



The Annapolis Times

Vol. 29 No. 30 May 28 - June 3, 2021

A Baltimore Times/Times of Baltimore Publication



Gina Barilone
Courtesy Photo

Baltimore Entertainer Talks about her Will to Live in her Battle with Pancreatic Cancer

By Stacy M. Brown

None of it made sense to Gina Barilone. She spent her days working as an administrative coordinator for the Johns Hopkins Institution and many evenings basking in the glow of love with her children and closest friends.

On most weekends, Barilone could be found on a concert stage belting out hits from artists like Aretha Franklin, Michael Jackson, and Whitney Houston. Barilone even performed some original tunes with her entertainment business, Mzz B Productions, LLC.

Mzz B provides live bands, photo booths, DJ/KJ, and live sound production for private and corporate clients in Maryland, D.C., Virginia, and other areas.

With the pandemic shutting the world down in 2020, Barilone was just like everyone else— at home and with minimal physical contact with the world.

About three months into the pandemic, the golden-voiced Baltimore resident felt some pain in her stomach. As it continued, she concluded that the pains must be a gynecological issue, so she called her doctor.

“Several years ago, I had some fibroids removed, and doctors determined that it was a fibroid; however, they wanted to perform other tests and MRIs to be sure,” Barilone recalled. “In July, the pain had

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Keep your mental health in mind all year long

By **Chazz Scott**
Nucleus Team Member
Positively Caviar, Inc.

As Mental Health Awareness Month comes to a close, be sure to always keep your mental state at the forefront of your mind. Don't let the month of May be the only time you check-in with yourself to understand how you feel mentally.

Checking-in with yourself should be a daily action to ensure you are constantly striving to be the best version of yourself you know you can be.

This daily check-in can provide the grounding you need to help cultivate the patience within ourselves needed in our distracted and always-on digital lifestyle.

Our day is filled with numerous emotions—the ups, downs, frustrations and successes. Not to mention that our minds are constantly worrying about the future or regretting the past. Researchers call this the “monkey mind.” It's the constant chatter never-ending voice in the back of our head that seems never to be quiet. It constantly ruminates over our fears, worries and stressors.

Here is a perfect example that I am sure that many of you have experienced. Have you ever found yourself driving your car when your mind begins to wonder and you can't quite remember a



Chazz Scott
Nucleus Team Member
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Courtesy Photo

portion of the trip you just made? Yep, that's your mind on autopilot!

This happens more times throughout the day than you probably realize—while you're at work; at the gym; and even in the middle of a conversation with someone. On top of that, our minds are constantly being pulled in so many different directions from notifications,

social media feeds and email alerts. In fact, a recent Harvard study found that a wandering mind is considered an unhappy mind. During the study, an iPhone app was used that pinged participants at random times throughout the day to understand what they are thinking about. The study concluded that 50 percent of the time participants' minds wandered from their current task; plus when their minds were roaming, they were significantly less happy.

Without realizing, it can almost seem like we never really have the opportunity to truly enjoy and experience the present moment. Life is happening all around us but our daily lifestyles and uncontrolled minds are so distracted that we easily miss the precious moments of life that allow us to truly experience the gift of living.

The gift of living is found in living fully in the present. To live in the present, we must practice a set of habits to counter our distracted lifestyles.

Every time you feel anxious, stressed or your mind begins to wander, you must develop the habit of pulling it back under your control. Now, this doesn't mean having complete control over your thoughts—it means being able to put yourself back in the driver's seat and to become aware of your thoughts. Once you are aware of what you are thinking about, you are in a position to choose

thoughts or actions that will support your goals, habits and mental wellbeing.

One of the best ways to make this practice a habit is by implementing a daily meditation routine. Practicing mindfulness has been shown to help quiet our chatty brains and obtain more self-awareness over our thoughts. Using apps like Calm or Headspace is a great place to start. Ten minutes a day in the morning before your day starts is one of the best ways to set your day up for success. Once you begin to implement this habit, you will begin to see changes in your focus, mood levels and even patience within yourself.

