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## Morgan Choir Alum Pens Song Confronting COVID and Racism



*Garrett "GP" Jackson, a Morgan State graduate and Mitchellville, Md. native wrote "Letter to the Nation," a new song that expresses his sentiments about police brutality and other issues disproportionately affecting people of color. (See article on page 8) Courtesy Photo*



# Baltimore attorney Venroy July uniquely qualified to fight for his clients

By Christopher G. Cox  
 Publisher and managing editor,  
[www.realesavvy.com](http://www.realesavvy.com)

Ask Baltimore-based attorney Venroy July for legal advice and you will find he is well qualified to counsel you on everything from asset sales to debt offerings. Tell him you don't care for his advice and he is equally well qualified to hit you with a left jab and a right cross. Not that he would, still you might want to reject his advice politely.

Born in Jamaica, July moved to the United States at the age of 11 and defied long odds and humble beginnings to earn a degree in political science and economics from the University of North Carolina and a J.D. degree from Duke University School of Law—not exactly a typical resume for the vast majority of those who turn to prizefighting to make a living.

The motivation for July, a principal at the law firm Miles & Stockbridge, was not so much searching for a way to make a living as it was his late father's love of boxing and wanting to know what it would be like to be a professional athlete. "I was also looking for a way to stay in shape," July said. "I'm not boxing or promoting other boxers anymore," July said. "People are aware that I know both



*Venroy July, a principal at the law firm Miles & Stockbridge is involved in supporting his firm's Black Business Initiative, which was launched last year to eliminate or reduce barriers that disproportionately impact black entrepreneurs and businesses.*

Courtesy Photo

boxing and the business of boxing, so I end up getting clients who need my assistance from a contract perspective. We help to put together promotional deals and other things where they need my assistance."

When not assisting boxing clients, July is involved in supporting his firm's Black Business Initiative (BBI), which was launched last year to eliminate or reduce barriers that disproportionately impact black entrepreneurs and businesses.

"My firm started BBI," July explains, "recognizing that many of the issues affecting social justice were really economic. The determination [is] that we can play a role in helping more businesses to be successful."

Businesses that wish to participate in Miles & Stockbridge's BBI program must be at least 50 percent Black-owned; have less than five years of operating history; less than \$500,000 of annual revenues; and fewer than 10 employees.

"The response has been overwhelming," July said. "We are working with businesses involved in real estate investment, one that is trying to start a hedge fund and another that wants to become an art dealer—a full range."

July also continues to be involved in the development of Opportunity Zones, a component of legislation passed in 2017 to encourage investment in economically distressed communities by making it possible for investors to receive preferential tax treatment on income from capital gains.

Addressing the potential of Opportunity Zones, July says it's important to come up with ways to take full advantage of this legislation, recognizing that most of these zones are in black and brown communities.

In addition to existing tax benefits at the federal level, July is encouraging legislation that would add tax benefits at the state and local level.

July also wants to enable investments of ordinary income, not just capital gains, in Opportunity Zones.

"There is a ton of potential to drive capital into neighborhoods where it can have transformative results," said July. "So we really need to be thinking about how to maximize that, rather than overhauling the legislation itself."

July is also actively engaged in supporting a virtual economic empowerment conference titled, "The Power of the Collective," being presented by Baltimore Young Professionals from 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 27, 2021.

Individuals interesting in participating can register at: [bit.ly/powerofthecollective](http://bit.ly/powerofthecollective).

"We have an outstanding group of panelists and a great keynote speaker," July said of Shawn D. Rochester, author of *The Black Tax: The Cost of Being Black in America*. The conference will tackle such subjects as accessing capital, the appropriate role for government and how private capital can help to right past wrongs.

"There is a need for young black professionals to understand the consequences of the economic wealth gap in this country and how they become engaged in confronting and overcoming it," July concluded.

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## Gigi Dixon on Creating Empowerful Communities.

Black history and heritage start with the Black family, which has always stood for pride, strength and resilience. In the wake of Covid-19, premier civil rights organizations are stepping up to help families facing significant challenges like home and job security. For Wells Fargo leaders like myself, supporting these organizations isn't just about making a corporate donation, it's a personal commitment.

As Wells Fargo's head of External Engagement, I help ensure that people in our communities have equal access to resources and opportunities. As the Vice Chair of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Foundation, I help support the empowerful spirit of everyday people working to make a difference, especially in the midst of this pandemic.

To help meet urgent needs in our community, the NAACP developed the "Covid-19 Response: Empowering Community" Program with help from a \$1.35M grant from Wells Fargo. This grant helps to ensure the NAACP has the critical support they need to:

- Nurture and support local residents, representing diverse interests, to become effective leaders able to promote equity and wellbeing in their communities.
- Support the #WeAreDoneDying campaign focused on how communities of color are faring in health, education, economic

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opportunity, and criminal justice during the pandemic.

