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Rising African American opera star snags lead role in Samson & Delilah at Kennedy Center



J'Nai Bridges is bringing her vibrant voice to The Kennedy Center. Bridges will have a lead role in the seduction and deceit tangle that is Saint-Saëns's sensual grand opera, "Samson & Delilah," which debuts at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. March 1, 2020, (See article on page 11) Photo: Nadav CJ Photography

Good health starts with your heart

By Stanley S. Liu, M.D., FACC

While February is traditionally American Heart Month, we should be taking care of our heart every day—365 days a year! As a community, African-Americans have higher rates of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity and diabetes—the four major risk factors for heart disease. For this reason, preventing heart disease before it happens is critically important to the African-American community.

African-American women are at especially increased risk for heart disease:

- Cardiovascular disease kills nearly 50,000 African-American women annually

- Forty-nine percent of African-American women ages 20 and older have heart disease...

- ...but only one in five African-American women believes she is personally at risk for heart disease.

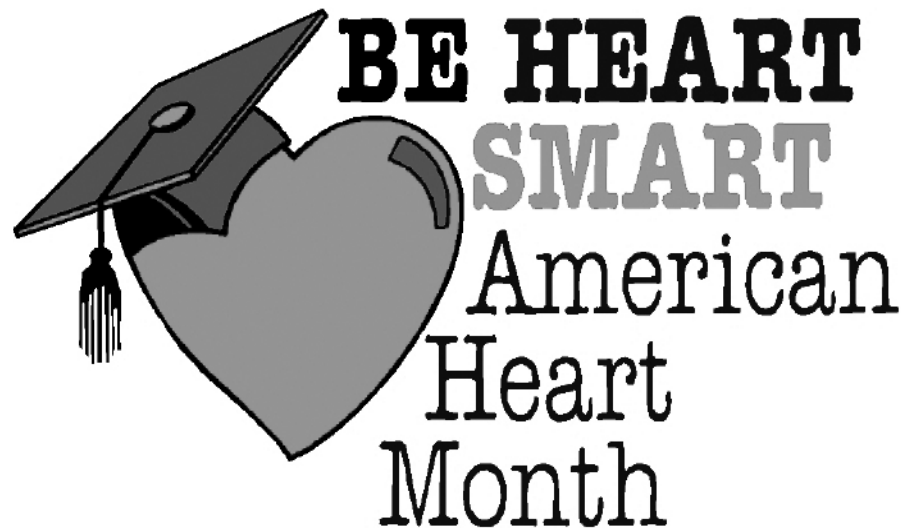
Join the University of Maryland Medical Center team at Leap into Heart Health Day, Saturday, February 29, 2020 from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. at Harlem Park Recreation Center for a day of free health services including blood pressure screening; quit smoking information; and BMI screening to learn more about how to prevent heart disease.

Nearly half of African-American men and half of African-American women have some form of cardiovascular disease that includes heart disease and stroke. But you can reduce your risk and improve your heart health by following the **ABCS**:

- **A** – Take aspirin if your healthcare provider recommends it
- **B** – Control your blood pressure
- **C** – Manage your cholesterol
- **S** – Don't smoke

A: Take aspirin as directed by your health care provider. Ask your health care provider if aspirin can reduce your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Be sure to tell your health care provider if you or your family members have ever had heart disease or a stroke.

B: Control your blood pressure. African-Americans are more likely to develop high blood pressure, which



increases the risk of heart attack and stroke more than any other risk factor. Work with your doctor to develop goal blood pressure numbers, and a plan on keeping them down. Your health care provider may suggest strategies, such as:

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Eat more fruits and vegetables and choose foods low in sodium (the main ingredient found in salt).

- **Get moving.** Experts suggest doing a 10-minute walk 3 times a day, for at least 5 days a week. If that seems like a lot, start smaller – any physical activity is better than none.

- **Take your medications.** When diet and activity is not enough, your health care provider may give you medicine to help control your blood pressure. Ask your health care provider if you have any questions on how to take the medications, how much it may cost, and what side effects you might have. Tell your health care provider if the medicine makes you feel bad; there may be better medications for you.

C: Manage your cholesterol. Cholesterol is a waxy substance produced by the liver and is found in animal-based foods. High cholesterol levels can cause blood vessel blockages that cause heart disease. Talk to your health care provider how to lower your cholesterol levels if they are too high. Diet changes and medications such as statins can save lives by preventing blockages in the blood vessels.

S: Don't smoke. If you smoke, quitting smoking may be the best thing you can do for your heart health. It's never too late to quit smoking. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW today or visit smokefree.gov for free counseling and medications, or talk to your doctor.

What women need to know and do: Heart disease kills more American women than any other cause, and African-American

can women are especially at risk. Talk to your healthcare provider about your own personal risk of heart disease and the steps you can take to prevent it. Cardiologists at the University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) are dedicated to helping women prevent and manage heart disease.

And be sure to come by the Community Health Education Center on the UMMC Midtown campus any day for blood pressure screening and other health services that can help you take care of your heart!

Stanley S. Liu, M.D., FACC is an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, and Associate Program Director of the Cardiovascular Disease Fellowship. His is also Director of Inpatient Consultative Services and/or Director of Cardiac Rehabilitation Services for the University of Maryland Medical Center.