Your mental health should be a priority every single day. Bring yourself back to the present by implementing the habit of mindfulness.

Positively Caviar, Inc. (PCI) is a grassroots nonprofit organization focused on instilling mental resilience by way of positive thinking and optimism. Each month, a member of the Nucleus Team features a column focused on mental and physical health tips, scientific studies, nutrition facts, and stories that are positive in nature to support a positive and healthy lifestyle. To learn more about how you can support, volunteer or donate to Positively Caviar, Inc. visit: staybasedandpositive.com



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The Annapolis Times

(USPS 5840) is published every Friday by **The Baltimore Times/Times of Baltimore**, 201-2530 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. Subscriptions by mail \$60 per year. Standard bulk postage paid at Baltimore, MD 21233.

Postmaster send address changes to:

The Baltimore Times

201 - 2530 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

Baltimore Entertainer Talks about her Will to Live in her Battle with Pancreatic Cancer

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increased in my stomach and progressed to my lower back. I knew that it could not be fibroids causing this pain, so I thought maybe I pulled a back muscle. Suddenly, my symptoms worsened with intensified stomachaches, severe backaches, diarrhea, jaundice, loss of appetite, and rapid weight loss. I was finally scheduled for an X-Ray and then finally a GI appointment in August.”

In September, Barilone underwent an intense routine of blood work, testing, prescription medication, and CT scans.

“After consulting with my nurse practitioner, Jennifer, I knew I had to take this seriously.

During an ultrasound, doctors noticed a mass at the head of my pancreas. I was terrified,” Barilone remembered. “I didn’t know how to be brave. I truly thought I was going to die. Jennifer did her best to comfort me and give me hope. Her optimism and positive spirit allowed me to breathe.

“Tests revealed my pancreatic duct was blocked, so I immediately underwent a procedure to have a stent placed to drain bile and to confirm the diagnosis: Stage II pancreatic cancer.

“My first oncologist believed I was too old to handle the strongest chemotherapy treatment, and my chances for long-term survival were minimal. I knew I deserved better.”

Her weight dropped from 157 to 134 pounds. Today, Barilone is at a steady 119 pounds, and her antigen 19 levels are well.

“Although I’ve developed neuropathy in my legs, feet and knees and some days severe fatigue, I’m still able to manage long walks,” Barilone said.

She recently completed a 5K run/walk and has returned to work.

Barilone also has returned to the recording studio at Stages Music Arts, working with singer and songwriter Richard Crafton.

“Starting this June, I’m laying the backing vocals on a second album with Cam Aliff, who is known as Tex Moonlight,” Barilone exclaimed.

But her fight is far from over.

According to the National Cancer Institute, only 8.2 percent of pancreatic cancer patients survive for five years. The pancreas is deep inside the body, and standard physical exams cannot detect early tumors. People usually have no symptoms until the cancer has already spread to other organs.

A diagnosis like this can drain the patient of most resources, so Barilone’s family has started a **Go Fund Me** campaign to help offset some of the rising medical costs. She is also performing during the Mzz Bs Beatz and Eatz Benefit show at Stages Music Arts in Cockeysville, Maryland on Saturday, June 5, 2021 at 5 p.m. Attendees must be at least 21. Tickets are \$65, and \$580 for a table of 8. Tickets include a full course meal, live entertainment, white or rose wine, raffle tickets, giveaways and live entertainment. For more information about the fundraiser or to purchase tickets, visit: www.mzzbncompany.com.

“The benefit was developed to unite family, friends and colleagues in one place at one time to unite to celebrate hope and endurance of life, through love, support, eats and music,” Barilone said. “I want to give back as well as I am receiving.”

Barilone also cautions women to not ignore any signs their bodies might signal.

“Take time out with your primary care physician and run tests,” she noted. “If they don’t work hard for you to find out what’s wrong with your body, then seek help from others. Our lives are too beautiful and precious. No health, no wealth.”

“Less than 20 percent to 30 percent, of those with pancreatic cancer, have a life expectancy of five years,” Barilone noted. “But I would like to— with God’s grace— push that envelope.”

