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Baltimore Writer, Producer, Director Continues to Shine in Hollywood



Patricia Cuffie-Jones, a graduate of Mergenthaler (Mervo) Vocational High School in Baltimore City is CEO of Diverge Entertainment and is responsible for several comedies and dramas that have appeared on Netflix, Amazon, iTunes, Bounce TV, and various streaming platforms. She just wrapped on directing her first feature film, "Twice Bitten," scheduled for a fall release and the second season of "Stuck With You," a hit that's streaming on the ALLBLK network. (See article on page 10)

Photo Courtesy of Patricia Cuffie-Jones

BCPL partners with ‘Vision To Learn’ to provide children with free eye exams and glasses

Towson, Md.— In an effort to supply children in low-income households with glasses for the impending school year, nonprofit “Vision To Learn” will visit eight Baltimore County Public Library branches in August. Children who step aboard the organization’s mobile vision clinic will receive free eye exams and, if needed, new glasses of their choice.

In a Stanford University Rural Education Action Plan study, research showed that over a period of nine months, wearing glasses raises a nearsighted child’s test scores by an average of 14 points. Without the glasses, the child is essentially losing an equivalent amount.

In the 2013 “Impact Analysis of Vision to Learn” study at UCLA, teachers reported that glasses helped students become more engaged in the classroom and were not only more confident about participating in class, but the class as a whole experienced fewer disruptions.

“We are always looking for ways to serve our community and level the playing field for those who are struggling,” said Baltimore County Public Library Director Sonia Alcántara-Antoine. “I am thrilled to be able to offer this life-changing service to families in need.”

Exams are available for children 17 and under, and all participants will need



In the 2013 “Impact Analysis of Vision to Learn” study at UCLA, teachers reported that glasses helped students become more engaged in the classroom and were not only more confident about participating in class, but the class as a whole experienced fewer disruptions.

Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

to be able to identify and verbalize basic shapes during the eye exam. If the initial screening indicates that a child needs corrective lenses, they will be examined by a licensed optometrist and then choose from a large selection of Warby Parker frames.

Vision To Learn will visit the following branches and schedule appointments between 9 a.m. and 2:40 p.m. Each

appointment is 20 minutes, which includes an exam, glasses selection and cleaning between patients. All participants are required to wear masks.

“Vision To Learn’s partnership with Baltimore County Public Library has allowed us to continue providing students with the glasses they need to succeed in school, and in life,” said Vision to Learn Manager/Regional Director of East Coast Operations Wade Brown. “Now, as kids come back to school, getting them access to quality vision care is more important than ever.”

Maryland Vision To Learn supporters include the Abell Foundation, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, Congressman John K. Delaney and April McClain-Delaney, Capital Source Foundation, Johns Hopkins University and the Warby Parker Foundation.

“Like many children, I needed eyeglasses from a young age. When a child can’t see, it is difficult for them to focus and learn, whether that’s in a classroom or when reading their favorite library book. Our partnership with Vision To Learn will help more than 100 children transform their lives and educational future,” added Alcántara-Antoine.

Vision To Learn will visit the following Baltimore County Library branches. Appointments will be scheduled between August 16 and 26, 2021 from 9 a.m. to 2.40 p.m. Each appointment is 20 minutes, which will include an exam, glasses selection and cleaning between patients.

***Monday, August 16 — Woodlawn Branch
Tuesday, August 17 — North Point Branch
Wednesday, August 18 — Rosedale Branch
Thursday, August 19 — Arbutus Branch
Monday, August 23 — Cockeysville Branch
Tuesday, August 24 — Sollers Point Branch
Wednesday, August 25 — White Marsh Branch
Thursday, August 26 — Randallstown Branch***

Schedule an appointment at <https://bcpl.info/events-and-programs/list.html#!/?startDate=August%2016,%202021&endDate=September%2001,%202021&term=free%20eye%20exams>

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'Brown Sugar Bake-Off: A Black Woman Play Festival' Call for submissions

Baltimore— Inspired by Paula Vogel's Bake-Offs, Black women focused Two Strikes Theatre Collective announces the Brown Sugar Bake-Off, a celebration of Black women creatives and the stories they have to tell. In its second year, the Brown Sugar Bake-Off will focus on a new theme: BODY. Misogynoir, colorism, objectification, and body-shaming are a part of the Black woman's experience. Brown Sugar Bake-Off 2021 will focus on what it means to take ownership after an undeniable history of policing Black and Brown bodies.

"This year's festival will be better than ever. We continue to showcase new talent in writing, acting and directing. It's great to see new faces show up to our annual event each year," said Rachel Wilson, Two Strikes Theatre Collective board member.