Additional sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Heart Association

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Guest Editorials/Letters

Aircraft Carrier Named After Doris Miller

By Lauren Victoria Burke
NNPA Newswire Contributor

The U.S. Navy is set to name a new aircraft carrier after World War II hero Doris Miller. Miller was a Mess Attendant 2nd Class from Waco, Texas. The aircraft carrier naming would be the first to be named after an African American.

In June of 2016, the USNS John Lewis (T-AO-205), a U.S. Navy replenishment oiler was named after civil rights legend and Congressman John Lewis. But the USNS John Lewis is not a warship.

On January 19, 2020, the Navy announced that CVN-81 would be named after Miller. The CVN-81 is a Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier scheduled to be built in 2023 and launched in 2028.

Miller fought during the attack on Pearl Harbor after the Japanese surprise attack on the islands on December 7, 1941. Miller was the first

African American to receive the Navy Cross for valor, the third highest honor in the Navy. Miller shot an anti-aircraft gun during the attack on Pearl Harbor though he had no training on the gun. He also took care of wounded members of the ship he was on, the U.S.S. West Virginia.

The U.S.S. West Virginia He served breakfast that morning and was collecting laundry when his ship was hit by the first of seven torpedoes plus two bombs. "The sacrifice and patriotism of heroes like Doris Miller inspired me to pursue public service," said Rep. Bernice Johnson (D-TX). "Though he is deserving of even higher official recognition, including the Medal of Honor, the announcement of the naming of this vessel on Martin Luther King Day could not be more fitting.

Until Franklin Roosevelt's administration, African Americans could not serve in the military at all but attendant, steward and cook positions were open to blacks. Miller enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1939 at 19.

Two years after Pearl Harbor, Miller was killed in action when his ship Liscome Bay was attacked by a Japanese submarine during the Battle of Makin. Miller was presumed dead and was declared "missing in action" on December 7, 1943, two years after his heroic actions at Pearl Harbor.

Miller's heroic actions were publicized numerous times in the black press and he became an icon of African Americans.



Doris Miller, Mess Attendant First Class, USN. wearing the Navy Cross medal, which was awarded for heroism during the Pearl Harbor Attack, 7 December 1941.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives Also at NHHC. (2016/07/05).

Lauren Victoria Burke is an independent journalist for NNPA and the host of the podcast BURKEFILE. She is also a political strategist as Principal of Win Digital Media LLC. She may be contacted at LBurke007@gmail.com and on twitter at @LVBurke

The coronavirus is dealing a blow to China's image...



I must find something to restore confidence in our leadership...



Letters to the Editor:

Editor:

Thanks to an innovative new program in Maryland, there is good news for those looking for health insurance. This tax season, Marylanders have a special opportunity to sign up for coverage. Filing taxes may not be one of life's great pleasures but this year, we can reduce the number of uninsured individuals when they file.

Maryland Health Connection, in conjunction with the Comptroller of Maryland, is providing state tax filers who file by the April 15 deadline an easy path to sign up for health coverage.

To participate, check the box on your state tax form 502 allowing the Comptroller of Maryland to share information, like your household size and income,

with the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. Maryland Health Benefit Exchange will then check if you are eligible for free or low-cost health insurance and mail you a letter explaining your options. You have 35 days from the date on your letter to sign up for a plan through Maryland Health Connection. This is a special opportunity available only to Marylanders who check the box on their tax form. Otherwise, you may have to wait until the fall to sign up.

This tax season remember to check the box to check out your health plan options.

Michele Eberle

Executive Director

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange
Baltimore, MD

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Black Life Journeys Matter

*By Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.,
President and CEO, National
Newspaper Publishers Association*

The U.S. Census is now preparing to count all who live in the United States of America. For the more than 50 million black Americans in the U.S., the 2020 U.S. Census is vital. Our numbers do matter and must be properly and accurately counted. Our birth rates count. Our socioeconomic rates count. Our death rates count. The overall quality of life in black America will be impacted for the next ten years as a result of the 2020 U.S. Census.

The full life journeys of all black Americans are important. Today, we are observing and celebrating 2020 Black History Month. This is the time for understanding and learning from the past to change the present and to ensure a better future for Black America.

While there has been a lot of appropriate national attention and focus on the

beginning of life's journey, there has not been enough attention on the inevitable transition and conclusions of one's life journey, particularly from the African American perspective.

This year is the 193rd year of the Black Press of America, represented today by the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) across the

important partnership with Compassion & Choices to acquire a more in-depth awareness and knowledge about how black Americans and others are enabled to have a planned, dignified and well thought out, peaceful transition without the sudden unpreparedness that happens too often in many black American families.

pers cover and publish the obituaries of people in the communities in which we serve as a matter of tradition and respect for the untold positive contributions of those who make their final transition at the end of their remarkable life journeys.

We know that we have to show respect to each other in our families, communities, and careers. Black love is about black self-respect. Too often black lives are ended in some type of hardship, tragedy, brutality, prolonged sickness or some unexpected unavoidable circumstance. But all of our final transitions should be observed with the utmost respect and dignity.

Planning for one's transition does not mean you are ready to die before your time is up or that you are attempting to hurry or rush your departure from this world. To the contrary, planning the final transition of your life is like having a sustainable life insurance policy that removes the burden of your transition from your love ones.

