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Local Young Leader Starts Sorority to Promote Sisterhood in Girls, Combat 'Mean Girl' Behavior



Ten founding members of the sorority and nonprofit for girls called Beta Iota Iota Beta, Inc. appear in a photo promoting sisterhood and positivity. These young ladies who are ages 7- 14, in addition to other members, have a safe place to fulfill their potential, pursue their goals, read together, attend outings, and bond without worrying about dealing with 'mean girl' behavior. Cailyn Davis (rear, center) was inspired to create the social group to take a stand against bullying. Girls who reside in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia are members. Photo by Stellar Life Photography (See more on page 10)

‘A True Public Servant’

Vernon Simms, Former Chief of Staff to Elijah Cummings Passes

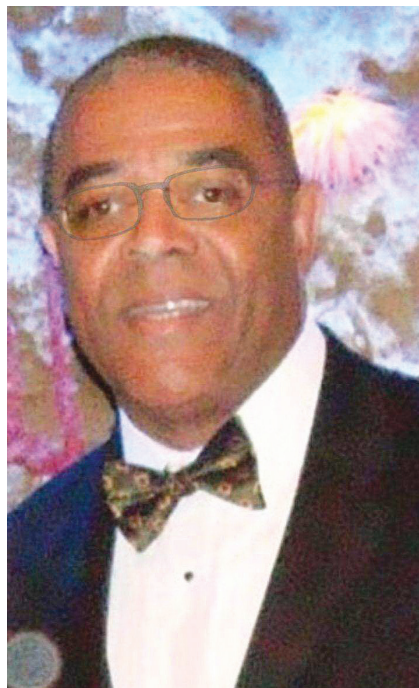
By Ursula V. Battle

Humble. Talented. Dedicated. Just three of the many words that can be used to describe the always immaculately dressed Vernon LaFrancis Simms, former Chief of Staff to the late Congressman Elijah Cummings. Simms, 64, passed away on July 16, 2022. At the time of his passing, Simms was the Director of the Smithsonian’s Office of Government Relations where he was responsible for promoting and strengthening the Smithsonian’s relationship with Congress, the executive branch, and federal, state, and local governments.

A memorial service for Simms will be held on Saturday, July 30, 2022 at the Vaughn Greene Randallstown Chapel, 8728 Liberty Road, Randallstown, Maryland where the family will receive friends from 2:00 p.m. until 2:30 p.m. with services to follow.

Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D), succeeded Cummings in Baltimore’s District 7. Before working in Congressman Cummings’ office, Simms had been a special assistant for government and community operations for Congressman Mfume. Collectively, Simms worked for the two political giants for three decades. Simms was considered a ‘giant’ in his own right.

“It was devastating to hear of the passing of my friend and former colleague Vernon Simms, who passed on from this life after a long and heroic battle with illness,” said Congressman Mfume. “For more than two decades, Vernon served as chief of staff to my dear friend, the late Congressman Elijah Cummings. He was renowned for his work on Capitol Hill, toiling day in and day out on behalf of the constituents of Maryland’s 7th Congressional District he held so dearly and in such high regard. Prior to his stint



Vernon LaFrancis Simms, former Chief of Staff to the late Congressman Elijah Cummings. Simms, 64, passed away on July 16, 2022. At the time of his passing, Simms was the Director of the Smithsonian’s Office of Government Relations. Courtesy Photo

with Congressman Cummings’ staff, Vernon was the special assistant for government and community operations on my congressional team. I had unwavering confidence in him because of his selflessness, diligence, and kindness.”

He continued, “And since 2020, Vernon has been a leader within the Smithsonian as the director of the Smithsonian’s Office of Government Relations, a role where he utilized his full skillset of intergovernmental communication and collaboration to bolster the institution. To Linda, his wife of thirty years, as well as to his children, grandchildren, and other family members, I offer my deepest condolences. Your loss is shared by so many friends, colleagues, and others who, like myself, loved and respected

Vernon and the simple eloquence of his example. It was, and remains, an example of class, courtesy and caring.”