Two Strikes Theatre Collective is searching for Black women and non-binary playwrights to write ten-minute performance pieces using the following ingredients (physical, literal or symbolic): shapewear, peach/peach emoji, a mirror, colorism, fitting room, BMI and brown sugar. A panel of readers will select several plays for the virtual production in October 2021. Stipends will be provided to all Festival participants.

On August 7, 2021, Two Strikes Theatre Collective will offer a free writing workshop hosted by educator and Playwriting Development Director Christen Cromwell. This free workshop is designed for those who would like to participate in the Festival but may not know where to begin or need a refresher on how to write a short play. Interested in joining the workshop? Sign up at tstc.baltimore@gmail.com.

Submissions will be accepted by midnight September 3, 2021, via Google Forms. Information on how to submit, festival guidelines, and production dates can be found at www.twostrikescollective.com/brown-sugar-bake-off-2021.

Guest Editorials/Commentary

Black-owned businesses look to FDA to protect them

By Ron Busby

President & CEO, U.S. Black Chambers, Inc.

What many of us have dreamed about for the past year may be turning into reality. Almost half of the nation has been fully vaccinated, the CDC has announced businesses can reopen along with lifted mask guidance, and the glimmer of hope is shining brighter each day.

However, as we cling onto this hope and adjust to what many are calling the “new normal,” we must not forget what we have learned and what practices we must bring into this next chapter with us. The reality for many Black communities, especially Black-owned businesses, is that they must continue to rely on lawmakers and regulators to protect them from virus spread and outbreak.

A year ago, in a quick fix reaction to the pandemic, the FDA released emergency guidance that lowered the standards for germ-fighting products like hand sanitizer in order to get more on the market. This led to an ongoing wave of hand sanitizers that both smell horrible and seem to do virtually nothing. Now, a year later, city streets are refilling, businesses are starting to operate at full capacity, and we have a more reliable supply of hand sanitizer. Yet, businesses are still providing questionable products, and we are even seeing reports of products with toxic carcinogens steadily pop up.

With this in mind, I look to lawmakers and regulators to resolve this issue. As we come out of this emergency, it's time for the FDA to withdraw the temporary guidance, and for Congress to use its power of oversight to ensure these toxic products are off the market for good.

We want to provide our patrons and employees with a safe experience; however, we are not public health officials. Clear and consistent guidance from those in power is vital to deciphering what hand sanitizer products are safe and effective, where they should be positioned in our stores/offices/etc.

Because as is the case with many issues in this country, it is no surprise that the Black community has been hit the hardest by the ripple effects of COVID-19. As the President of the Black Chamber of Commerce, it is my responsibility to advocate for the 310,000 U.S. Black-owned businesses we represent. With reports of hand sanitizer products containing high levels of methanol, benzene and other toxins, how can these employees, customers and business owners feel safe?

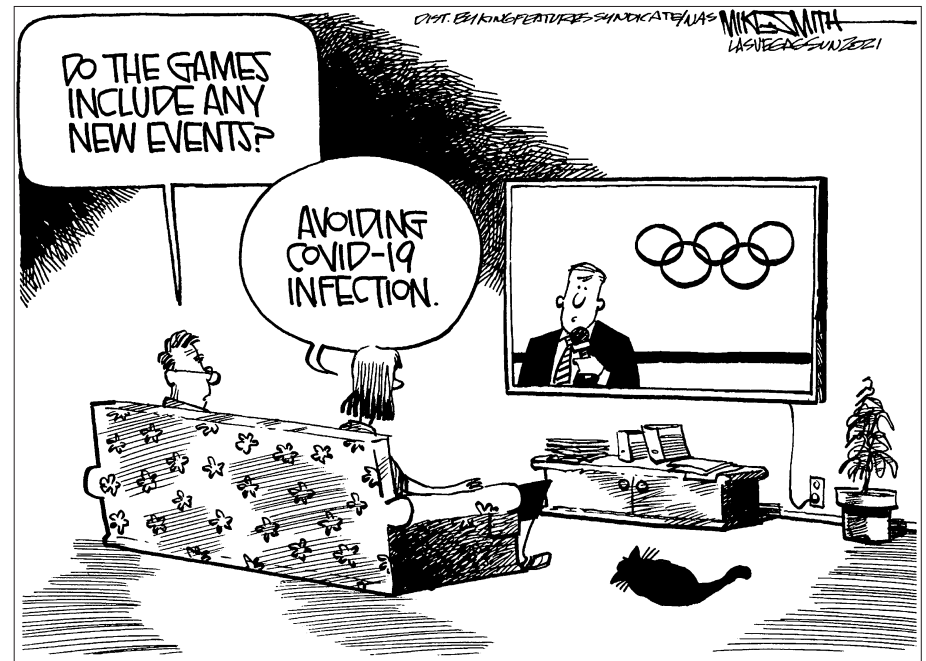
Not only are Black people more likely to contract and die from COVID-19, but because of systemic inequities, Black-owned businesses more likely to lack sufficient resources needed to stay afloat and protect their customers.