- Humanize Covid-19-related issues through stories from the community, amplifying the voices of local residents.

With so many families struggling right now, we also worked with the National Urban League to help people stay in their homes or secure housing.

As Covid-19 began taking its toll on communities of color, the National Urban League quickly responded with foreclosure and rental counseling with the support of Wells Fargo funding. As a result, between April 1 – October 31, 2020, National Urban League housing counselors helped:

- Stabilize housing for 3,178 renters.
- Assist 764 homeowners to stay in their homes.
- Increase the number of homeless or potentially homeless people obtaining temporary or permanent housing by 80%.

Understanding that Black-owned businesses are the cornerstones of the community, the Urban League's Entrepreneurship Center Program focuses on increasing equity, growth and stability for entrepreneurs. Results through mid-December 2020 show that 12 of their Entrepreneurship Centers (ECs):

- Served approximately 20,300 participants through counseling and training activities.
- Secured \$102.7 million in financing and contracting opportunities.
- Saved or created over 47,600 full and part-time jobs.

Creating more financial equity and opportunity for Black families is why I'm committed to serving organizations like the NAACP and the National Urban League and I'm proud of Wells Fargo's dedication to this shared goal. We encourage you to join us by donating time and/or money to organizations like these to ensure our community remains resilient, innovative and empowerful for generations.

Join us in making a difference at [wellsfargo.com/empowerful](https://wellsfargo.com/empowerful)



### Meet Gigi Dixon:

Georgette "Gigi" Dixon is a 27-year financial industry veteran and head of External Engagement for Diverse Segments, Representation and Inclusion. Her team helps to ensure that people across Wells Fargo's workforce and communities feel valued and respected and have equal opportunities to succeed.

Gigi, who's also a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, resides in Charlotte, NC with her family.



# Guest Editorials/Commentary

## “March In” is not the answer

By Howard Dean

All Democrats and many Republicans are committed to making prescription drugs more affordable.

There is one strategy that is likely to make things worse: overriding patents on drugs developed with the help of federally funded research. This “march-in” option is not a good idea.

It hinges on the Bayh-Dole Act, a 40-year-old law that revolutionized scientific research in the United States. A provision within the law permits the federal government to “march in” and seize intellectual property that benefited from federal grants if that IP is not being made available to the public.

Prior to 1980, the government retained the patent rights to any breakthroughs that resulted from federally funded research. But the government didn’t do a good job licensing those patents to companies that could turn them into real-world products. In 1978, the feds held more than 28,000 patents. Just 5 percent of them were licensed.

To stop those ideas from going to waste, Senators Birch Bayh and Bob Dole spearheaded legislation that allowed universities to keep the patents on discoveries made by university researchers with the help of federal funding.

Universities have a huge incentive — namely, royalty payments — to partner with private-sector companies to commercialize these patents. So do the researchers themselves, who may be able to parlay their discoveries into products that change the world.

In the past 40 years, Bayh-Dole has helped commercialize inventions ranging from Honeycrisp apples to Google’s original search algorithm.

By bringing early-stage research to private labs, the law also played a role in the development of more than 200 drugs and vaccines. Some policymakers have argued that some of those medicines are not adequately available to the public because of their high prices. They believe the government should “march-in” and require licensing of the patents behind those drugs so generic drug manufacturers can produce cheaper competing versions.

This is ironic, given that we are finally administering vaccines to end the pandemic. Without taxpayer support for early-stage research at universities, drug companies would have never been in a position to create lifesaving vaccines so quickly.

Drug companies won’t spend the billions of dollars it takes to commercialize federally funded research if there’s a risk the government will seize the fruits of their research. The result will be fewer new treatments for patients.

Consider what happened in 1989, when the National Institutes of Health adopted a policy calling for “reasonable” pricing by companies that licensed patents that benefited from government funding. The number of licensing agreements between universities and companies plummeted.

In 1995, NIH-funded research led to just 32 licensing agreements with private companies. That same year, the agency eliminated the pricing clause. Not surprisingly, the number of licensing agreements in 1996 more than doubled, to 87.

If the government takes away patent rights, then less federal research will be commercialized— and fewer new medicines will hit the market. That’s not an outcome that’s in the interests of patients.

The people of the United States need and deserve access to affordable medicines. But it is incredibly important to not destroy innovation in one of the last industries in the world where the United States still has a real edge.

*Howard Dean is the Former Chair of the Democratic National Committee and Former Governor of Vermont.*



## Commentary

### Amazon not prime for Black Bessemer, Alabama workers

By Dr. Ken Morgan

On February 20, 2021, the Metropolitan Baltimore community formed a caravan of cars to demonstrate solidarity with the Bessemer, Alabama Amazon workers just outside of the Dundalk Distribution warehouse with signs on their cars read “Support the Amazon workers,” and Solidarity with the Bessemer workers.

The Baltimore People’s Power Assembly and the UJIMA Political Progress Party—a Black independent political party attempting to obtain Maryland ballot status— organized the Baltimore event.