Talking about and planning your transition will not kill you, but it will save your loved ones the awful sorrow and agony of unpreparedness. We are grateful to Compassion & Choices for helping us to transfer our reluctance and fear of discussing the ultimate transition of our life journeys into a responsible and respectful plan of love and dignity.

Yes, black life journeys matter at the beginning and at the end. We all have the opportunity and the responsibility to respond to this issue in a timely manner.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. is President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and can be reached at dr.bchavis@nnpa.org

The NNPA began a unique and important partnership with Compassion & Choices to acquire a more in-depth awareness and knowledge about how black Americans and others are enabled to have a planned, dignified and well thought out, peaceful transition without the sudden unpreparedness that happens too often in many black American families.

nation. I am proud of the expansion and progress of the Black Press even amidst trying and challenging economic times for Black owned businesses. The NNPA corporate partners and sponsors, such as Compassion & Choices, immeasurably help to sustain the Black Press.

The NNPA member publishers and newspapers, complimented by their digital distribution of content, including a wide array of social media channels, cover the news that oftentimes gets left out of mainstream news media. One of the reasons why the Black Press continues to be the trusted voice of black America is because we report on the entire journey of black America from life to death from generation to generation.

The NNPA began a unique and

Compassion & Choices is committed to empowering people to get the care they need during a serious illness or at the end of life. One way to do that is by helping people plan well and become good advocates for themselves and their loved ones.

In other words, the entirety of one's life journey is precious and should be prepared for the end of the journey with dignity and respect. It is really about taking responsibility to ensure that your transition will be handled in a manner that you have pre-determined with the interest of all those you love and who love you.

This is a subject that is often avoided until the finality of death confronts the loved ones of the departed. Our newspa-

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Ravens' Bradley Bozeman and wife kick off anti-bullying campaign at Pikesville Middle School

By Demetrius Dillard

Nationwide, bullying prevention efforts are well established but with the growing prevalence of social media, bullying remains a glaring concern. Baltimore Ravens offensive lineman Bradley Bozeman and his wife, Nikki, have joined the national campaign against bullying as they kicked off their Anti-Bullying National Tour on February 7, 2020, at Pikesville Middle School.

For nearly two years, the couple has made a concerted effort to educate youth on the harmful effects of bullying. The Bozemans founded an organization to further their anti-bullying efforts—the Bradley and Nikki Bozeman Foundation, which seeks to impact the lives of at-risk children and families with a focus on the dangers of childhood bullying and the importance of treating everyone respectfully, standing up for others and being true to oneself.

Their cross-country tour will consist of stops to schools in 17 states spanning from the Mid-Atlantic, to the Deep South, to the West Coast in their R.V. to fulfill the goal of raising awareness about the dangers of bullying and cyberbullying. The excursion is set to run through March 25, 2020.

“It was great. I was so excited when we walked out here,” Bradley said after the kickoff event. “The kids, I think, responded pretty well.”

Bradley and Nikki’s personal experiences have given them a platform to help adults and children learn how to recognize bullying, respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior, and send a strong message that such behavior is unacceptable.

They were prompted to reinforce the anti-bullying message to students in



Baltimore Ravens offensive lineman Bradley Bozeman and his wife, Nikki, kicked off their Anti-Bullying National Tour on February 7, 2020, at Pikesville Middle School. The Bozemans’ cross-country tour will stop in 17 states and is set to run until March 25, 2020. (Left) Bradley Bozeman with a teachers and students from a Pikesville Middle School class. (Right from left to right) Bradley Bozeman; Pikesville Middle School Principal Kalisha Miller; former Maryland State Senator Bobby Zirkin; and Nikki Bozeman.



Photo Credit: Bobby Zirkin

April 2018 when they were asked to send an inspirational video to a girl of Chinese descent who was being bullied, according to Bradley, a Roanoke, Alabama, native and former standout for the University of Alabama football team.

Instead of sending the video, they went to the girl’s school and spoke to the student body about the harmful effects of bullying. Interacting with students and hearing their stories has been a humbling and eye-opening experience, Bradley added.

Throughout the rally, Pikesville Middle School students had the privilege of getting to learn true stories of bullying from the Bozemans and had the chance to share some of their stories with classmates, faculty and the Bozemans.

“They (children) shared their stories, and they were very brave, and told all about what was going on,” Nikki said.

The children asked a variety of questions, ranging from Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson to whether the Bozemans had ever counseled people who attempted suicide, according to Nikki.

“It means a lot to our kids, to our staff and our community because middle school is a very difficult time for students naturally,” said Kalisha Miller, principal of Pikesville Middle School, who readily welcomed the Bozemans to kickoff their campaign at the school. “To have someone like Mr. Bozeman and his wife come and really share with the kids and be vulnerable, and talk about what they went through as middle school kids, and how they got through it and some of the things that [students] could do to get through whatever they’re going through.

“What I also hope is that they (students) took away is knowing their resources and knowing who they can

reach out to, and they’re not alone,” Miller said. “If something is happening, they have plenty of staff members to open up to so that we can support them.”

Recently, former Maryland Senator Bobby Zirkin collaborated with the Bozemans in their advocacy against bullying of any kind. In 2019, Zirkin crafted “Grace’s Law 2.0,” a piece of legislation targeting cyberbullying. The law was named for Maryland teen Grace McComas, who committed suicide after suffering from constant online bullying.