This shows that while safer, more effective products may be available again, without clear guidance and access, there is a barrier to entry for them to arrive at small, often Black-owned, businesses. The latest census shows that 28 percent of U.S. businesses are Black-owned. The U.S. economy relies on their success and health, and we will not see them flourish if they continue to be ignored.

The FDA fought to get more hand sanitizers on the market when we needed it most, but now we must deal with the unintended consequences that came along with it and rescind the emergency guidelines. I hope that along with the FDA, lawmakers, especially those on the Congressional Black Caucus, are as concerned about this as I am and will use their power to stop it.

Black business owners have enough on their shoulders. They do not need to worry about the toxicity of hand sanitizer products they put out to protect their patrons, but instead should feel confident that they have the support of regulatory bodies to keep them safe.

Ron Busby, President & CEO, U.S. Black Chambers, Inc.



Community Affairs

Governor Hogan celebrates 40th Anniversary of the National Aquarium in Baltimore

Annapolis— Governor Larry Hogan attended the 40th anniversary celebration of the National Aquarium in Baltimore on Tuesday, August 3, 2021.

“Since 1981, the National Aquarium has been not only an amazing tourist destination and educational resource, but also a major economic anchor for Baltimore City,” said Governor Hogan. “Our administration has been proud to strongly support the aquarium’s continued success over the years, and I want to congratulate everyone who has played a role in reaching this important milestone.”

The National Aquarium generates \$455 million in economic activity each year, supports 4,500 jobs in Maryland—including 350 jobs at the aquarium—and draws more than 1.5 million visitors annually to the Inner Harbor.

Since 2015, the Hogan administration has provided \$14 million to the National



Governor Larry Hogan attended the 40th anniversary celebrations for the National Aquarium in Baltimore on Tuesday, August 3, 2021.

Courtesy Photo/Office of the Governor

Aquarium, including recently funding the complete replacement of the glass pyramid above the rainforest exhibit. To help the aquarium weather the challenges of COVID-19, the administration also provided \$550,000 in pandemic relief and enabled the development of new virtual education opportunities that reached 24,000 Maryland students.

Why the business-as-usual regulatory pace to advance COVID-19 vaccines to full approval?

By Jean Bonhomme, MD, MPH, Founder, National Black Men's Health Network; and Salvatore J. Giorgianni, Jr., PharmD, Sr. Science Advisor, Men's Health Network

Men's Health Network and the National Black Men's Health Network urge the FDA, and the Biden Administration, to provide current COVID-19 vaccines full regulatory approval within the next 90 days.

The Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) process that was essential in getting COVID-19 vaccines out to the general public was an important first step in making this life-saving biologic into the arms of people in the United States. The EUA has served its purpose for the three currently available vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson; but at this stage EUA status for these products is outdated and has outlasted its usefulness. In fact, it is now perceived as an impediment by some.

The US Food and Drug Administration

(FDA) must now move on to quickly grant full approval of the Biologic License Applications, (BLAs), as a fundamentally important next step in addressing vaccine hesitancy and protection of the public health. After over 340 million doses of these vaccines

Given the laudable cooperation between developers and regulators that rapidly brought these products under the infrequently used EUA process to people, it is incongruous that moving to full approval is not proceeding with the same sense of urgency and speed. The current

This full approval also opens the way for commercial entities to communicate about these vaccines. Current campaigns and approaches have done much good but obviously have not effectively motivated all who need to be persuaded. Harnessing the health communications skills of all stakeholders would add new and hopefully incrementally effective approaches to reach those who are still on the fence.

Scientists in the Biden Administration have every right to be concerned about the rising number of COVID-19 cases, low vaccination rates and the very real potential for a more dangerous variant to take hold and once again devastate our country, and the world.

We encourage regulators and the Biden Administration to take a close look at what is holding up full BLA approval and use appropriate approaches to address them now with the same urgency that was used in early 2020 to get these important products into the arms of people.

MHN is an international non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play, and pray with health awareness messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation. For information on MHN's programs and activities, visit: MensHealthNetwork.org.

“There are several important reasons to have these life-saving vaccines fully approved sooner rather than later. Most important of these is that full approval would remove the objection echoed by many who are hesitant to be vaccinated because they are experimental.”

in the US and almost 3.5 billion doses worldwide, and the unprecedented level of scrutiny, there should be no doubt that these vaccines meet any reasonable standard of effectiveness and safety needed for full market approval.

There may be some technical issues related to labeling, storage and shelf-life and most certainly there are questions about the length of their ability to adequately protect from COVID-19 but these must not be allowed to impede application progress to full approval.