House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (MD) also shared fond memories of Simms.

“Vernon was a true public servant; after his time on Capitol Hill came to an end, he became Director of Government Relations for the Smithsonian Institution,” said Hoyer. “I join in extending my condolences to his wife Linda, with whom he shared three decades of partnership, as well as his children Erin, Candace, and Kyle and their families. Vernon leaves behind so many friends, colleagues, and community members whose lives he touched, and the impact of his work undoubtedly has made Maryland and our country a better place.”

Early in his career, Simms was a paralegal with the law firm Singleton, Dashiell and Robinson, attorneys in Baltimore. He also served as the Executive Director of the Maryland Chapter of the American Planning Association in Baltimore.

Vaile Leonard, Founder of Light of Truth Center, Inc., (LTC), is a relative of Simms said, “You know how you have that one family member who everyone talks about, but not in a good way?

Then you have that one family

member that everyone looks up to and aspires to be like. Well, that’s my cousin Vernon. A dedicated family man and community activist who was willing and committed to making a difference. That’s Vernon. A man among men!”

Anthony McCarthy, who served as Communications Director for the late Congressman Cummings, often worked alongside Simms.

“I was very sad when I heard of Vernon’s passing,” said McCarthy. “He demanded that I be the best that I could be. The lessons that Vernon and Elijah taught me served me well throughout my entire professional career. Vernon was so humble. But you automatically gave him respect. We saw him day in and day out doing his job and really teaching us to look out for Congressman Cummings and to anticipate what the Congressman needed.”

He added, “When he went to the Smithsonian the latter part of his career, I would just marvel at watching him operate in government for an institution like the Smithsonian. I remember thinking, ‘whoever chose Vernon to work at the Smithsonian made a great decision.’ He was so good at what he did. He was the definition of public servant. I really admired him and will miss him tremendously.”

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Inflation is kicking our butts: some solutions

By Dr. Kenneth Morgan

According to the Wall Street Journal, one government economist, Federal Reserve Chair Jay Powell, said to the U.S. Congress recently that raising the central bank's interest rates indicated that a recession was a possibility. Former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers became more exact. He said, "We need five years of unemployment above 5% to contain inflation." He calls it secular stagnation. I call the problem more hardships for working people.

He was talking about the everyday working person, who must stretch ends or subsistence such as gas, food prices, and housing costs. I speak of these three price-leading indicators of inflation. Add on the worst inflation in 40 years. Can you say 9.1 percent?

Who requires blame? How can it be fixed or inflation decreased? Some CEOs of the more giant key conglomerates say that workers are to blame because they demand increased wages. Forbes and the Wall Street Journal agree. Wait a minute, and wages continue to lag behind inflation. Forbes and the New York Times agree.

One WSJ columnist, James Mackintosh, clamored that strikes for living wages and better working conditions meant increased inflation. He said, "Stronger unions make for a more inflationary environment,"

When the Federal Reserve increases corporate interest rates (as it has) to slow down borrowing — often a significant source for giant corporations to expand facilities and hire more workers — instead will lay workers off and become more profitable to invest in speculative securities - especially since the overall decline in long-term profits from 1970 continues to decrease. In other words, more hardship for workers as customers and breadwinners.

The saying goes, black people are the last to be hired in good times and the first to be fired in the worst times. These things continue historically. You know what happens. Just think of the devastating consequences inflation places on countries in Africa, such as Zimbabwe and Burkina Faso, where prices increased by 122 and 100 percent, respectively. These folks got out on the picket line and went on strike. The nurses from Zimbabwe and workers from Burkina Faso did.

When giant conglomerates find it more challenging to borrow money from national banks as they have, it remains at the discretion of these big business employers whether to raise prices to increase profits. No, it is not primarily an increase in shipping costs or blaming workers. Consider them all excuses. Can you say that when employers want to maintain or increase prices, they raise prices?