The next stop for the Bozemans will be at a school in Kennesaw, Georgia, which is Nikki’s hometown.

Bradley and Nikki Bozeman pride themselves in using their platform to combat a growing epidemic among America’s youth. To conclude the kickoff, the couple took pictures with Pikesville Middle students, faculty and staff.

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Calvert Hall Celebrates 175 years:

Baltimore leaders Karl Perry, Shawn Vinson share their experiences

Baltimore— Calvert Hall College High School, the first Christian Brothers School in the United States, opened its doors to 100 students at 16 West Saratoga Street in Baltimore 175 years ago. Today, nearly 1,200 students come from more than 105 zip codes to its campus in Towson.

The all-boys, Catholic, Lasallian high school's 16,000 alumni are prominent in Baltimore and beyond, in fields such as banking, health care, education, financial services, law enforcement, media, sports, philanthropy and more.

Among those alumni are Baltimore-area leaders Karl Perry, a graduate of the Class of 1985 and principal of Edmondson High School; and Shawn Vinson, from the Class of 1989 who serves as the chief spokesperson for the Baltimore County Police Department and the director of the public affairs unit for the agency.

Both agree that the education they received at Calvert Hall prepared them well for the lives they lead.

"The Hall provided me with a world-class education which has prepared me to change the lives of others," said Perry. "Equally as important are the lifelong brothers who I have made as a result of being a Hallman."

The school's core principles, following the Lasallian tradition established by Christian Brothers' founder St. John Baptist de La Salle, include educating the whole person by respecting each individual and joining the greater community that professes faith, justice and service. Reflecting the world around it, Calvert Hall welcomes students from diverse geographic, racial, religious, economic and learning backgrounds.

Perry, who came to Calvert Hall from Catonsville, was an active student participant in the school's Black Awareness Club and played football for Calvert Hall. Vinson, from the Perry Hall/White Marsh area, also was involved in the school's Black Awareness Club and was a homeroom representative in student government in the ninth grade.

Both note how faculty and staff members care about the students and want to



(Left) Karl Perry, a 1985 graduate of Calvert Hall, is the principal of Edmondson High School. Courtesy Photo/Karl Perry (Right) Shawn Vinson, a graduate of Calvert Hall's Class of 1989 who is the chief spokesperson for the Baltimore County Police Department and the director of the public affairs unit for the agency, meets with Calvert Hall student Travis Fruhling '19 during the school's annual Career Day. Courtesy Photo/Calvert Hall College High School

see them become successful men, a commitment that continues today.

"Joe Baker was my geometry teacher. He guided us into becoming caring, supportive and fair men," Perry explained. "June Brown [typing teacher] was our 'mother' at the school. She supported us through all our endeavors and still does to this day."

Vinson agrees. "Calvert Hall has so many programs and resources that will help you succeed. The staff and teachers of Calvert Hall honestly care about the students. You can tell it's more than just a job for them."

Calvert Hall is known for excellence in academics, fine arts and athletics. All three are equally important. Recent honors include two students being named National Merit Semi-Finalists in the fall. The Robotics Team was recognized as the 2019 Maryland State Champions, the fifth time in the last six years. The Marching Band won its fourth consecutive USBands National Championship in November and captured its fifth straight USBands Maryland State title the month before. During the last academic year, The Hall won nine sports championships, including its third straight MIAA A Conference lacrosse title.

"I appreciate the continued growth of economic and social diversity of the student body," Vinson said. "Also, there is

such a focus on technology at Calvert Hall today. Students are getting experiences that many colleges cannot match."

"As a student, you may not always realize the value of the education, experiences and relationships that is provided to you by Calvert Hall," Vinson said. "When you graduate, you become a part of a brotherhood that will continue to provide countless opportunities to you throughout your life."

After graduating from Calvert Hall, Perry earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from West Virginia University and then a master's degree in education with an emphasis on special education from Coppin State University. "College was easy to me following my years at The Hall. I was truly well prepared."

"Calvert Hall helped to influence my decision [to pursue education in college] because it reiterated the importance of education in opening up a pathway to change the world," said Perry, who comes from a long line of educators.

Vinson received a bachelor's degree in business in addition to a law degree from the University of Baltimore.

"Calvert Hall provided me with the skills to be able to handle the academic demands of college. You must have time management skills to ensure that you attend classes, make appropriate use of your free time, prepare for finals and

meet deadlines," Vinson said. "These are all expectations of you as a student at Calvert Hall."

Perry and Vinson stay involved as active alumni at Calvert Hall. Both participate in the school's annual Career Day. Vinson recently joined the school's board of trustees.

"Calvert Hall provided me with so much support during my formative years that I feel there is an obligation to return what has been given," Vinson explained. "I hope in some way that I can mentor students so that they can gain the insights and experiences that I have been able to realize."

Perry remains an active alumnus of Calvert Hall because "Calvert Hall has helped pave a blessed life for my family and myself."

Calvert Hall celebrates its milestone anniversary with Gala 175 on Saturday, March 21, 2020 at 6 p.m. at SECU Arena in Towson. The black-tie optional evening includes cocktails, dinner, Hall of Fame induction and dancing. Being inducted into the school's Hall of Fame are John Murtaugh '61 (posthumously), John Noppinger, Jr. '64, W. Daniel White '65, Kenneth Boehl '72, and Francis Smyth '78.