There are already several accepted and widely use mechanisms in the regulatory process, such as post-marketing surveillance, on-going storage studies and label reviews that have been used to bring important products to full market approval.

“business-as-usual” pace, which has slowed advancement for full approvals, is costing more lives every day.

There are several important reasons to have these life-saving vaccines fully approved sooner rather than later. Most important of these is that full approval would remove the objection echoed by many who are hesitant to be vaccinated because they are experimental. For some this is a real lingering concern, for others it is simply a false-objection, but either way it is an impediment to reaching critical levels of immunization now and should additional vaccinations be needed in the future. It will provide a layer of confidence for businesses that are considering vaccination requirements for employees and customers.

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Americans of Japanese Heritage at Goucher College in Baltimore

By Richard McDonough
Civic Journalist

The United States of America has acted in ways unbecoming through the years against a wide range of ethnicities, races and faiths, among other groupings.

One of these times was during the 1940s. The Federal government imprisoned approximately 112,000 Americans of Japanese heritage at that time—most were interned in prison for approximately three years. Two-thirds of the individuals incarcerated were American citizens. None of the individuals had been charged with any crimes; none were individually suspected of any crimes.

They were imprisoned because the Federal government considered them a threat to our country. Most elected officials endorsed the incarcerations. Few leaders spoke out against the actions of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it was constitutional for the Federal government to take away the freedom of these individual people.

The vast majority of those “relocated,” Federal-government-speak for imprisonment lived in four western states: Arizona, California, Oregon and Washington. While a number of Japanese Americans in Eastern States were able to avoid imprisonment, they could not escape the overall climate of the times.

Fear, prejudice, discrimination and hatred coalesced into actions considered perfectly legal to deny Americans the liberties enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.

Africans Americans know that experience all too well.

Among the institutions that stood



The former Bennett Hall and Annex at Goucher College. Located at 2300 St. Paul Street in Baltimore, the structure is now known as the “Weaver Building” and serves as the headquarters of the Maryland Geological Survey.

Photo Credit: Eli Pousson, December 4, 2017

against this evil was Goucher College, located in what is today known as the “Old Goucher Neighborhood” in Baltimore. Three Japanese American women—Eiko Oshima, Mitsuko Takami and Gloria Teru Noda—were able to come to Baltimore to further their education.

Eiko Oshima came to Baltimore from Hilo, Hawaii. She was born in that American territory (Hawaii was not yet a state) in 1923. As a child, she was recognized as an accomplished pianist. She studied at Goucher College for two years from 1941 through 1943. Miss Oshima then went to study music at the Julliard School of Music in New York City.

She moved back to Hawaii and married Nelson Doi, a Hawaii County Deputy

Attorney in 1949. Together, they raised two children. She continued to enhance her skills as a pianist and worked as a schoolteacher. Her husband, Nelson Doi became a prominent political leader, eventually serving as Lt. Governor of Hawaii from 1974 to 1978.

Eiko Oshima Doi died at the age of 86 years in 2010.

When Mitsuko Takami arrived in Baltimore, she had already been honored by Brooklyn Friends School for her tennis and basketball athletic activities. At Goucher College, she continued to participate in sports in field hockey. She was a daughter of Dr. Toyohiko Takami, was the founder of the Japanese Mutual Aid Society, an organization that evolved into The Japanese American Association of New York (JAANY).

According to the JAANY, Dr. Takami was a key leader of Japanese Americans.

She was a member of the Class of 1943 at Goucher College. Takami returned to New York where she married Roy Kurahara. He was born in California, and lived in New York for years. Her husband died at age 44 in 1968.

Mitsuko Takami Kurahara died at 89 years of age in 2011.

Gloria Teru Noda was the third Japanese American student at Goucher College. She was born in 1924, and came to Baltimore from Long Island, New York. Miss Noda attended school in Baltimore beginning in 1942 and graduated in 1945. She married Mr. Yamaoka (unsure of his first name) and they raised three children. According to a statement from Florence Drafts Mann in 1987, Mrs. Yamaoka “...was a designer’s representative for *Vogue*, Bill Blass and Harvey Nichols, wrote for the *Herald Tribune*, and had her own agency... [She was well known] in the fashion world in Tokyo and New York.”

Gloria Teru Noda Yamaoka died at the age of 62 in 1986.

Leadership comes in many forms. In the early 1940s—when it was not popular, when it was not acceptable for many—Goucher College in Baltimore stood for justice.

It’s a lesson that many could find worthwhile today. Do your best. Stand for justice. Help all those striving to make this a more perfect union.

The Nuacht of Baltimore is a news column that details life and activities in Baltimore. “Nuacht” is “News” in Irish. To contact Richard McDonough, email: newsaboutamerica@gmx.us.