The Bessemer workers are currently voting to unionize and create collective bargaining rights with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) until March 9, 2021. Over 50 actions took place around the country on February 20.

The Amazon, Bessemer, Alabama plant ironically employs between 76 and 85 percent of Black workers in its workforce of 5800 in the heartland that once was the nation’s largest black populations from slavery up to well after 1972.

Amazon hired the Morgan Lewis law firm, one of the largest union-busting outfits in the nation, to break the union.

Remember the 1981 PATCO air traffic controller’s strike; the 1993-94 baseball strike; and the 2019 GM strike busing activities. Remember, who aided McDonalds in fighting unionization and the \$15 an hour minimum wage. Microsoft, Dell and Google have been among Morgan Lewis’ clients.

It’s not the first time Amazon reached out to Morgan Lewis to do its bidding. The firm thwarted the machinist union at Amazon in 2014. They represented Amazon in worker lawsuits that claimed they were cheated out of wages and benefits. They also defended Amazon against worker claims of failure to pay for worker overtime, and alleged insufficient COVID-19 safety precautions.

One of the firm’s jobs this time around for Amazon was to make every effort to stop recognition of the union. They opposed Amazon workers’ mail-in ballots. However, workers succeeded in winning this battle.

“We express solidarity with the Bessemer Amazon workers, tied into the same struggle that made Amazon a \$1.7 trillion operation on the backs of its workers,” said Nnamdi Lumumba, the UJIMA PPP’s Maryland coordinator.

*Former Coppin State University professor, Dr. Ken Morgan is a human rights activist. He can be reached at btimes @btimes.com*



## Vulnerable Baltimore Children Face Down Savage COVID Scourge

By Regi Taylor

If it were not already terrifying enough that the COVID Grim Reaper threatens death for every human on the planet, there are also equally threatening horrors COVID-19 has unleashed directly on our children.

One of the consequences of separation as we try to survive COVID-19 is the prolonged isolation experienced by our children, causing many to develop intense depression.

“Suicide among children during COVID-19 pandemic: An alarming social issue,” was a recent screaming headline in the National Center for Biotechnology Information, the U.S. National Library of Medicine’s online publication.

During the many hours every day that school-age kids spend alone with their thoughts, they are coping with the stresses of fear and uncertainty imposed upon them by the current pandemic

environment affecting everyone.

Too many are negotiating unstable home environments, thoughts of dying or losing a loved one; internalizing news about disease; death; political violence; distrust of vaccines; and food insecurity, while feeling vulnerable, unprotected and emotionally overloaded.

Don’t forget that before COVID-19, many youth, particularly urban kids, were already psychologically burdened by ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences), the culmination of social stressors resulting from a wide variety of environmental social conditions like domestic violence; police violence; gang violence; drug abuse; alcoholism; criminality; and other chronic negative circumstances they routinely confront.

In April 2020, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) released 20 public service videos addressing techniques to cope with stress, anxiety and depression resulting from feelings of desolation brought on by mandatory stay-at-home measures due to the Coronavirus pandemic, identifying these mental affects as an emergency.

Last summer, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, reported that symptoms of anxiety and depression in the United States had tripled in the past year, and that thoughts of suicide, especially among youth, are epidemic.

Their report concluded that 26 percent of young people, ages 18 to 24, had confronted feelings of suicide in the previous month. This is a warning to parents, and all family members, to monitor the attitudes and dispositions of everybody in our households more closely for signs of depression.

Be vigilant. Look for symptoms of unusual sadness or irritability; loss of interest in activities; changes in weight

and sleep patterns; sluggishness; and expressions of hopelessness. Most importantly, take it at face value if any family member reveals they feel suicidal. Get immediate help. Statistics for rates of depression and eventual suicide since COVID-19 suggest that people, particularly children, who exhibit tendencies to harm themselves, will follow through.

Heard enough? Unfortunately, there is another extremely dangerous aspect of COVID-19 that primarily affects children, with deadly consequences. The very mysterious Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children or MIS-C, has only been diagnosed in the last eight to nine months and is precipitated when the body’s immune system is weakened from COVID-19 infection.

The new disease first appeared in the United Kingdom in late April of 2020, identified in several previously healthy children, according to the CDC. Those children also tested positive for active or recent Coronavirus infection, the CDC acknowledged.

A couple weeks later, early May 2020, the first U.S. cases of MIS-C in children were recorded by the New York City health department. Some of those children were admitted to intensive care units, and more than 100 additional patients have since been discovered there with the syndrome.

As of late last year, roughly 200 cases had been discovered in the U.S. In Maryland, six cases have been reported so far with one death of a 15-year-old African American girl reported in Baltimore County last May, according to Maryland health authorities.