Yes, workers, the unemployed, and retirees need to fight like hell for cost-of-living allowances at the union bargaining table or fight for a union or go on strike. It remains the best way to keep up with inflation.



Letter to the Editor

The Federal Reserve Fell Asleep Editor:

As a Babson MBA graduate I am highly disappointed with the Federal Reserve's very late recognition of the runaway inflation impacting our country. Inflation is running at 8.5% compared to a year ago, and the Federal Reserve (Fed) only started to increase interest rates in March 2022 to try to reach its target of 2.0%. How did we reach this debacle?

The Covid pandemic during the period 2020 to 2021 necessitated the implementation of relief plans, which had the Treasury Department pump almost \$4 trillion in programs and tax credits into the U.S. economy. The availability of these funds and the savings accumulated by consumers in 2020 and 2021 provided a springboard of demand unleashed in the last half of 2021 and into 2022. This created the primary impetus for escalating inflation. A secondary cause has been the supply chain constraints, and a tertiary cause is the Ukrainian War.

But where was the Fed in its role to implement monetary policy and control inflation? During 2020-2021 the Fed kept its federal funds rate at a bottom floor level of 0.00%-0.25%, and with Quantitative Easing (QE) increased its

balance sheet assets from \$4 trillion to \$9 trillion. This monetary policy was designed to combat the economic impact of the pandemic, but inflationary pressures were ramping up around the middle of 2021 when I stated to family members the Fed should be increasing interest rates and ending its QE program. The Fed continued its near zero interest rate and large monthly purchases of tens of billions of dollars in Treasury securities into 2022, which increased the money supply and the availability of bank loans. This was expansionist and continued the upward inflationary pressures.

As inflation kept surging the Fed erroneously believed the increased inflation was transitory and would subside. The Fed finally woke up and determined inflation was pervasive and started belatedly raising interest rates and ending its purchases of Treasury securities in March 2022.

Note: The Fed is a non-partisan entity responsible for the implementation of monetary policy. The U.S. administrations are responsible for fiscal policy (e.g. spending, taxes).

**Donald Moskowitz
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Scholars and Experts Make Case to Expand Supreme Court; Abolish Electoral College

A growing number of Americans reportedly believe that expanding the court and ridding elections of the Electoral College are keys to preserving democracy in America.

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent
@StacyBrownMedia

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v. Wade has raised concerns from women regarding bodily autonomy and palpable fear that other long-held rights may also be in jeopardy.

And with the ongoing hearings surrounding the January 6 insurrection and the attempt by former President Donald Trump to change the outcome of the 2020 election, momentum has increased in favor of abolishing the long-standing Electoral College.

A growing number of Americans reportedly believe that expanding the court and ridding elections of the Electoral College are keys to preserving democracy in America.



This month, a bipartisan group of federal lawmakers led by Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) introduced the Electoral Count Reform Act of 2022 (ECRA) to ensure that electoral votes tallied by Congress accurately reflect each state's public vote for president. "Adding more justices to Supreme Court and abolishing the Electoral College both help to give the majority of Americans the ability to have a say in what's going on in their country," said H.R. Bellicosa, the author of *The Punishings*, a novel about a world without abortion rights.

"We are headed toward minority rule if we're not there already. Overturning Roe is a deeply unpopular opinion, but with a conservative majority on the court, the justices were able to further their theatrical agenda," Bellicosa stated.

"More justices would combat that. The Electoral College has given us two recent presidents who did not win the popular vote – [George W. Bush and Trump]. America is under threat of being ruled by a deeply unpopular minority, and steps must be taken to mitigate that."

A change.org petition has garnered more than 103,000 signatures from individuals desiring to abolish the Electoral College, a system established in the 1800s and resulted in the infamous "three-fifths compromise" in which three-fifths of an enslaved Black person would count toward allocating electors and representatives.

The U.S. Constitution holds that whoever wins the electoral vote claims the presidency during presidential elections

even if the candidate fails to win the popular vote.

Further, historians noted that officials created the Electoral College to give slave states more power and to keep an agent of England's King George from becoming president.

