing to help you keep things aligned? Does your music contain lots of heavy keyboard, and you need a live keyboardist? Now, on the other side of things, also know who to not have around. Sometimes there can be too many opinions in a room, from my experience, this can (at times) slow down processes, especially artistically.

I had a chance to catch up with Baltimore native, and videographer/photographer Lukey Lenz in reference to the importance of having a good team. Lenz has worked around artists such as: PnB Rock, Method Man, and Premo Rice, to name a few. Lenz asserted:

"Good teams draw from the understanding that they each need to make opportunities for themselves and the artist,



Lukey Lenz before filming a concert in Silver Spring, Maryland
Photo: Muammar Muhammad

whether it be a promoter, booking manager, or even another artist within the group. The idea is to work like a tree, growing the branches and making more connections."

Since Lenz has been a team member for several artists, I asked him how he attributes to the artists' image, and how he tries to make them appear to the public.

Lenz laughed, and then stated: "As a visual artist I like to complement the subject by appealing to their aesthetics as well as sprinkling in some of my creative visions. Life is not necessarily like a movie, so when I do capture an artist I try to give a realistic representation of how they operate. A natural and genuine feel is what I go for because it not only gives their fans a true idea of what they are about, but who they actually are."

Lenz then went on and specified how

he attempts to capture artists in a live concert space. "On stage it is typical for me to focus or zoom as according to what I feel the artist is trying to convey. If the song feels personal, the viewer

may want to see expressions on the artist's face so they themselves can be enthralled. If the song is energetic, I'm going to give the audience a wider shot and allow them to see all the elements, pieces, and motion that make a good performance. These are subtle things that allow people to feel more connected to you and the artist."

As much as I enjoyed listening to Lenz go through his artistic outlook on visually capturing artists, I more so focused on how everything he did had purpose. He evidently plays his role with high levels of dignity zeal. He had a multifaceted outlook of himself, the task at hand, and the artist. Lenz is a prime example of the type of team member one should be, and the type of team member one needs.

Follow Lukey Lenz on Instagram @LukeyLenz

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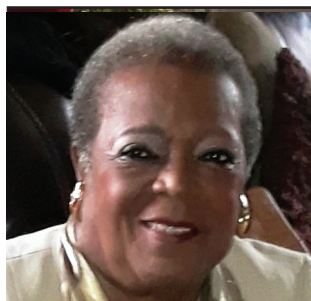


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**Spring Has Sprung!
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Rosa Pryor Trusty

Happy Easter!

Hello everyone, I hope everything is good with you. If not, just keep the faith. I have a few interesting things coming up to get you in the mood for the wonderful weather we are having. Yes, my friend, spring is here, so let's enjoy and have some fun. Get out of the house and stop moping around, especially my seniors. Life is too short to sit around doing absolutely nothing but going from a sofa to bed and wining woe is me! I will be a little out of commission for this week because my husband, my Boo-Boo, Shorty had his left knee replacement on Tuesday, April 16th so I will be home taking care of him. So keep us in your prayers.

So let's get started on some great events coming up.

Marva D is having her "Good Friday Fish Fry Party" on April 19 from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m. at the VFW Hall, 8123 Harford Road serving fried fish, with sides; it is BYOB with free set-ups and beer. For more information, call 410-599-9159.

"Jazzy Tarsha" is doing her thing again, but this time she is at the Belmont Restaurant and Lounge, located 1800 Belmont Avenue in Windsor Mill every Tuesday night with live entertainment from 5-11 p.m. On Tuesday, April 23 my group from out of Washington, DC "Signature Live!" will be performing. Please check her Tuesday Night out, it is awesome.

My friend, Walt Carr, the son of Walter Carr, Sr. of the "Nightlifer Magazine" called to inform me that Howard County MSU Alumni's "Spring Day Party" Caribbean Style Cabaret is Saturday, April 27 from 12 noon until 4 p.m. at the Kahler Hall in Columbia, Maryland. It is BYOB with free set-ups & vendors. What a wonderful day time event.

Speaking about Easter, The Forum Caterers, 4210 Primrose Avenue in Baltimore is having their Easter Sunday Buffet on Sunday, April 21 from 3-6 p.m. Give Nikita a call at 410-358-1101. I have been several times and HONEY CHILD! The buffet they serve is mind blowing! So after church, if you do not want to cook and planning to go out for dinner, this is the place.

Every Saturday from noon until 2 p.m. Lexington Market has concerts with live entertainment with local bands in the Market's Arcade stage. It is open to the public and it is free.

Look my friends, I told you about this place a couple of months ago called "CURED/8th & 21st", I know it has a wired name, but who am I to judge. All I can say is that two of my favorite musicians are playing there every Sunday including this Sunday, April 21. It is a wonderful venue for exquisite dining, incredible cocktails and a wonderful and fitting variety of live music performances including Jeff Wilson on piano and Terry Battle on bass from 5-8 p.m. The venue is located at 10980 Grantchester Way in Columbia, Maryland next to Merriweather Post Pavillion. If you are familiar with the group called "Jumpstreet" than you know these guys. They play quite the variety of music as they do with their whole band. Just check it out, you won't be sorry. Write me and tell me what you think.

So my friends enjoy your weekend and check out the photos on my page with more information on what is going on. I have to go now. I am out of space, but remember if you need me, call me at 410-833-9474 or email me at rosapryor@aol.com. UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.



Joe Chambers & Dennis Chambers Quartet will perform on Friday, April 26 at the An die Musik LIVE, located 409 N. Charles Street in Baltimore with Joe on vibes/drums and Dennis chambers on drums, Allyn Johnson on piano and Herman Burney on bass. Showtime is at 8 p.m. It is sure to be a percussion extravaganza and a jazz party to me. For more information, call 410-385-



St. James Brotherhood of St. Andrew is hosting a "Jazz Concert" in memory of Howard Easley featuring the Craig Alston Quartet on Saturday, April 27 from 1-4 p.m. at the Parrish Center on Lafayette & Arlington Avenues. For more information, call 410-523-4588.



Rosa Pryor's group from out of DC "Signature Live!" will be performing at the Belmont Restaurant & Lounge, 1800 Belmont Avenue, Windsor Mill, Maryland on "Jazzy Tarsha" Tuesday Nights Live on Tuesday, April 23, 7-10 p.m.



Anderson Ward, renowned photographer and race car driver has made it to the final round in the Mitsubishi vs. Subaru Bracket Class at Street Wars in Cecil County Drag Way as a winner. Congrats my friend.

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