To contribute to the Barilone family Go Fund Me, visit:

<https://gofund.me/81acc4e2>.



Gina Barilone at a recording session in 2019.

Courtesy Photo



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Memorial Day 2021

*A message from George W. Owings III
Secretary, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs*

As Secretary of the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, I am honored to serve the 385,000 veterans who call Maryland home. As a veteran myself, Memorial Day resonates deeply with me. As we gather with friends and family this holiday weekend, let us not forget the men and women who valiantly served and who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our great nation. Let us remember the sacrifice made by the many who have lost those dearest, our Gold Star families. The sacrifice these heroes and families made has created the great nation we live in today.



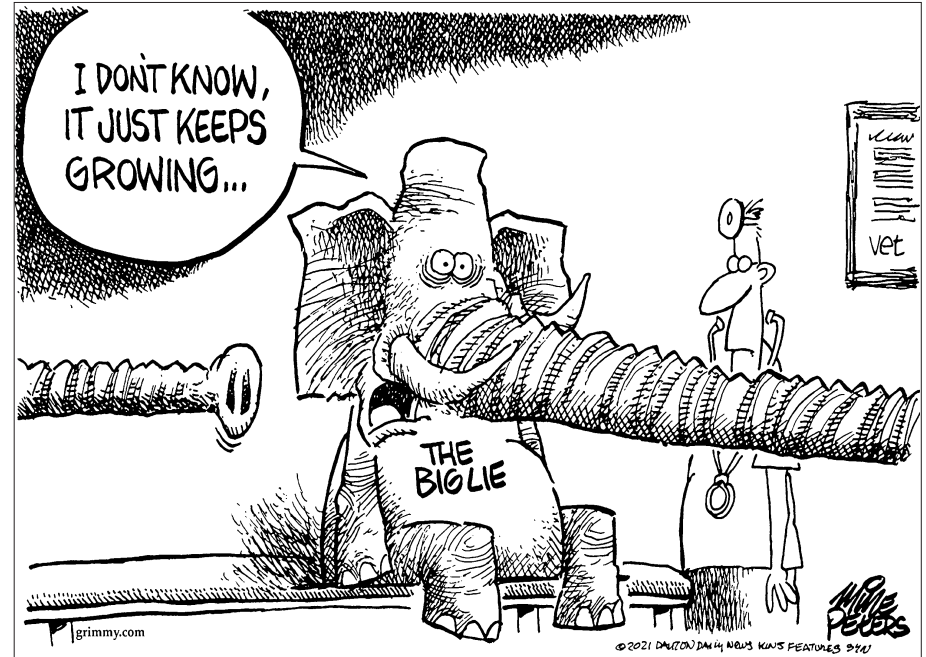
Many of us are familiar with the story of how Memorial Day was established. Our country was nearly torn apart by the Civil War, but after the guns were laid down, people in cities and towns across the nation began to gather and remember those who had died. Originally called Decoration Day, May 30 was designated as the day to visit and place flowers on the graves of those who died in service to their country.

In Annapolis this Memorial Day weekend, the United States Naval Academy will graduate the Midshipmen of the Class of 2021. The Air Force Academy, West Point, and Coast Guard Academy have also graduated the next generation of military leaders. They will go on to be Admirals, Generals, pilots, ship captains and more. Others will join the enlisted ranks and provide support and leadership across the globe. They will serve in an increasingly complicated and technologically advanced world. They are the hope for our future and yes—those responsibilities may place them in harm's way.

On this holiday weekend, I ask you to contemplate what more you can do to honor and support the members of our United States Armed Services. I ask you to support our nation's veterans, and Maryland veterans in particular. They are your neighbors, your friends, and your relatives. Take time to learn of their experiences and pause to consider the sacrifice made by their spouses, their children, and their parents. Thank them all for their service as active duty service members, veterans, family members and loved ones.