For more information, visit calverthall.com/gala.

Motivational Speaker, Author Pam Curtis

‘Pushing the Vision’ of the Community

By Ursula V. Battle

It takes only a brief moment to be in the company of Pam Curtis to realize she is an encourager. She exudes connectivity, shuns negativity, and speaks positivity.

“Everyone wants to be a King or Queen,” said Curtis. “But I would rather be a King or Queen maker.”

Curtis is the founder of Pushing the Vision Outreach, Inc. a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Founded in 2010, the multicultural organization caters to underserved communities. According to Curtis, the organization caters to homelessness, abused men, women and children, and provides life skills preparation training, mentoring programs, financial counseling, motivational speaking, and other services.

“I just want to push the vision,” said Curtis. “I just love building our people up. There is just too much jealousy in the world. Women against women. Men against men. Some women will look at another woman and say, ‘she thinks she’s cute’. Well, I hope whoever they are talking about does think she’s cute. To be honest, I hope she thinks she is gorgeous.”

She added, “For so long, so many mothers and daughters have been told they can’t wear certain colors because of their complexion. They’re told, they’re not light enough. Or they’re told, they’re not dark enough. We have been forced into a state of low self-esteem.”

Curtis said she was bullied growing up.

“I grew up with a speech impediment, said Curtis. “I stuttered, and was bullied over my speech. All through elementary, middle school, and in high school. Some of the same ones who teased or bullied me, now ask for my help. Around December, one of them wanted to know how I got through being bullied. She was asking for my assistance because she had a daughter who was being bullied.”

Curtis’ became choked up as she added, “When I struggled to speak out loud, I just used everything God placed



Pam Curtis, 36, is the Founder of Pushing the Vision Outreach Inc. a multicultural organization that caters to underserved communities. She also serves as Community Outreach Coordinator for Park Heights Renaissance, Inc. and is the President of the Park Circle Community Association. Courtesy Photo

in me. I tell people that their voice is their impact. I don’t care if they stutter or their voice cracks. I tell them to keep speaking. Sometimes I marvel in the strength that I know that only God has given me.”

The Baltimore native said she was diagnosed with lupus 16 years ago.

“I was diagnosed when I was 20-years-old, and now I am 36-years-old,” said Curtis. “God told me ‘no, don’t listen to that title. By His stripes, you are healed.’”

She continued, “It’s been tough. Sometimes, I have been guarded. But I will not miss an opportunity to make someone smile or share an encouraging

word. Sometimes we don’t understand why we are going through what we are going through. I tell people that even when your back is against the wall, God is still there. I say, ‘you are still standing on the ground on your feet.’”

Curtis is a woman on the move. She also serves as Community Outreach Coordinator for Park Heights Renaissance, Inc. located at 3939 Reisterstown Rd. in Baltimore. Curtis said Park Heights Renaissance oversees the redevelopment, education and community neighborhoods in Park Heights/Northwest Baltimore.

“I have to be out in the community,” said Curtis. “That includes engaging with

the elderly. People tend to forget the elderly. That irks me. How dare we not respect the wisdom that came before us?”

The 36-year-old Curtis also serves as president of Park Circle Community Association.

“As president, I work with the Department of Public Works, City Hall, and with state government. I host meetings and I talk to people. I am a mother of two boys, and I take my sons to the meetings with me. They are being groomed as young men.”

She added, “King is not a title, but how you conduct yourself when it comes to integrity when no one is watching. What do you do when everyone says go right, but your spirit says go left? People will have to stand in moments when its not popular to stand. Transforming the world is starting with yourself. This is what I teach my sons, and try to instill in others.”

Curtis is the author of a book entitled, *The Day I Went Home*, which she said is geared towards all ages and is about perseverance in foster care. She is a 2019 Baltimore Times “Positive People Award” honoree. The awards are given to individuals who work to uplift and celebrate the human spirit and the power within all people to improve their quality of life and that of their community.

Other honors include the “Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” Award and “The Trailblazer Award.” She is the recipient of numerous citations and proclamations. She is an Eastern Star, regularly hosts community events, and a graduate of Woodlawn High School.

“Truth be told, society wants us to be programmed not to re-invent the wheel,” said the Park Heights resident. “But sometimes, we have to reinvent the wheel.”

Curtis will be joining The Baltimore Times staff as a columnist. Her column will start soon, and will be entitled, “Diamonds in the Roughs of Baltimore City.”

Rising African American opera star snags lead role in Samson & Delilah at Kennedy Center

By Stacy M. Brown

From the basketball court to the opera stage, J’Nai Bridges is bringing her vibrant voice to The Kennedy Center. The rising star that once appeared to be destined for a career in pro basketball, counts among the few African Americans who have excelled in the opera.

A rising star whose parents and family live in Baltimore, Bridges will have a lead role in the seduction and deceit tangle that is Saint-Saëns’s sensual grand opera, “Samson & Delilah,” which debuts at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. March 1, 2020,

Bridges previously performed the title role in “Carmen” at the San Francisco Opera and has earned features in The New York Times Style Magazine, Flaunt Magazine and several others. She also once performed for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Washington.

“I grew up playing basketball because I have a great passion for sports,” Bridges said. “But I also grew up singing in the church choir, and I’ve played piano since I was about five. Music was always in my bones, but so was basketball.”