The symptoms of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children are fever; abdominal pain; vomiting;

diarrhea; neck pain; rash; bloodshot eyes; and feeling extra tired. Researchers found that 99 percent of children with this condition had previously been diagnosed with COVID-19, and that one percent had been exposed to someone with the disease prior to onset.

Findings of an investigation by the CDC released in January 2021 reported the following: Total active U.S. MIS-C cases are 1,659 with 26 deaths in 47 states. Most victims are children and adolescents between one and 14 years old, averaging age eight years. Cases have occurred in children less than a year old to 20 years old.

More than 70 percent of reported cases are Latino (554 cases) or African American (499 cases). Most children developed MIS-C two to four weeks after a COVID-19 infection, with 57 percent being male. States reporting more than 50 active cases each are: Arizona; California; Texas; Florida; Georgia; Illinois; Pennsylvania; and New York.

The New England Journal of Medicine announced that 73 percent of child patients had previously been healthy prior to contracting COVID-19 and MIS-C, and that 88 percent would require hospitalization.

Be aware!

*Regi Taylor is a West Baltimore native. The married father of four is an artist, writer and media professional specializing in political history. Check out his meme gallery at <https://www.humortimes.com/cartoon/s/dc-crap/>.*

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# Former UPS driver gives Morgan State \$20 Million, ensuring access to college for generations of students

Baltimore— Morgan State University (MSU) announced receipt of a \$20 million commitment from alumnus and philanthropist Calvin E. Tyler Jr. and his wife, Tina, increasing an endowed scholarship fund previously established in the Tylers' name. The monumental gift is the largest private donation from an alumnus in University history and is believed to be the largest contribution of its kind to any Historically Black College or University (HBCU) nationwide from an alum.

In 2016, the Tylers made a commitment of \$5 million to the University— at the time the largest in Morgan's history— bolstering the Calvin and Tina Tyler Endowed Scholarship Fund established in 2002 to provide full tuition scholarships for select need-based students residing in the Tylers' hometown of Baltimore. In light of the financial hardships and challenges a number of students and their families are facing as a result of the current pandemic, the Tylers were compelled to expand their giving. Once exclusive to students from Baltimore, the endowed scholarship is now national in scope and will benefit generations of future Morgan students seeking a college education. To date, the endowed fund has supported 222 Morgan students by way of 46 full-tuition and 176 partial scholarships, with the promise of benefiting more 'Tyler Scholars' with the increased multimillion-dollar pledge and expanded scope.

"Morgan is so proud to call this son and daughter of the great City of Baltimore our own, and through their historic giving, the doors of higher education will most certainly be kept open for generations of aspiring leaders whose financial shortfalls may have kept



*The \$20-million pledge by Calvin and Tina Tyler to Morgan State University is the largest private donation from an alumnus in university history and is believed to be the largest contribution of its kind to any Historically Black College or University nationwide from an alum. (Left) Calvin and Tina Tyler with Morgan State University President David K. Wilson. (Right) The building bearing their name, Calvin and Tina Tyler Hall Student Services Center officially opened in the fall of 2020.*

Courtesy Photos/Morgan State University

them from realizing their academic dreams," said David K. Wilson, president of Morgan State University. "For public institutions, like Morgan, our charitable alumni are testaments to the legacy we collectively uphold, and the Tylers' generosity over the years, culminating with this transformative commitment, is a remarkable example of altruism with great purpose. We are forever indebted to the Tylers."

Calvin Tyler enrolled at Morgan State College in 1961 to study business administration. The first of his family to attend college, he later interrupted his matriculation in 1963 due to lack of funding and eventually took on a job as one of the first 10 UPS drivers in

Baltimore in 1964. At UPS, he would then work his way up, climbing the corporate ladder, ultimately ending up as senior vice president of operations before his retirement in 1998, and joining the company's board of directors. Through his 34-year career at the multinational package delivery company, Tyler never lost sight of his own humble beginnings, committing with his wife Tina to support those who, like him, encountered hardships and financial insecurities while pursuing their college degree.

"My wife and I have become keenly aware of the effect that the pandemic has had on a number of young people trying to get an education [and] we have the

resources to help a lot of young people," Tyler shared. "This is why we are increasing our commitment at Morgan; we want to have more full tuition scholarships offered to young people so that they can graduate from college and enter the next stage of their life debt free."

Fulfillment of the Tylers' \$20 million pledge will be executed for years to come, ensuring an enduring support for Morgan students facing extenuating financial circumstances. Through this commitment and the recently constructed student services building bearing their name—Tyler Hall—their connection to Morgan and their legacy of philanthropic giving will be forever cemented.



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Learn more about vaccines and slowing the spread at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)



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# Morgan Choir Alum Pens Song Confronting COVID and Racism

By Ursula V. Battle

Moved by the civil unrest and racial disparities he was seeing happening around the nation, pinnacled by the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, Garrett "GP" Jackson sensed a calling to express himself in a creative way to share how he felt. He took words to pen and expressed sentiments through his debut solo release, "Letter to a Nation," a song about coping with anger, grief, and tragedy, while opening the door to hope and healing.