Neither situation rises as pertinent in the 21st Century, said historian and political scientist William S. Bike.

Bike said he believes it's time to get rid of the Electoral College, and Democrats, while in the majority, should act.

"Republicans use every weapon at their disposal against Democrats, but Democrats tend to behave like someone bringing a tennis racket to a knife fight," stated Bike, the author of *Winning Political Campaigns*, a how-to guide on political campaigning.

"So, Democrats expanding the Supreme Court would be a weapon seldom used before in American history, but without it, the extreme right will continue taking away Americans' rights," Bike asserted.

"They're coming after Miranda, birth control, gay marriage, homosexuality, and possibly interracial marriage and racial equality.

"The negative to expanding the Supreme Court is that once the Democrats do it, the next Republican president will do it, then the next Democratic president. Eventually, the Supreme Court would become as big as a legislature. But it's a chance Democrats must take if they want to protect basic rights."

Georgetown University graduate Tim Rosenberger Jr., who's completing a JD/MBA at Stanford University, said expanding the high court can improve America.

However, eliminating the Electoral College could hamper the country's ability to preserve minority rights and ensure ongoing dynamism.

"American benefits from having smaller states that can be laboratories for innovation," Rosenberger stated.

"Justice Antonin Scalia once noted the oddity of how non-representative the Supreme Court is," Rosenberger noted.

"Every New York borough but Staten Island had a seat on the court for a time. At the same time, not one protestant, the prevailing American religion, sat on the court. Both the Supreme Court and the D.C. Circuit should start having geographically assigned seats with seats traditionally, if not explicitly, aligning with one person from each of the larger geographic circuits."

Rosenberger continued: "Eliminating the electoral college would overly concentrate political power in large urban centers and move America away from a diverse and complicated social and political tapestry." Content Writer Elena Zimmerman added that the benefits of expanding the Supreme Court in its current state are impossible to miss.

"Whatever the intentions were with the decision to appoint 9 judges, it would be difficult for anyone to argue the idea in mind was for one political party to appoint 66 percent of the justices of the most powerful judicial body in the country while systematically excluding the choices of elected presidents in the opposing party while in office," Zimmerman stated.

"It would also be difficult for anyone to argue that it should be acceptable for new potential justices to lie during their confirmation hearings about their intentions to rule if appointed. "Expanding the court during a democratic president's tenure and with an evenly divided Senate could potentially balance this inequality of partisan power."

Zimmerman further concluded that there's "no longer a benefit to the Electoral College."

"Particularly when it can be used exclusively to the benefit of only one party to override the popular vote," she insisted.

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Haitian-American Entrepreneur Raises Awareness About Vision Health, Creates Fashionable Eyewear

By Andrea Blackstone

Although several eye diseases are prevalent in the African American population, the topic of having healthy eyes is often underdiscussed. The National Eye Institute, a division of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), reported that “African Americans are at higher risk for glaucoma at a much younger age than other populations.” Other eye diseases such as cataracts and diabetic retinopathy were also mentioned on The National Eye Institute’s website. African Americans were cited as having “some of the highest rates of vision loss and blindness caused by eye disease.”

Undergoing comprehensive dilated eye exams early was a strategy mentioned that assists in detecting eye diseases when treatment is easier. A doctor places eye drops in a patient’s eyes to widen (or dilate) his or her pupils. This method is how eye diseases can be checked.

The National Eye Institute added that habitually wearing sunglasses is another strategy to protect vision, even on cloudy days.

“Wearing sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of both UVA and UVB radiation can protect your eyes and lower your risk for cataracts,” per information provided on The National Eye Institute’s website.



NURILENS offers a collection of eyeglasses for men and women that combines a sustainable lifestyle, durability, and style. Photo Credit: C_Thru Lens



Dr. Juliette Nelson is the Chief Executive Officer of NURILENS. She officially launched the handcrafted wooden eyeglasses company in 2020. Today, the Prince George’s County, Maryland resident sells sustainable eyeglasses and sunglasses made by her company while prioritizing eye health and eye health awareness. NURILENS’s glasses are also designed to promote individuality and embrace every personality.