While in high school in Lakewood, Washington, Bridges appeared in her first opera. One of her rehearsals for the opera coincided with a basketball tournament that her high school team was scheduled to participate in.

“I asked my coaches if I could go to the rehearsal and then have my mother drive me to the game rather than me attending the team meeting beforehand,”



J’Nai Bridges will play the lead role in “Samson & Delilah,” which debuts at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. March 1, 2020, Photo Credit: Nadav CJ Photography

Bridges said. “The coach agreed, but then when I got the game after rehearsal, he didn’t allow me to warm up and kept me on the bench. He said I let my team down and that I didn’t show great sportsmanship because I choose the opera over my team. He told me that I had to make a choice finally. That was the last day that I played.”

That shrewd decision couldn’t have turned out any better for the rising star. According to her biography, Bridges’ 2019-2020 operatic engagements in the United States include her debut at The Metropolitan Opera, singing the role of Nefertiti in Philip Glass’ opera Akhnaten; and her house and role debut with Washington National Opera performing Dalila in Samson et Dalila.

Additionally, Bridges will sing the title role of Carmen for the first time in Europe at the Dutch National Opera and will make her debut with the Festival d’Aix-en-Provence singing Margret in a new production of Wozzeck, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle.

Her season also includes a performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, a concert repertoire with the San Antonio Symphony in Mahler’s Symphony No. 2, and debuting with the New Jersey

Symphony in Handel’s Messiah. For an opera singer, it’s a fantastic schedule. For an African American, it’s more operatic history.

“The opera definitely has been changing, and it continues to change, which is really necessary and refreshing,” Bridges said. “The National Opera has done an excellent job of inclusivity; and they continue to work diligently at it. I’ve spoken to people on staff, and they make it a point not only to hire black people but to ask how we feel and what might need improvement. So, not only are we on the stage, but we are behind the scenes too.”

Samson & Delilah opens March 1 and runs through March 21, 2020 at The Kennedy Center. For tickets and information, visit https://www.kennedy-center.org/wno/home/2019-2020/samson-delilah_68152/

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Obtaining health insurance in Maryland is now as easy as filing income taxes

By Stacy M. Brown

More than 130,000 Maryland residents were reported without health insurance in 2019 but were eligible for free or low-cost coverage.

However, many failed to enroll because state officials said the application process was too difficult to navigate.

Thanks to a first of its kind program created by the state General Assembly, residents may find the process as simple as checking a box when filing their tax returns this year.

This tax season marks the beginning of the Maryland Easy Enrollment Health Insurance Program, which allows those without health insurance to simply check a box on their state income tax return to start the process of enrolling in a health plan.

Once the box is checked, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange will determine a tax filer's eligibility for Medicaid and free or low-cost private insurance.

State officials will then follow up with a letter notifying whether an individual qualifies for insurance. Accompanying the letter are instructions about how to complete enrollment.

"I think it's an unbelievable thing to get people to come out and get some health-care," said Hall of Fame Baltimore Oriole star Eddie Murray, who appears in various ads on radio and online promoting the new health insurance initiative.

The legend attended a special event last month in Baltimore to announce the program with Maryland House Speaker Adrienne Jones and Senate President Bill Ferguson and Comptroller Peter Franchot.



Baltimore Orioles legend Eddie Murray (back row, fourth from right) joined state officials, including Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates and Comptroller Peter Franchot in promoting a new health care initiative where Maryland residents can simply check a box on their state income tax returns to obtain health insurance.

Photo Credit: Catherine Kirk Robins

"Many people are eligible for free or low-cost health insurance right now and don't even know about it, but by checking the box they can find out what type of health insurance they are qualified for," said Stephanie Klapper, the deputy director for the Maryland Health Care for All Coalition.

"It's easy, and that's why we call it easy enrollment. We hope by having these boxes on the tax return, people will see it and have the information sent to them," Klapper stated, adding that Maryland is the first state in the country to adopt such an initiative. "Other states

are reaching out, and hopefully, this is a model for them."

Since the Affordable Care Act was passed in 2010, Maryland has made remarkable progress enrolling families into health insurance, according to Vincent DeMarco, president of the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative.

Enrollment in Maryland's health insurance exchange grew to a four-year high last year, "even as the federal government has thrown up hurdle after hurdle in an attempt to undermine the law," DeMarco said. "The new program makes the enrollment process easier than in the

past, and many people will be pleasantly surprised to find that they can obtain high-quality insurance at a low cost.

"Health insurance helps families' financial security and makes it more affordable for the newly enrolled to visit the doctor, fill prescriptions and take care of other health needs.

"Expanding the pool of people covered by insurance lowers premiums for everyone. Among other things, hospitals will face less need to provide uncompensated care to people who can't pay for services. This lowers what they charge to patients who do have insurance."

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From the desk of
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Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to learn about The Greenwood Initiative.

As someone who has been very lucky in life, I often say my story would only have been possible in America – and that’s true. But I also know that because of the artificial barriers of discrimination, my story likely would have turned out very differently if I had been Black, and that more Black Americans of my generation would have ended up with far more wealth, had they been white.

Building Generational Wealth for Black Families is Critical. That’s why I launched The Greenwood Initiative in Tulsa last month. I visited the site of the Black Wall Street Massacre, where a white mob decimated the prosperous community of Greenwood. It is to the memory of the lost lives and promise of Greenwood that we’ve dedicated The Greenwood Initiative: a plan to address the systematic bias that has kept Black Americans from building wealth.