"What made me write the song was the anger, frustration, and overwhelming grief of COVID-19 as it was taking shape, the impact it was having on the country, particularly how the previous administration was handling the outbreak and not taking it seriously," said Jackson. "That was the initial trigger for the song."

The Morgan State University graduate talked about the goals he hopes to accomplish through his debut song.

"There are three goals," said Jackson. "The first is education. I want folks to be educated not just about COVID, but about how we can use our voices to combat the social challenges of our time, whether that's creatively, like the song I wrote for instance, or a variety of other ways. The second goal is motivation. I want the piece to speak to students, community groups, businesses, government agencies, and others looking for ways to bring conversation to the table about the issues of our times. The song is one way to initiate those conversations. The third pillar is vaccinations. I am 100 percent a proponent of getting our community vaccinated. Black folks not only have a higher likelihood of getting the virus, but a higher likelihood of dying."

Jackson noted the education component of the song involves working with Dr. Rhonda Hylton, an associate professor at Kent University in Ohio in developing a multi-disciplined curriculum for K-12 and postsecondary students.



*Garrett "GP" Jackson is the author of "Letter to a Nation."*

Courtesy Photo

"This curriculum will center around civic engagement, social justice and racial equity," said Jackson. "The reason we are focusing on these areas is to come up with best practices to teach our students to share their voices around the social challenges that are going on around them and how to best express themselves to cope with the grief and frustration many of them are experiencing."

"Letter to a Nation" features a video of Jackson performing the song. The video was shot in Washington, D.C. by Make a Scene Media, a women-owned media agency based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Jackson said his debut work has been met with great success, with some comparing the songs compelling, thought-provoking message to the likes of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On"

and Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come."

"The response has been overwhelming," said Jackson, noting the video has been played by churches, agencies and various organizations during a plethora of events. "I am a member of Phi Beta Sigma, and the fraternity played it during our global founder's event. Gospel legends Kurt

Carr and Richard Smallwood have reached out with encouraging words as well. This is my first piece as a solo artist, so to get this kind of response is overwhelming. I really cannot put into words what is happening."

A native of Mitchellville, Maryland, the 36-year-old has performed internationally at concert halls in France, Czech Republic, Russia, and Germany. A business consultant in the Washington, D.C. area, Jackson is married and has a son, Quincy. The trained baritone earned a master's degree from George Washington University after completing his studies at Morgan.

"I trained at Morgan under Dr. Nathan Carter," said Jackson referring to the late director of the Morgan State University Choir. "Dr. Carter's standard of excellence was the driving factor for me not only joining the choir, but wanting to contribute to the legacy of the choir. I live by that standard of excellence in my music."

"While I hope "Letter to a Nation" will encourage Americans to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and begin the much-needed racial healing our country so desperately needs, I ultimately hope this song will inspire people everywhere to write their own proverbial letter about what they are going to do to enact change in their own communities."

You can follow GP Jackson on social media at @RealGPJackson. His music is available on iTunes, Amazon or Spotify; and the compelling "Letter to a Nation" video can be found on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxrI-csRscM>

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# Fifteen Baltimore Area Businesses Receive Comcast RISE Awards

By Stacy M. Brown

Arion Long started her company, Femly, after being diagnosed with a cervical tumor linked to chemicals in popular feminine products. But, she survived that, and her business is surviving the pandemic.

Bianca Jackson, a visionary and trailblazer, had always possessed a drive to do more than what her career as a tech journalist allowed. The Philadelphia-born entrepreneur, who owns and operates BrickRose Exchange, not only survived the pandemic, but she's thriving.

Both Long and Jackson are among the first round of Comcast RISE award recipients.

The company said more than 700 businesses will receive consulting, media, and creative production services from Effectv, the advertising sales division of Comcast Cable or technology upgrades from Comcast Business.

RISE – Representation, Investment, Strength, and Empowerment – is part of a more extensive \$100 million Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative that Comcast launched in 2020.

The company has committed to playing an integral role in driving lasting reform and developing a comprehensive, multi-year plan to allocate \$100 million to fight injustice and inequality. Femly and BrickRose Exchange are among the 15 Comcast RISE award recipients in the Baltimore metropolitan area.

The Baltimore Times also counted among the award recipients. “We are grateful to Comcast and salute their continued mission to effect real change,” The Baltimore Times Publisher Joy Bramble stated.

Each of the businesses has detailed their stories about the pandemic's impact, how they pivoted, and how the services they are receiving from Comcast RISE will help them move forward.

“The biggest thing that this award from Comcast means is accessibility and access as a Black female in business,” stated Long, whose long list of available



*Arion Long, Femly founder*



*Bianca Jackson, owner, BrickRose Exchange*

feminine products includes panty liners, day and night pads, and a unique menstrual cup.