Photo Credit: Demas Photography

Dr. Juliette Nelson, a Prince George’s County, Maryland resident, is providing support for individuals who want to better guard their eye health. Her gender-neutral eyewear line called NURILENS offers sustainable eyeglasses and sunglasses made by her company. The frames are primarily made of wood sourced from Asia, Africa, and the U.S. NURILENS’s glasses are crafted with blue-light blocking lenses that help protect eyes from side effects associated with staring at screens, such as digital eye strain. The sun is another source of blue light emission. This reality makes wearing sunglasses important since they aid in filtering it.

Nelson is an educator, entrepreneur, and published author who works as an industrial-organizational practitioner with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. While serving as a passionate advocate for positive eye health in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)

communities, Nelson wants these individuals to become better stewards of their vision health. Encouraging people to obtain regular eye exams, and remain more attentive of other health factors that may impact vision, are a few ways that Nelson attempts to raise awareness about combating the prevalence of eye diseases.

“Last year, we started a blog segment on our site called NURI’s Optical Lab where we break down eye health-related topics for our audience and found that there is more that we can do in terms of building awareness in our communities,” Nelson said. “This year we’ve recently launched a podcast (called) VisionNURI where we will continue having these conversations (by) inviting eye care professionals and other individuals to speak on various topics related to vision health.”

Per The American Academy of Ophthalmology®, recommended frequency of ocular examinations depends on “the presence of visual

abnormalities and the probability of visual abnormalities developing.”

Although it is essential for individuals who experience ocular symptoms to receive prompt examinations, and for people who are at risk of developing ocular abnormalities to stay on top of their vision appointments, health status, family history, and a person’s age are other factors that could influence visual screening schedules. Individuals who have been diagnosed with diabetes and hypertension “require periodic comprehensive eye examinations to prevent or minimize visual loss.”

Making it possible for customers to look and feel great while wearing glasses is another manner Nelson fuses eye health with fashion and identity. She told The Baltimore Times that her Haitian American roots influence her desire to celebrate people for who they are through NURILENS. Nelson started the company out of her love for eyewear, and the need for cost-affordable vision solutions.

“In addition to the fashionable appeal that different types of wood material bring, wooden eyewear is a more environmentally sustainable choice than some other options. It is also lighter and doesn’t weigh down as much on the face as plastic frames. Additionally, it is less likely to slip off the face,” Nelson said. “I designed all of the frames we have in our collection.”

NURILENS can receive and process prescription orders. Items such as Au Naturel Wood Polish and Au Naturel Eyeglass Lens Cleaner are sold to enhance the enjoyment of wearing and caring for NURILENS glasses. Learn more about the handcrafted wooden eyewear via www.nurilens.co. Nuri’s Optical Lab is available by visiting <https://nurilens.co/blogs/optical-lab>.

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Part 1 of a 2 Part Series

The AFRO to Celebrate 130 Years with Gala

By Ursula V. Battle

For nearly a century and a half, The AFRO-American Newspaper has served as a “voice” for Black Americans. The publication has been in existence since August 13, 1892, when John Henry Murphy Sr., a former slave who gained freedom following the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, started the paper. Murphy, Sr. merged his church publication, The Sunday School Helper with two other church publications, The Ledger (owned by George F. Bragg of Baltimore’s St. James Episcopal Church) and The AFRO-American (published by Reverend William M. Alexander, pastor of Baltimore’s Sharon Baptist Church).

By 1922, Murphy had evolved the newspaper from a one-page weekly church publication into the most widely circulated Black paper



Founder of the AFRO American Newspaper John H. Murphy Sr., undated.
Courtesy of the AFRO American Newspapers Archives.

along the coastal Atlantic and used it to challenge Jim Crow practices

in Maryland. Over the course of its illustrious history, the paper has covered countless stories involving Black America including: lynchings; church burnings; the Emmitt Till trial; The Freedom Riders; and The Little Rock Nine.