Finally, take a pledge this weekend to visit at least one of the four Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs memorials. Recite the names of Marylanders lost in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Pause at the Gold Star Memorial and reflect on the sacrifice made by the families of the fallen. And finally, on behalf of our entire Department, enjoy a safe and relaxing holiday weekend.

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Community Affairs

Ace Hardware honors fallen heroes with 1 million American flags

Ace partners with the VFW to give away one million American flags for Memorial Day Tributes

Oak Brook, Ill.— Ace Hardware is collaborating with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) once again this year to honor the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country by giving away 1 million American flags nationwide on Saturday, May 29, 2021.

Consumers who visit a participating Ace store on May 29, will receive a free 8" x 12" American flag while quantities last. A second flag will be donated to a local VFW Post to be used for marking and honoring veterans' graves this Memorial Day.

"Ace is proud to be a part of this nationwide effort to distribute flags to our customers and to the VFW to help honor our fallen heroes on Memorial Day," said Kim Lefko, Chief Marketing Officer, Ace Hardware. "With Ace stores easily accessible to millions of Americans, we wanted to step up and provide a way for our customers, and

our store owners and associates, to pay tribute to our military men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country."

"Memorial Day is one of the most important days of the year as we recognize and honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's fallen heroes," said VFW National Commander Hal Roesch. "Teaming up with patriotic and compassionate companies like Ace Hardware help to ensure our fallen service members are never forgotten."

Last year, 535,000 American flags were given away to customers at Ace stores nationwide. In addition, Ace sent 535,000 flags to more than 2,000 VFW Posts for placement on veterans' graves.

"The American flag giveaway aligns with Ace Hardware's long history of supporting veterans nationwide," added Lefko. "Ace's very name is a commemoration of the "flying aces," the courageous fighter pilots from World War I. Ace's patriotism continues through the support of its veteran retailers, and the sincere appreciation for all the veterans and active-duty military who work in Ace stores, distribution centers, and its corporate offices."

Systemic cheating threatens quality of U.S. education

By Dr. Julianne Malveaux,
NNPA Newswire Contributor

Education is the bedrock of a successful society. With quality education comes more opportunities to grow, increased equality and stronger communities.

But right now, the quality of a U.S. education is under siege. As a former college president and educator, I will not stand by and watch as it happens.

As educators adapt to virtual classrooms and students are faced with academic burnout, a perfect storm is brewing for cheating and plagiarism to thrive. All the while, one company, Chegg, is encouraging the behavior and making billions. It's time for colleges and universities to put a stop to this company, so it does not continue to grow out of control.

A \$12 billion company that has grown

as a direct result of exploitation and dishonesty, Chegg provides students with tools to receive near-immediate answers to tests, homework and quiz questions, all without repercussions.

Using the platform, students are able to access test banks, find exact copies

It is unconscionable to think that we are sending our kids to school to learn and prepare for the real world, only to see so many of them cheat their way through.

And as with most issues in this country, we are seeing disproportionate

consist of predominately upper-middle class white students, are subsidizing Chegg for their members. One college junior put it perfectly in a statement to *The Daily Pennsylvanian*:

"I know that not everybody is capable of paying that kind of money to be a part of an organization, and that creates these small groups of privilege, where people share different Chegg accounts and test answers, and it's further privileging the privileged."

Racial inequality is a virus in this country. Now it is meeting another virus in our country's education system: cheating. All students deserve a quality education. To see a company further perpetuate racial inequality as it reduces education quality across the board is unacceptable.

Online learning has allowed our educators to safely continue teaching their students, despite the shakeup COVID-19 has caused. Even as we slowly begin to re-enter society, I am confident online learning is here to stay. But that means it is time for all academic institutions to step in and keep this cheating platform out of our classrooms, before the problem gets even worse.

Dr. Julianne Malveaux is an economist, author, media contributor, former college president and educator.

"As educators adapt to virtual classrooms and students are faced with academic burnout, a perfect storm is brewing for cheating and plagiarism to thrive. All the while, one company, Chegg, is encouraging the behavior and making billions. It's time for colleges and universities to put a stop to this company, so it does not continue to grow out of control."

of their assessments, and check to see if an essay will be flagged for plagiarism. Most egregiously, a student can log on to Chegg in the middle of taking a test and submit a question to the "Expert Q&A" tool, which will give them an answer in the same amount of time it takes to even read one question.