“I think that as a Black female in business, access to capital and marketing are often barriers to success,” Long added.

She said the creative production services she received from Comcast will allow her to accomplish more.

“It’s been an amazing opportunity to be able to craft commercials that will be shown to women in our target markets,” Long said.

For Jackson, the Comcast RISE award could not have arrived at a more opportune time.

“They gave us laptops and iPads, and I’m just so grateful and humbled to be a recipient of this grant,” stated Jackson, who noted that her BrickRose Exchange was “born from love and appreciation for connecting people.”

“The name itself has some great significance,” Jackson explained about BrickRose Exchange. “Brick represents culture and tradition, spaces and cities.

Rose is like innovation, and when you look at cities like Baltimore, sometimes, when innovation comes in, it erases culture and tradition. So, the name is a space where both can meet.”



According to a news release, Comcast RISE consists of several components. They include a media technology resources program, consulting, a linear

television media campaign, creative production, technology makeovers, business resources, and grants of up to \$10,000 for U.S.-based small and diverse businesses that have been operating for at least three years.

“We created Comcast RISE to partner with Black, Indigenous and People of Color-owned (BIPOC) small businesses and give them access to tools that will help them survive the pandemic and thrive,” Dan Carr, Vice President, Comcast Business, Comcast’s Beltway Region, said in a statement.

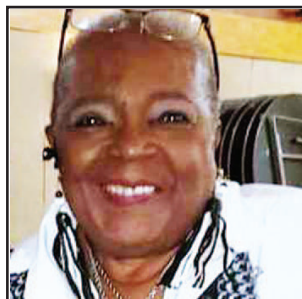
“As we’ve gone through the selection process, it’s been so powerful to hear these business owners’ stories and see the tangible ways that we can help grow their businesses and positively impact their communities. I could not be more pleased to open this program to the entire BIPOC community and continue this positive momentum.”

For more details about Comcast RISE, visit <https://www.comcastrise.com/>



# Rambling Rose

“Black History Month  
Going Out With a BANG!”



Rosa Pryor Trusty

Hello everyone, hoping everyone who have eyes on this column is well and healthy and their family too.

This is the last week for Black History Month and I want to go out with a BANG! This week I wanted to capture some of our history back in the day, especially in the world of entertainment. I truly hope you enjoy. First of all let me tell you the photos you see on my page this week are a sneak preview on what's going to be in my new book entitled “Baltimore’s Black History; Who? What? When? And Where?”

These are just some of about 500 photos and stories that will be in my new book. All of the photos in my new book are preserved with a back story. My book will be coming out soon, I hope you will enjoy it as much as you have my last two books.

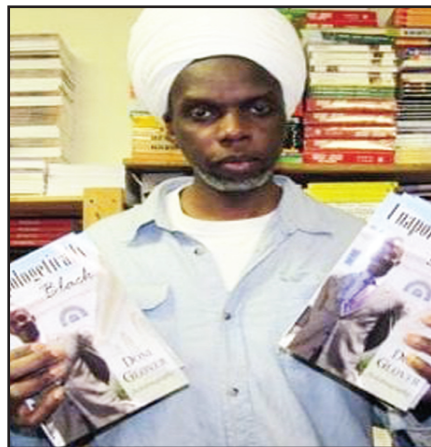
So let’s talk some history that you and I remember. I said you and I because, I don’t think that no one under 50 years old is reading this column.

I want to begin by talking about Everyone’s Place African Culture Center located in the 1300 block of West North Avenue. I am telling you this African-American place is amazing. It is very well-known and popular by people of all walks of life. It is a lovely browsing spot, a place for local and regional artists to share their merchandise, paintings, etc. The African culture side of the business sells skincare products, oils, scents, clothing, and hand-made jewelry. But my favorite is their undying support to the community. Authors can sell their books and have book-signings; they also house many, many local authors’ books on their shelves. I have so much more to tell you, but you have to wait until my new book comes out.

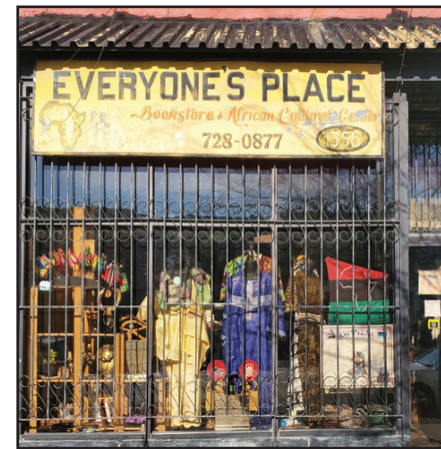
Now, I want to talk about a guy who was my friend and maybe yours too: a businessman, owner of one of my

favorite clubs in Baltimore, not only because he kept so many of the musicians I booked working, but also the entertainment was always first class and the patrons were respectful and loyal. I am talking about the late Herman Clayborne who owned the Club Astoria on Edmondson Avenue near Carey Street. Oh yes! Around 1970, Mr. Clayborne purchased the business connected to a package goods store and never looked back for many years. Some of the acts Clayborne booked were a Doo-Wop group that I had the pleasure of managing for almost eight years; Sonny Til’ and the Orioles; and the R&B group, the Swallows; the jazz group Shirley Scott; jazz pianist Mel Spears. Did you know that Bobby Ward and his band was a house band for a long time? You can see the rest of this story in my new book. Oh! What about Phil’s Lounge that was located on Mount & Mosher Streets? Do you remember? They used to have some of the best food and local live entertainment in the late 1950s. This club was so very intimate and classy. A guy named Joe Reuben and his brothers owned this one.