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For more information and to get the process started, complete the application here: <https://bit.ly/B2Mvapp> or scan our QR code:



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When: Saturday, September 18, 2021
Where: Coppin State University, Tawes Center
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Event Hours: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Set-up: 7:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Breakdown: 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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How Black pregnant women can improve their outcomes in healthcare settings

By Ngozi Alia

Implicit Bias and institutional racism in the healthcare system contribute significantly to pregnancy-related deaths of Black women. According to the Center for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC), African American women “are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women.”

Furthermore, the risk increases with age for Black women. Therefore, as studies and data collection are ongoing regarding Black-related pregnancy deaths, Black women must continue advocating and improving their care throughout their pregnancy.

In a 2020 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the death of Black newborns significantly reduced to half when Black physicians completed care and delivery. In addition, there was no significant difference in infant death rates when Black physicians administered delivery. A board certified-family physician-obstetrician, Dr. Kristin Reavis serves as the Maternal Child Health Director for the University of Maryland Department of Family and Community Medicine and is the Director of Student Diversity and Inclusion for the University of Maryland School of Medicine. She is also a Cook Ross certified unconscious bias trainer. Dr. Reavis recognizes there are improved health outcomes for Black women who share the same racial, ethnic background as their doctor.

In 2018 however, the Association of American Colleges (AAC) reported that only five percent of physicians in the United States identify as African American, and less than three percent identify as African American women. Dr. Reavis shares, “what’s more important than finding a physician who is also Black, is finding a physician that understands the impact that race and racism may have on the outcomes of that patient and is working to address some of the health disparities.”

Dr. Reavis also expresses that a continuity relationship is one way Black expecting mothers can screen for



Dr. Kristin Reavis serves as the Maternal Child Health Director for the University of Maryland Department of Family and Community Medicine and is the Director of Student Diversity and Inclusion for the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Courtesy Photo

cultural competency and implicit Bias in an OB clinician. A continuity relationship is one where a physician often treats a patient over time, and in some cases from childhood to adulthood.

“Having prior relationships and prior knowledge is one of the best ways to screen because you know what the physician’s outlook is and how they treat or don’t treat people based on their race,” said Dr. Reavis.

Dr. Reavis encourages Black, expecting mothers to:

Envision What You Want for Your Ideal Delivery— Delivery can look like a medicated birth, labor in the tub, or frequent availability of an OB clinician. Black expecting mothers should envision their ideal delivery and seek a practice and clinician that reflects and supports their ideal delivery.

Utilize your social network— Reach out to friends and your primary care physician to ask for recommendations for culturally competent obstetric clinicians.

Listen to your gut— If you feel like you’re not being listened to or that your concerns are being brushed off or you are being treated a certain way because of your race or socioeconomic status, listen to your gut.

Dr. Henrietta Akintoye is a Morehouse School of Medicine Alumna and practicing OB-GYN in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Akintoye notes improved health outcomes for Black pregnant women who share the same race as their OB-GYN. She says this is likely due to Black and Brown OB-GYNs having added experience, knowledge and training for risk factors that Black women face before and during pregnancy. In cases where there are limited numbers of Black OB-GYN’s, Dr. Akintoye says that Black women can look at patient profiles of hospital and hospital settings to get an idea of where Black expecting mothers are treated.

Dr. Akintoye also encourages Black women to:

Schedule a Well Women’s Visit— Black women should try to choose an OB-GYN before becoming pregnant. Scheduling a wellness check allows Black women to see whether they feel comfortable and relate with a specific OB-GYN.

Search for OBGYN’s Affiliated with Your Local Hospitals— On their website, hospitals will list physicians that are affiliated with them. Black expecting mothers can scroll through the list of healthcare providers and individually research physicians that fit their interests.

Tour the Hospital and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit— When you visit the NICU, you can ask questions about their protocols for management of preterm delivery. See if the hospital is associated with a high-level NICU. See whether or not the NICU has a system in place for the parents of newborns to ask questions.

Blatantly Ask Your OB-GYN. Black expecting mothers should feel free to openly ask their provider about their thoughts and awareness of the high death rates and complications associated with pregnancy for Black women.

Meeting Your OB-GYN & Progressing to Your Delivery Date

Pay Attention to the Atmosphere & OB-GYN— When meeting your OB-GYN for the first time, Black women should take account of the atmosphere of the practice and the diversity of the images and staff. In addition, Black women should take note of if their OB-GYN is asking them questions and listening to their responses.

Communicate with Your OB-GYN— Black expecting mothers are encouraged “to address their concerns before you deciding to move on. Many times when [OBGYN] patients don’t feel comfortable there may be a lack of communication between the patient and provider. Often times this can be circumvented by saying, “I didn’t feel comfortable by something that you said. I don’t feel like my questions or issues are being addressed.”