The service is so widely used among students that in a 52-student *Forbes* interview, "aside from the half dozen students Chegg provided for *Forbes* to talk to, all but 4 admitted they use the site to cheat."

effects on students of color and those from underprivileged backgrounds. At nearly \$200 a year, not only is Chegg out of the budget for many of these students, but it also lowers the quality of education across the board by requiring less actual learning in exchange for quick and easy good grades. Unlike their white counterparts, many of these students do not have a safety net to fall back on when they lose access to quality education.

To exacerbate the inequality, many fraternities and sororities, which

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Sizzling Meals Made for Summer

Family Features

Summertime, for many, represents an opportunity to enjoy freshly cooked meals while enjoying time outdoors. Taking your dishes from ordinary to extraordinary starts with chef-inspired recipes that call to mind the flavors of the season.

Whether you're a steak enthusiast who enjoys nothing more than a tender cut or a summer burger connoisseur looking for a fresh twist on tradition, this recipe calls for high-quality beef from Omaha Steaks. Created by Omaha Steaks Executive Chef David Rose, these Fried Lobster Po Boy Burgers with pimento remoulade sauce are a tempting way to combine two summertime favorites – seafood and burgers.

Visit OmahaSteaks.com for more summer meal inspiration.



Fried Lobster Po Boy Burgers

Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks Exec. Chef David Rose

Prep time: about 20 minutes

Cook time: about 20 minutes

Servings: 2

Pimento Remoulade:

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 1/2 tablespoons minced pimentos
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon minced bread and butter pickles
- 1 pepperoncino (seeded and minced)
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 3 dashes hot sauce
- kosher salt, to taste

Fried Lobster Tails:

- Vegetable oil, for frying
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 dashes hot pepper sauce
- 1/4 cup potato chips, finely blended in food processor
- 1/3 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 tablespoon minced flat leaf Italian parsley

- 2 Omaha Steaks lobster tails (5 ounces each)

Cheeseburgers:

- 1 pound Omaha Steaks premium ground beef
- salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 brioche buns
- 2 slices yellow cheddar cheese
- 3 leaves romaine lettuce, shredded

To make pimento remoulade: In small bowl, mix mayonnaise, pimentos, mustard, pickles, pepperoncino, paprika, garlic powder, black pepper, lemon juice and hot sauce until well incorporated. Season with salt, to taste.

To make fried lobster tails: Preheat grill to 400 F and add oil to 10-inch cast-iron pan about 1/2-inch deep.

In medium bowl, whisk flour, 1/4 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, garlic powder and smoked paprika until well incorporated. Set aside.

In separate medium bowl, whisk egg, water and hot pepper sauce. Set aside.

In third medium bowl, whisk potato chips, panko breadcrumbs and parsley until well incorporated. Set aside.

Cut lobster tails in half lengthwise, remove meat from shell and season with remaining kosher salt and black pepper.

Fried Lobster Po Boy Burgers

Toss halved lobster tails in flour mixture first, egg mixture second then potato chip mixture third, coating thoroughly.

Fry lobster tails 3-4 minutes on each side until golden brown and cooked through. Close grill lid between flipping.

To make cheeseburgers: Preheat grill to 450 F using direct heat. Form ground beef into two 1/2 pound patties, each about 1/2-inch thick.

Using thumb, make dimple in center of each patty to help cook evenly.

Season both sides of burger with salt and pepper, to taste. Spread butter on each cut side of buns.

Grill burgers 4-5 minutes per side for medium doneness.

Add one slice cheddar cheese on each burger, close lid and grill about 30 seconds to melt cheese. Remove patties from grill to clean plate. Place buns cut sides down on grill grates and toast 20-30 seconds, or until well toasted, being careful to avoid burning.