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I understand that undoing generations of systematic discrimination won’t happen overnight, but we can make progress with a clear vision and a comprehensive plan. I’ve included a pamphlet along with this letter that lays out my plan. When I’m President, implementing The Greenwood Initiative: will be a top priority.

Join me in ending the systemic inequality that has held Black Americans back for too long!

Sincerely,


Mike Bloomberg

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Rambling Rose

**Prince Hall Foundation of Maryland
3rd Annual Thurgood Marshall Black
History Month Celebration**



Rosa Pryor Trusty

Hello everyone, how are you? I am doing pretty good— thank you for asking. This month is heavy duty for me—and I'm loving every bit of it. I am very busy with book signings and doing lectures about my books. Coming up this week is the Prince Hall Foundation of Maryland 3rd Annual Thurgood Marshall Black History event. Last year, I was honored at this event and this year, I will be doing a book signing of my two books, "African-American Entertainment in Baltimore" and "African-American community, History & Entertainment in Maryland." Not only for this event, Prince Hall Mason will honor Hon. Nathaniel J. McFadden with the Life & Legacy Award, but also honoring: Le Gretta Y. Ross-Rawlins; Jeanne D. Hitchcock, Esq.; Bernard L. Jennings; Hon. William H. Billy Murphy Jr.; Hon. Elizabeth S. Morris; Hon. Robert M. Bell; Professor Larry S. Gibson; and Dr. Aminta H. Breaux.

Lindsey Johnson will present his Black Memorabilia Show & Sale on Sunday, February 23 at Morgan State University. It will be held the Carl J. Murphy Fine Art Center, 2201 Argonne Drive in Baltimore, Maryland. This will be in conjunction with the Prince Hall Grand Lodge Masons of Maryland 3rd Annual Thurgood Marshall Black History Month Program at the Murphy Fine Art Center from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. and admission is free. There will be vendors with black memorabilia for sale including: historical artifacts and documents; books; autographs; dolls; advertisements; kitchen collectibles; magazines; toys; political, sports and entertainment memorabilia; civil rights; jewelry; movie memorabilia; art; and Me! This is an educational event and a celebration of African American History and Culture.

For more information, call 301-649-1915 or 410-929-3480. Oh! I want to mention that the Master of Ceremony is Patrice Sanders, Anchor for Fox 45 Morning News and our keynote speaker is Dr. David Anderson, founder and Senior Pastor Bridgeway Community Church.

Caton Castle is jumping up and down, doing the James Brown! Caton Castle located at 20 S. Caton Avenue in Baltimore will host on Saturday, February 22, 2020 a special show called: "The Songbooks of" Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Marvin Gaye, James Brown and much more. A tribute to the Music of the Civil Rights Movement inspired by; B-Fly Entertainment's Liner Notes featuring: Deborah Bond, vocals; Sam Prather, vocal and keys; Dante Pope, vocal and percussion; Craig Alston, saxophones; Robert "Wawa" Legrand, guitar; Eliot Seppa, bass and John Lamkin, III on vocals and drums. I told you James Brown will be in the house. A show you will not want to miss.

To add to this fabulous Black History Month, Rasheed and Co. will present a 40 and Over School Extravaganza" on Sunday, February 23, 2020 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Oh Mannnnnnnnnn! That's what I'm talking about! Check this out— The Blue Philly Magic, Epiphany, Raw, Christal F & Extravagance, Lady T, J'Kar, Songbird (I'm not sure who they are, but that's alright); Father and Son, 5 Shadows, DJ Mike Jones & DJ Sugar Chris (Hell! That's the show right there); and it will be hosted by my adopted children Tee Shirt Brian and Ms. Maybelle. Now you can't get any better than that. I will see you there! By the way this is "Cabaret Style," so bring your own booze and food. All of this is happening at the Gentlemen 10 located



Lindsey Johnson is heading up the Black Memorabilia Show & Sale on Sunday, February 23, 2020 at Morgan State University in the Carl J. Murphy Fine Art Center 2201 Argonne Drive in conjunction with the Prince Hall Grand Lodge Masons of Maryland Black History Celebration.

at 2135 Edmonson Avenue. For more information, call Tee Shirt Brian at 410-790-9333 or Ms. Maybelle at 443-226-8895 and tell them "Rambling Rose" told you!

Well, my dear friends, before I go, I want you to keep Mildred Battle in your prayers; right now she is in Meadow Park Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center, 1525 N. Rolling Road in Catonsville, Maryland 21228 getting her body built up for major surgery. Send her some flowers or card to cheer her up. She has always supported the clubs and social events in Baltimore and always the life of the party. Now she needs your prayers.

We are sending condolences to the Reggie Wayne Morris family. The renowned blues guitarist and vocalist, died last week suddenly of a massive stroke. Also to Vernard Gray's family—he passed away in Cuba on January 20, 2020 while on his vacation.

Well, my dear friends I really have to go this time, 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.



The Hon. Nathaniel J. McFadden, former Maryland State Senator President pro tempore will be honored with the Life and Legacy Award at the Prince Hall 3rd Annual Thurgood Marshall Black History Month Celebration on Sunday, February 23, 2020 at 3 p.m. at Morgan State University Murphy Fine Arts Center.