Seek Alternate Care. In a case when a Black pregnant woman feels as if her OB-GYN continues to minimize and overlooks her concerns, she should not be afraid to seek out alternative care. A lot of what underlies health disparities is that women of color are not being listened to and their concerns and complaints are not being heard or are being minimized.

Have Someone with You. Due to COVID-19, many practices may still limit visitors. However, Black expecting mothers are encouraged to have someone on the phone or facetime during visits. Dr. Reavis shares, “it’s difficult sometimes to intake all the information that you are given.” Having someone with you can be beneficial as that person can listen, take notes, and catch information that you might miss, especially when you are given news that might be challenging.



Dr. Henrietta Akintoye is a Morehouse School of Medicine Alumna and practicing OB-GYN in Baltimore, Maryland. Courtesy Photo

Advocate for Yourself. If at any point during pregnancy, you notice that your concerns are not being taken seriously, Black expecting mothers are advised to vocalize their concerns, which can include: contacting the on-call, overnight OB-GYN if you have any questions; asking for earlier appointments; or requesting same-day appointments. If a same-day appointment is unavailable, Black expecting mothers should walk into the labor and delivery and request an assessment. And, if you find yourself in a position where you feel that your concerns might not be taken seriously, Black expecting mothers should continue to advocate for themselves—ask someone else or ask to speak to a nurse manager. Black expecting mothers can also request to talk to the liaison of risk management, patient advocate, or a patient experience representative.



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being addressed or that you are being brushed off, ask to move up the chain of command.

“If you are feeling like you are being brushed off, if you are feeling like your concerns are not being addressed, ask to speak to the nurse manager; ask to speak to the head physician in the hospital; ask to speak to them immediately; ask for a face-to-face conversation about your concerns. If someone is not answering the questions to your satisfaction, you [should] always escalate, escalate, escalate!” Dr. Akintoye said.

Program Leaders and Tutors Needed!

GiGi’s Playhouse is currently seeking volunteers to lead and assist in fun, educational, and therapeutic-based programs for individuals with Down syndrome. Volunteers with a background in social work, special education, music, drama, speech language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, or behavioral therapy are needed. Volunteers will be trained to lead or assist with GiGi’s Playhouse programs or as one-on-one literacy or math tutors. Volunteers can choose from a range of program days and times. Complete the online at <https://gigisplayhouse.tfaforms.net/> to get started. Email GiGi’s Playhouse Annapolis’ Site Coordinator Judy Co Annapolis@gigisplayhouse.org or call 410-517-7474 with questions or for more information.

Baltimore Writer, Producer, Director Continues to Shine in Hollywood

By Stacy M. Brown

Patricia Cuffie-Jones, a graduate of Mergenthaler (Mervo) Vocational High School in Baltimore City, continues to make her mark in Hollywood.

The hardworking CEO of Diverge Entertainment, Cuffie-Jones, is responsible for several comedies and dramas that have appeared on Netflix, Amazon, iTunes, Bounce TV, and various streaming platforms.

She just wrapped on directing her first feature film, "Twice Bitten," scheduled for a fall release and the second season of "Stuck With You," a hit that's streaming on the ALLBLK network.

BET recently premiered another one of Cuffie-Jones' hits, "Favorite Son."

"I also just wrapped a Christmas film that I'm hoping makes it out this holiday season, if not next," Cuffie-Jones told the Baltimore Times. "There are a lot of cool things in the mix and in the works right now."

Born and raised in Baltimore, Cuffie-Jones began writing, directing, and producing at age 14. She has worked behind the scenes with a series of touring productions in the Baltimore/Washington area.

With her husband, Jeffrey Jones, she started Diverge Entertainment and moved to Los Angeles. Once in La La Land, Cuffie-Jones hit the ground running. She created acclaimed period pieces that span from the 1930s to the 1970s and earned five NAACP theatre award nominations.

"I take breaks. My husband and kids make sure of that," Cuffie-Jones asserted. Still, those breaks often are short-lived.

"I just wrapped a film now and will have some weeks to get some writing done," she noted. "Then, I'll be going back into production with another film."

Cuffie-Jones insists that she writes at her pace, allowing for family time which she calls vital.

"Balance is very important," Cuffie-Jones demanded. "The industry is fleeting. Family is forever."

Cuffie-Jones also reasserts that the glamour and glitz of show business

count as a small part of life in the spotlight.

"When I first started, I had a 9-to-5 job which I used the money earned there to pay for my shows. I worked for a non-profit that I loved, but my evenings and weekends were a mixture of rehearsals and writing," Cuffie-Jones recalled.

"There's a lot of work that goes into this. A lot of hard work."