To assemble: Place desired remoulade on buns. Place cheeseburgers on bottom buns. Top each with two fried lobster tail halves. Place handful shredded lettuce on lobster tails. Top with buns.

Source: Omaha Steaks

New York Strips Oscar-Style

Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks Executive Chef David Rose

Prep time: about 30 minutes

Cook time: about 3 1/2 hours

Servings: 4

Sauteed Asparagus:

- 1/2 pound jumbo asparagus (about 1 bunch), blanched in salted boiling water
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons minced shallots
- salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Bearnaise Sauce:

- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons minced shallots
- 1 tablespoon chopped tarragon
- 3 egg yolks
- 2 tablespoons water, plus additional for boiling, divided
- 2 dashes hot sauce
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Jumbo Lump Crab Meat:

- 1 pound jumbo lump crab meat
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt

New York Strip Steaks:

- 4 Omaha Steaks Private Reserve or Butcher's Cut New York Strips (10 ounces each)
- salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- water
- 4 tablespoons grapeseed oil
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 garlic cloves
- 2 fresh thyme sprigs

To make asparagus: Cut asparagus stalks into 1/4-inch pieces. Heat large pan over medium-high heat and add olive oil.

Add garlic and shallots to pan; lightly saute about 20 seconds, or until fragrant.

Add asparagus to pan; saute about 2 minutes until lightly browned. Add salt and pepper, to taste.

To make bearnaise sauce: In small saucepan, bring vinegar, shallots and tarragon to boil then reduce to simmer 3-4 minutes until reduced by about half. Cool to room temperature.

Bring medium pot half full of water to slow boil.

In small bowl, whisk egg yolks, vinegar reduction, water and hot sauce until well incorporated.

Place bowl over pot of boiling water and continue whisking ingredients until it starts to emulsify and becomes sauce-like. Alternate whisking on and off heat every 30 seconds to prevent eggs from scrambling.

Gradually add melted butter, continuously whisking until sauce becomes rich with ribbony consistency and sets up. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. If too thick, add 1 tablespoon water at a time and whisk to desired consistency.



New York Strip Oscar-style

To make crab meat: In medium bowl, lightly toss crab meat with salt until well coated.

To make steaks: Pat steaks dry with paper towels and season heavily with salt and pepper, to taste. Bring steaks to room temperature.

Place sous vide immersion circulator in pot of water and set to 5 F below target doneness.

Place seasoned steaks in sous vide bag or zip-top bag and cook 2 hours.

Remove bag and remove steaks from bag. Pat steaks dry with paper towels.

Warm large cast-iron pan over high heat and add oil. Add steaks, butter, garlic cloves and thyme leaves. After about 1 minute, steaks should start to brown.

Flip steaks and baste with butter until caramelized. Remove steaks from pan and rest 7-8 minutes.

To assemble: Place asparagus on bottom of plate. Top with steaks (whole or sliced), crab meat and bearnaise sauce.

Source: Omaha Steaks

COVID-19 survivor beats virus after 31-day hospital stay

By Ursula V. Battle

Part I of a Two-Part Series on Darnell Davis

Recalling the days leading up to his hospitalization for COVID-19, Darnell Davis reflected on the conversation that took place between he and his wife Daven Spencer Davis.

“It was April of 2020, and I started to feel funny,” he said. “I tried to self-isolate, but my condition worsened. Eventually my wife told me that if I did not feel better by the end of the week, we were setting up an appointment with my doctor. My doctor sent me to Pimlico to be tested for COVID-19, and on April 27, I was sent to Greater Baltimore Medical Center. By April 30, they were telling my wife that if I stayed there, I would die. When I arrived at Shock Trauma, I was literally dead when I got there.

“My lungs were white with COVID and I was part of the early phase of COVID patients. I was very sick. My wife was told to start making funeral arrangements for me.”