Taking you back way back in Baltimore Black history, do you remember the Comedy Club, Buck’s Bar, which was on the “Avenue” between Hoffman and Preston Streets? I can tell you some stories about these clubs including Club Tijuana and the Ubangi Club which was located in the 2200 block of Pennsylvania Avenue. But not today, maybe another time. I got to go. Stay safe, we will hopefully see you at a concert soon. Remember, if you need me, call me, at 410-833-9474 or email me at [rosapryor@aol.com](mailto:rosapryor@aol.com) or you can send me a note at 214 Conewood Avenue, Reisterstown, Maryland 21136. **UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I’M MUSICALLY YOURS.**



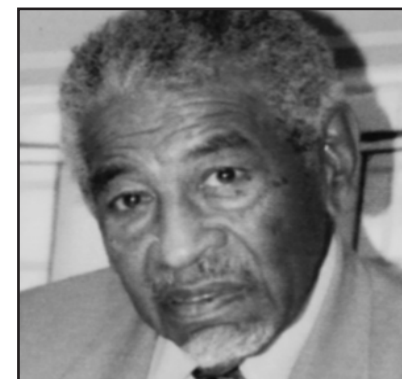
*Everyone’s Place Culture Center located 1356 W. North Avenue has books on everything Black; CD’s, lectures handbooks, health food products, clothing, spiritual products, arts, fragrances and jewelry. Everyone’s Place is a family owned business run by Nati (above), wife Tabia and daughter, Olakekan Kamau-Nataki.*



*The legendary Sphinx Club in the mid 1980s was located 2107-2109 Pennsylvania Avenue. The owner, Charlie Tilghman's photo is hanging on the wall in the left-hand corner of the photo and musician sitting at the bar is Baltimore's own saxophonist, the late Eddie Gough showing off with his sax solo while the late song stylist, Earlene Reed next to him sings along as other patrons looks on.*



*Music Liberated started having jazz shows in 1979. Shown here are John Water on piano; Maynard Parker on guitar; Pokie Hudgins on bass; Marvin Cabel on sax; and Larry Jeter on drums.*



*Leon B. Speights, founder of Leon’s Pig Pen opened his first store in 1965 located on Fremont Avenue in South Baltimore. He used his savings of \$900 working as a headwaiter, line cook, waiter and bartender at the Pimlico Hotel, Bonnie View and Woodholme Country Club to start his business.*



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# Baltimore Ravens continue to tweak coaching staff

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens have established themselves as one of the more successful franchises in the NFL. The team's recent success continues to take a toll as members of the coaching staff have been plucked to serve roles with other franchises.

Former assistant head coach and wide receivers coach David Culley has joined to the Houston Texans to take over as the head coach. The Ravens hired Tee Martin to take over the role vacated by Culley. Martin served as a wide receiver coach for Kentucky, USC and Tennessee.

Keith Williams was also hired to be the Pass Game Specialist. Williams coached wide receivers at Nebraska from 2015-17. His recent experience includes serving as a personal wide receivers coach for an assortment of NFL players, including Tyreek Hill and Davante Adams. He also served as the wide receivers coach for the San Antonio Commanders of the Alliance of American Football in 2019.

Former linebackers coach Mike McDonald left the Ravens to become the defensive coordinator for the University of Michigan. Ironically, he will work under Jim Harbaugh, Ravens head coach John Harbaugh's brother.

"Mike is an excellent defensive mind who is highly respected across the NFL," John Harbaugh said in a statement. "He has been a valuable member of the Baltimore Ravens staff, and shown a passion for teaching, coaching and developing his players. We are excited about everything that Mike brings to our defense, team and university."

The Ravens have added Jay Peterson to



**Baltimore Ravens head coach John Harbaugh promoted his long-time assistant Craig Ver Steeg to running backs coach to replace Matt Weiss who left to become the quarterback's coach at the University of Michigan. In over 12 seasons as John Harbaugh's assistant coach, Ver Steeg has worked with running backs, quarterbacks and wide receivers.**

Courtesy Photo/www.BaltimoreRavens.com

be the assistant linebackers coach. Peterson joined Baltimore's staff after most recently serving as linebackers' coach at Wayne State. The Ravens also added veteran defensive coach Rex Ryan to serve as the inside linebackers coach.