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The Black Vote Mural Project opens at Banneker-Douglass Museum

Governor Larry Hogan, Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture recognize historic movements for right to vote

Annapolis— The Banneker-Douglass Museum, a unit of the Maryland Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, launched The Black Vote Mural Project exhibit on Saturday, February 15, 2020.

The Black Vote Mural Project exhibit recognizes historic movements for the right to vote by exploring the intersection of public art, black voices and civil rights with sixteen murals that transform the interior galleries of the museum.

Painted by regional artists, these murals interpret the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) 2020 theme: African Americans and the Vote.

"Maryland is proud to recognize African American heroes and icons who fought for equality, justice, and the right to vote," said Governor Larry Hogan. "I appreciate the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture and Banneker-Douglass Museum for working tirelessly to keep these important legacies alive, and to promote and protect African American history and culture in Maryland."

The goal of The Black Vote Mural Project is to provide visitors with a dynamic experience that demonstrates artistic excellence, cultural expression, and historical preservation. Through this exhibit and our public programs, we will highlight important milestones in the year 2020 - the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment (1920) which was the culmination of the women's suffrage movement and is honored by the Year of the Woman proclaimed by Governor Hogan; and the sesquicentennial of the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) which



Artworks in the Black Vote Mural Project commemorate the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment, which was the culmination of the women's suffrage movement. Governor Larry Hogan proclaimed 2020 as the Year of the Woman in honor of this historic milestone and women heroes from Maryland. Courtesy Photo/Governor's Office of Community Initiatives

gave black men the right to vote after the Civil War. This project will examine these stories, celebrate memories, preserve history, and illuminate cultural experiences that demonstrate we are stronger together.

"As an election year, it is critical that we consider the power of African American voices," said Chanel Compton, executive director, Banneker-Douglass Museum. "Our impact on the political process can be seen through these murals which educate, inspire, and move us toward a stronger future by examining our past."

Featured artists include: Steuart Hill Academic Academy; Ryan Allen; Bowie State University (Public Arts Class); Nikki Brooks; Jay Coleman; Lloyd Foster; Olivia Gittens; Jabari Jefferson; Gina Lewis; Megan Lewis; Janie McGee; Gretta McGill; Future History Now; Latoya D. Peoples; Zsundayka Nzinga Terrell; James Terrell; and Ernest Shaw.

The Banneker-Douglass Museum will host monthly programs for people of all ages and backgrounds such as lectures, youth conferences and celebrations. Voter registration will be featured at signature events. The Black Vote Mural

Project is open to visitors Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. until December 28, 2020.

For more information about the program series, visit <https://bdmuseum.maryland.gov/events>.

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What placing franchise tag on Matt Judon means for the Ravens

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens have consistently been able to find impact pass rushers outside the first and second rounds of the NFL Draft over the years. Players like versatile edge rushers Pernell McPhee (5th round 2011) and Za'Darius Smith (4th round 2015) are examples of prospects that Baltimore plucked late in the draft and developed into disruptive pass rushers. Both McPhee and Smith signed lucrative contracts with other teams once they were eligible to be free agents.

The Ravens' latest prospect turned Pro Bowl caliber defensive player, Matt Judon could become a free agent next month. Baltimore would be wise to place the franchise tag on the 2016 fifth-round pick that became one of their leaders last season. Tagging Judon would hold a \$16.3 million salary in 2020 but more importantly, it would give the Ravens exclusive negotiation rights and give both parties more time to agree to a deal.

Baltimore could also designate Judon



Matt Judon has just come off a 9.5 sack season in which he also notched 33 quarterback hits. At 27-years-old, he is a budding star voted to the Pro Bowl for the first time in his career this past season.

Courtesy Photo/Baltimore Ravens.com

as a non-exclusive free agent. That would give other teams an opportunity

to negotiate a deal with Judon but the Ravens would have an option to match the deal. If they decide not to do so, the team that signs him would have to forfeit two first-round draft picks.

Judon is coming off of a 9.5 sack season in which he also notched 33 quarterback hits. At 27-years-old, Judon is a budding star voted to the Pro Bowl for the first time in his career last season.

His 6-foot-3, 275-pound frame and athletic ability make him a piece that defensive coordinator, Don 'Wink' Martindale can utilize in multiple ways. Judon has played left and right outside linebacker in addition to middle linebacker and interior defensive lineman. That versatility is invaluable.

The Ravens currently have only \$31 million in cap space to work with. Placing the tag on Judon would take up over half of that number. If Baltimore can sign Judon to a deal similar to the four-year, \$52 million contract the Green Bay Packers signed former Washington Redskins edge rusher Preston Smith to, they can reduce his cap hit to \$13 million. They'd probably have to increase the guaranteed money to make the deal for Judon.

It's expensive, but necessary. The Ravens already lost key leaders Eric Weddle; Terrell Suggs; C. J. Mosley; and Za'Darius Smith to free agency last year. They can't afford to lose another leader in Judon.

Baltimore is coming off a season with a 14-2 record—the best in franchise history. Their dynamic offense is led by 2019 MVP Lamar Jackson.

Despite the Ravens success lighting up the scoreboard, offensive coordinator Greg Roman didn't receive any head coach offers and will be back for another season. The window is open for them so, they must maximize their opportunity.

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