Davis, who was 55 at the time and has since turned 56, was originally admitted to Greater Baltimore Medical Center (GBMC) after being diagnosed with COVID-19. On April 30, 2020, he was transferred to Shock Trauma at the University of Maryland Medical Center and was having difficulty breathing. There, doctors placed him on advanced life support—ECMO, or extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, for 17 days, with a heart-lung machine doing the work of his lungs to provide oxygen to his body. Davis also went into acute renal failure and was assisted by another lifesaving machine to help filter his blood and temporarily replace his kidneys.

“At some point, every major organ failed—kidneys, heart, lungs,” said Mrs. Davis. “He also needed a massive blood transfusion after heavy doses of blood thinners used with ECMO caused life-threatening bleeding.”



Darnell Davis during his hospitalization at Shock Trauma.

Courtesy Photo/Darnell Davis



COVID-19 survivor Darnell Davis spent 31 days in Shock Trauma at the University of Maryland Medical Center.
Photo by Ursula V. Battle

Davis would ultimately spend 31 days at Shock Trauma, nearly dying several times.

“When I went to GBMC, I walked into the building even though my oxygen was very low, and my organs were shutting down,” said Davis, who was recently honored at the 31st annual R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Celebration of Heroes. “My right lung had completely collapsed. There are things that took place during my journey with COVID that doctors are still scratching their heads about. I’m supposed to be dead.”

Laura S. Buchanan, MD, an Assistant Professor, Trauma/Surgical Critical Care, and a faculty member of the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center of the University of Maryland, was among the doctors who treated Davis after his arrival at Shock Trauma.

“Mr. Davis was like many of the

patients we see with COVID who initially had gone to another hospital where they did everything that they could possibly do for him—but worsen and look like they are going to die,” said Dr. Buchanan. “They are transferred here for ECMO, and parts of their body are already shutting down. That’s where Mr. Davis was when he came to us.” She also noted that Mr. Davis also had a pulley catheter, which is a bladder drain. That is a normal part of ICU when patients are that sick to monitor renal functions. Mr. Davis bled from the site where the tube was placed—a complication from necessary therapy. After his arrival at Shock Trauma, there was a huge team of doctors and nurses that took care of him. Anyone who is that ill, we are working constantly to keep them alive. There is no treatment for the COVID, so we are trying to give their body a chance to heal and recover

from the COVID infection.”

Jessica Bradford was among Mr. Davis’ nurses.

“I took care of Mr. Davis,” Bradford said. “I saw him from the time he came in up until he was discharged. After things were controlled, he started to get well. I remember him being extremely nice. He would ask us to turn on Pandora, and also Facetimed his wife and children. He also joked about us looking like aliens,” chuckled Bradford, recalling Davis seeing the medical staff dressed in their personal protection gear.

“He was always happy to see us,” She added, “I worked the night shift, and I would see him doing his exercises in bed. Mr. Davis had such a drive and fight in him. He had a drive like no other.”

Coming Next Week— Part 2: Darnell Davis – A COVID survivor with a new lease on life.

“We don't even know how strong we are until we are forced to bring that hidden strength forward. In times of tragedy, of war, of necessity, people do amazing things. The human capacity for survival and renewal is awesome.” —Isabel Allende



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Baton Rouge Area Foundation opens entries for 15th Annual Gaines Award

The deadline for submissions for \$15,000 prize is August 15, 2021

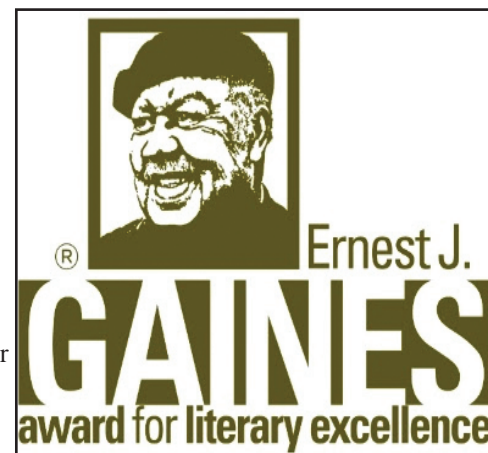
Baton Rouge, La.— Entries for the 15th annual Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence will be accepted through August 15, 2021. Information on criteria and entrance forms for the award, which includes a \$15,000 cash prize, is available

at www.ernestjgainesaward.org.