Cuffie-Jones reiterated what she told the Baltimore Times in a 2016 interview. She said the company provides her with an opportunity to "green light" herself.

"You hear a lot of 'no,' 'no,' and 'no.' out here. So I decided I was going to tell myself 'yes,' 'yes' and 'yes' and sell myself," she stated.

"I have built many relationships working with many producers and directors. However, the biggest thing that helped me was sowing seeds with other writers and producers. It's truly been a blessing."

Because of the pandemic, Cuffie-Jones said she hasn't been able to return to Baltimore as often as she'd like. However, her parents and most of her family still live in the city.

"Fortunately, they've been able to come out and visit, but I'd like to get back to Baltimore," Cuffie-Jones remarked.

Meanwhile, the talented filmmaker has a lot in store for those seeking good entertainment.

"Patricia continues to push the envelope and partners with other producers looking to elevate and diversify storytelling," Cuffie-Jones' management wrote in a news release.

"She embraces the concept of conscious entertainment and seeks out opportunities that can expand her stories, of love, family, romance, faith, and resilience."

Cuffie-Jones said she's driven. "I'm a worker and a hustler," she insisted. "I've been doing this a long time, and I'm good at finding my rhythm."



Patricia Cuffie-Jones, CEO of Diverge Entertainment
Photo Courtesy of Patricia Cuffie-Jones

Recruiting Volunteer Drivers and Phone Buddies

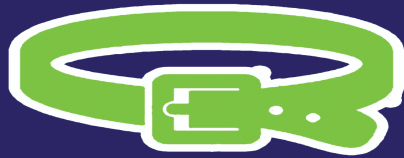
Partners in Care is a local nonprofit that has been around since 1993. Their main focus is to help older adults remain in their homes independently. They also have an Upscale Resale Boutique in Pasadena where they accept donations and then sell those items to fund their program. Partners in Care is currently recruiting volunteer drivers to transport members to appointments. Extra precautions to keep members and volunteers safe during this current COVID-19 pandemic are in place. Members will wear a mask, sit in the backseat, and will be asked current health questions as appointments are set up. Partners in Care can work with volunteer driver schedules.

If you prefer a virtual volunteer opportunity, the Phone Buddies program is recruiting volunteers to make friendly phone calls once or twice a week to members who are isolated.

For more information, or to sign up call April Stup at 410-544-4800 or email her at aprilstup@partnersincare.org.

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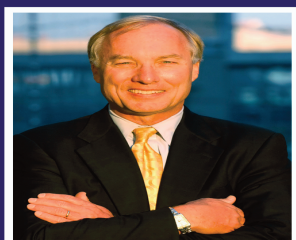


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Cece Winans' single "Believe For It" making waves with top 10 positioning on Billboard Christian charts

Los Angeles— There's no stopping the outstanding performance of CeCe Winans' current album, "Believe For It." Prior to street date, the record began to acquire a buzz throughout the Christian and Gospel industry, which heightened the anticipation of hearing new music from the celebrated voice of Winans. The live recording featuring 12 heart-felt songs of worship quickly rose to the top of the charts claiming the number one spot, simultaneously, on four different Billboard Gospel Charts with the album remaining in the number slot for seven consecutive weeks.

Winans is now making her mark at key Christian radio stations and networks like: K-Love, KLTY (Dallas), KSBJ (Houston), The Fish (Atlanta & Los Angeles), WONU (Chicago), Sirius XM, The Message and many more. The single, "Believe For It," holds a Top 10 presence on the Billboard Christian Charts chiming in at #7 on Billboard Christian Airplay Chart, #9 on the Billboard Monitored Chart, #7 on Billboard Christian Digital Song Sales Chart and #9 on the Mediabase Christian AC Chart. The album is currently at #4 on Billboard's Top Christian/Gospel Album chart and has been in the top 10 every week since its release 20 weeks ago. The US On-Demand streams for "Believe For It," the song that distributes hope to the multitudes, has surpassed the 13 million cyber count and the album is over 41 million and increasing daily.



Twelve time Grammy winner, Cece Winans' single "Believe For It," from her 11th solo album is currently at #4 on Billboard's Top Christian/Gospel Album chart and has been in the top 10 every week since its release 20 weeks ago.

Photo Credit: Marissa Roberts

"It's always a privilege to work with artists of CeCe's

caliber. We are beyond excited about the success she is having with this record and we know there is much more to come," says Jeff Moseley, founder and president of Fair Trade.

The 36 million video views the album has received on YouTube and FaceBook keeps the momentum of "Believe For It" vigorous and tracking upward on the Christian Charts. But it's the many testimonies of Winans' fans and followers sharing their stories of how the song has touched their hearts and changed their lives that is at the core success of this single and album. For Winans, singing is always about spreading the good news of the gospel, encouraging people to trust God, believe, and never give up.