Jason Brooks was also added as the assistant defensive line coach. Brooks joined the Ravens after most recently serving as the defensive line coach for over the last two years at Charleston Southern University.

Running backs coach Matt Weiss is the

latest coach to leave the flock. Weiss left the Ravens to serve as the quarterback's coach for the University of Michigan. He was also part of Jim Harbaugh's staff during his time at Stanford where he worked on the defensive side of the ball and assisted with special teams.

John Harbaugh promoted long-time assistant Craig Ver Steeg to running backs coach to replace Weiss. In over 12 seasons as Harbaugh's assistant coach, Ver Steeg has worked with running backs, quarterbacks and wide receivers.

"Craig is a highly regarded member of our staff and someone who's served as an integral part of our offense for many years," John Harbaugh said in a statement. "He has vast experience coaching and coordinating offenses, a thorough understanding of our schemes and techniques, and has a great relationship with our running backs. Craig is a dedicated coach and teacher who has a proven ability for getting the most out of our players."



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# How a North Carolina farmer became an important part of Baltimore's Black History

By Stacy M. Brown

She was born on a farm in North Carolina but made an everlasting impression in Maryland.

Verda Freeman Welcome is counted among the foremost political, civil rights, and community activists of her time. After moving to Baltimore at age 23, Welcome graduated from Coppin State Teachers College and Morgan State College, and later received a master's degree in history at New York University.

She earned honorary degrees from Howard University and the University of Maryland.

Welcome, a proud member of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority, taught for nearly a dozen years in the Baltimore public school system before setting her sights on the political arena where she ultimately made history.

Married to Dr. Henry C. Welcome, Freeman Welcome won election to the Maryland House of Delegates representing Baltimore City's fourth district. Welcome became the first African American woman to win election to the state House.

She served as a Delegate until 1962 when she won election as the state's first Black woman senator. Welcome served in the Senate until 1982.

"She was very impactful with the legislation that she helped pass in regards to marriage equity, even smoking bans and other kinds of things we now kind of take for granted," Ida E. Jones, an author and archivist at Morgan State University, remarked in a televised 2019 interview.

It was Welcome's 1975 legislation that transformed Morgan State College into Morgan State University.



**Verda Freeman Welcome**  
Courtesy Photo/Morgan State University

"Verda Welcome is largely ignored by history, Edwin T. Johnson, assistant university archivist at Morgan State University, said in the same interview with Jones.

Johnson offered that he was hopeful that Welcome's notoriety would change.

Her legislative accomplishments were historic. She spearheaded bills to attack discrimination in public housing and other public accommodations, and she sponsored legislation that helped to fund the construction of Provident Hospital.

Legislation put forth by Welcome also addressed equal pay, harassment of welfare recipients, illegal employment practices.

Her legislation also led to the creation

of the Maryland Commission on Afro-American History and Culture.

One of fifteen children of John and Docia Freeman, Verda Freeman Welcome died in 1990.

"She brought the entire community of those on the margins to the center of the conversation with dignity and grace," Jones told WBAL-TV. "The Welcome Bridge" at Morgan State University was constructed in Welcome's honor, and officials said it provides a safe path over a busy road at the campus.

"She bridged the gap between the races; she bridged the gap in terms of inequities between men and women in so many facets and aspects of our world."

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HBCU students, alumni and advocates can vote for their favorite HBCUs through Twitter and Instagram using the school's designated hashtag found at [retoolyourschool.com](http://retoolyourschool.com) or through the voting portal also on the website. There are three school clusters, based on student population, and the ten schools with the most votes per cluster will be awarded the campus improvement grants. Voting is unlimited and ends on March 15, 2021 at 11:59 a.m. EST.

"Since 2009, The Home Depot has continued to increase its investment in campus improvements for HBCUs," said Derek Bottoms, chief diversity, equity & inclusion officer for The Home Depot. "In addition to other HBCU initiatives supported by The Home Depot over the years, we are doubling our *Retool Your School* commitment to \$1 million for 2021. We are ensuring that, upon their return to campus, HBCU students have an upgraded environment that enhances their educational experience as they progress on their journey to become the next generation of leaders."

Winners will be announced in April 2021. For more information on *The Home Depot Retool Your School*, visit: [retoolyourschool.com](http://retoolyourschool.com)

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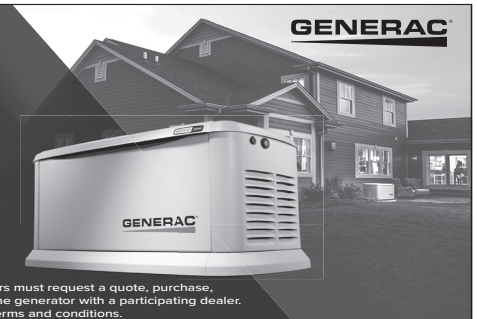
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