Sponsored by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Gaines Award was created to honor outstanding literary work from rising African-American authors while recognizing Louisiana native Ernest Gaines' extraordinary contribution to the literary world. The upcoming Gaines Award will honor outstanding fiction— novels or short-story collections— published in 2021. Galleys for 2021 publications are also accepted.

A native of Pointe Coupee Parish, Gaines' critically acclaimed novel, "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," was adapted into a 1974 made-for-TV movie that received nine Emmy awards.

His 1993 book, "A Lesson Before Dying," won the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction. He was Writer-in-Residence Emeritus at the University



of Louisiana-Lafayette before his death in 2019.

The Gaines Award winner is chosen annually by a panel of professional writers and academics.

The award has identified promising writers early in their careers. For instance, two previous Gaines Award winners have later won the \$50,000 Whiting Award. Another was chosen a MacArthur Fellow, a \$625,000 award given over five years.

Previous Gaines Award winners are Gabriel Bump; Bryan Washington; Jamel Brinkley; Ladee Hubbard; Crystal Wilkinson; T. Geronimo Johnson; Mitchell Jackson; Attica Locke; Stephanie Powell Watts; Dinaw Mengestu; Victor Lavalley; Jeffery R. Allen; Ravi Howard; and Olympia Vernon.

The Ernest Gaines Award event will be held Thursday, January 27, 2022 at the Manship Theatre in downtown Baton Rouge.

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Ravens Alejandro Villanueva relishes new rushing offense

By Tyler Hamilton

Baltimore Ravens new offensive lineman Alejandro Villanueva got his first on field learning experience when the team started organized team activities this week.

Villanueva played left tackle for the last five seasons with Pittsburgh Steelers. Now, he is moving to right tackle for Baltimore. Moving from left to right isn't a big concern for Villanueva. He is more focused on getting the playbook down and understanding his responsibilities in the new scheme. Fortunately for Villanueva and the Ravens, the scheme he is learning is similar to the run-first offense he played at Army.

The chance to play for a team that won't throw the ball "800 times a season" is a welcome transition from the Steelers to the Ravens, a team that has had one of the NFL's top rushing offenses over the last two seasons.

"The mindset, when you know that you're with a team that runs the ball well, it involves every single room in the offense, everybody is in unison, and it's a lot of timing involved with running the ball," Villanueva said after signing with Baltimore. "If you get the timing right, if you get the nice tracks on everybody, then usually you can get to run the ball, and for an offensive lineman, it's very easy, because you don't have a lot of angst when the team is running the ball well.

"For an offensive lineman, it's definitely an awesome experience to be able to find angles to the hips of the defensive lineman, to be able to use your hands and be aggressive, take more risk



The Baltimore Ravens signed two-time Pro Bowl offensive lineman Alejandro Villanueva to a two-year deal earlier this month. He played left tackle for the last five seasons with the Pittsburgh Steelers but will move to right tackle for the Ravens.

Photo Credit: USA TODAY Sports

on your blocks, be able to work, obviously, in tandem with players to your left and right, instead of being on an island blocking and just hoping that if the ball doesn't get out of the hands quickly, that it's [not] going to be a catastrophe."

That's not to say it won't be a transition without any obstacles. There is more than just learning a new playbook.

Villanueva understands that he'll have to

get used to getting into a new stance and seeing the game from a different perspective on the right side of the offensive line as opposed to the left.

Trading offensive lineman Orlando Brown Jr. to the Kansas City Chiefs created a void for Villanueva to sign with the Ravens and make the switch to right tackle. Choosing Baltimore was an easy decision because he knows the organization pretty well from his days as

an AFC North archival with the Steelers.

Villanueva says he still has contact with some of his former Pittsburgh teammates. He'll get to see the rivalry from the other side this season especially when Baltimore faces the Steelers in Pittsburgh on December 5, 2021. The two teams will conclude the regular season with a clash in Baltimore on January 9, 2022.

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