As the 12 time Grammy winner reflects on the achievement of her 11th solo album she said, "I'm thrilled with the success of "Believe For It" because I think the message of the song is more important today than ever before. I celebrate reaching Top Ten and the millions of views the videos have received— not because it elevates me in any way— but because the songs promote the truth of the Gospel and the hope we have in Christ."

Stay connected: IG @cecewinans, FB@official.cece.winans, Twitter@cecewinans and www.cecewinans.com

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Ravens linebacker Patrick Queen looks for growth in year two

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens have a history of outstanding inside linebackers dating back to Ray Lewis. Once the team lost C.J. Mosley to free agency, they struggled to find their next candidate. Enter 2020 with No. 28 overall pick Patrick Queen out of Louisiana State University (LSU).

Queen's rookie season was highlighted by a 53-yard touchdown on a fumble recovery against the Cincinnati Bengals. He was able to register a strip sack on college teammate Joe Burrow before picking the ball up and running for the score. Queen added 102 tackles, three sacks and an interception.

As he enters his second season, Queen feels like he is settling in with the defense.

"I'm way more comfortable now. We had minicamp; I came in. [Defensive coordinator Don] 'Wink' [Martindale] asked me to come in a lot, so I came in, and we just got to work. Since then, I feel like I'm going up, so it's only up from here. I feel like I'm way more confident, I'm way more into the defense, so it's going to be a good season," Queen said.



As linebacker, Patrick Queen enters his second season with the Baltimore Ravens, he feels like he is settling in with the defense. Queen was selected by the Ravens with the number 28 overall pick in the 2020 NFL Draft.

Photo Credit: BaltimoreRavens.com

The defense is a tough one to learn, but once to get it—it clicks, according to Queen.

Not having OTAs and minicamp last season due to COVID-19 protocols

made Queen's ability to quickly grasp the defense a little rough. However, he emerged as one of the starters on defense anyway.

"He's such a smart guy. People know

he's physical and he's athletic, but you don't realize how smart he is. He's a big thinker, he loves this team, he's going to be a terrific leader for this team [and] he's going to be fantastic this year, I know that," inside linebackers' coach, Rob Ryan said.

A big part of that is coverage. For Queen that involves matching up against tight ends and running backs.

That was an area that Queen needed to sharpen up after his rookie year. It's also an area where Queen has actually gotten better. Ravens head coach John Harbaugh offered up some praise for Queen during a press conference last week.

"I thought he had a really good day today in coverage," Harbaugh said. "You could see the things that sometimes people talk about as far as the experience in coverage—he had an excellent day. [Inside linebackers' coach] Rob Ryan is doing a great job. He's [Patrick Queen] doing a great job. It was a nice day for him in coverage there today."

The arrow is pointing up for Queen now that he has a full season of training camp and is entering his second one.

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5th Annual Imagination Lunchbox International Children's Film Festival

Baltimore— The 5th annual Imagination Lunchbox International Children's Film Festival (ILICFF) will be held virtually on Saturday, August 7, 2021 via Zoom from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Presented by the Eubie Blake Center and The Baltimore Times Foundation, Times Community Services, Inc., the film festival will award films in four categories— Best Films Made BY Kids; Best Film Made FOR Kids; Film Festival Choice; and Most Uplifting Film.

The Imagination Lunchbox International Children's Film Festival will be hosted by ILICFF founder and multi-award winning SAG/AFTRA actor (DreamWorks, PBS); and filmmaker Anthony Michael Hobbs and radio personality Doresa Harvey (Magic 95.9FM/Praise 106.1FM).

Selected short films that will be screened and potentially awarded, are from around the world, including: United States; Australia; Canada; Germany; Korea; Iran; Netherlands; Spain; China; Jamaica; India; and Jamaica. This is the second year that ILICFF will present the event via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has allowed ILICFF to be a worldwide event, attracting attendees from as far away as Spain and Japan.

Attendees will select the Best Film by Kids and Best Film for Kids Awards; and founder Hobbs will select the Film Festival Choice and the Most Uplifting Film Awards.



Multi-awarding winning actor/filmmaker Anthony Michael Hobbs is the founder of film production company, Imagination Lunchbox. His film "Naga Pixie" (Imagination Lunchbox) was winner of the 2017 Bonita Springs International Film Festival "Kidz Shorts" Award. Hobbs who has garnered six awards from Global Stars Network for his acting skills is best known for his role as a young Frederick Douglass in the 2013 PBS special mini-series "The American Experience: The Abolitionist"

Courtesy Photo/Imagination Lunchbox

The Most Uplifting Film Award is sponsored by the "Uplifting Minds II" Entertainment Conference, which is celebrating 22 years of service to the community. (www.upliftingminds2.com)

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