Today, The AFRO, as many people have come to call the publication, is still going strong and continues to fulfill the vision of John Henry Murphy, Sr. by continuing to serve as a platform to advance the Black community. In celebration of its 130th Anniversary, the historic publication will be holding a Gala. The AFRO Gala will take place on Saturday, August 13, 2022 at Martin’s Crosswinds located at 7400 Greenway Center Drive in Greenbelt, Maryland. The Black-Tie affair will feature Kid Capri, Tommy Davidson, and Absolute Music featuring Temika Moore.

“I congratulate The Baltimore AFRO-American Newspaper on it’s 130th Anniversary,” said Baltimore Times Publisher Joy Bramble. “What an achievement! The AFRO and The Baltimore Times were once next door neighbors in the 2500 block of Charles Street. It was indeed an honor to sit directly next to a fellow publication who also sought to uplift and tell the stories of people of color through the pages of its paper. The AFRO is the epitome of resilience, and the fact that the paper has been in existence for so many years is a testament of that resilience.”

Dr. Frances ‘Toni’ Draper is the Chairman of the Board and Publisher of The AFRO-American Newspapers.

“One hundred and thirty years is quite a milestone,” said Dr. Draper. “It makes us the oldest Black business in



First Editor of the Afro American, Reverend William Alexander, ca. 1919.
Courtesy of the AFRO American Newspapers Archives.

Maryland, and the third oldest in the United States. I can’t imagine what it must have been like for my great-grandfather, his wife, and the founders of the AFRO to start a newspaper in 1892 when less than two percent of the Black population could read. He was also a sergeant in what was known as The Colored Troops. But he started a newspaper to talk about what was happening in the Black community. We talk today about how hard business can be. But I can’t imagine how difficult that must have been. That was quite an undertaking.”

Murphy Sr. founded The AFRO with \$200 from his wife Martha Howard Murphy.

“Martha Murphy doesn’t get a lot of mentions,” said Dr. Draper. “But it cost \$200 to buy the name and the printing press at an auction, and it was the \$200 she had. When you look at an early editions, they were writing about

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John H. Murphy, Sr. (seated) at the former AFRO office on St. Paul St., ca. 1900s.
Courtesy of the AFRO American Newspapers Archives.

what was happening in churches, neighborhoods, about policies, and other things.”

“Those are the same types of things people want to know today. What is happening in my neighborhood and what is happening in my city.”

Dr. Draper said the couple had 10 children.

“They had five boys and five girls, one of whom was my grandfather Carl J. Murphy who served as Publisher of the paper for the longest from 1922 when his dad died to 1967 when he died.”

Carl Murphy and his wife Vashti Turley Murphy - one of the founding members of Delta Sigma Theta had five daughters. Under the editorial control of Carl Murphy, The AFRO-American Newspaper rose to national prominence. He served as its editor-publisher for 45 years. The newspaper was circulated in Baltimore, with regional editions circulated in



Dr. Carl Murphy, former President of the AFRO American Newspapers 1967 - 1971, undated. Courtesy of the AFRO American Newspapers Archives.

Washington, D.C. twice weekly and in Philadelphia, Richmond, and Newark, once a week. At one time there were as many as 13 editions circulated across the country. The AFRO-American's status as a Black paper circulating in several predominantly Black communities endowed it with the ability to profoundly affect social change on a national scale.

Carl Murphy used the editorial pages of The Afro-American to push for the hiring of African Americans by Baltimore's police and fire departments; to press for black representation in the legislature; and for the establishment of



Veteran retired journalist, Dr. E. Lee Lassiter, served as a Copy Editor for the paper's National Edition from 1960 until 1965.

a state supported university to educate African Americans.

“I had the good fortune to work for The AFRO during an especially exciting period in history for African Americans and for the Black Press,” said retired journalist, editor and educator, Dr. E. Lee Lassiter. “I was a Copy Editor for the National Edition from 1960 to 1965. We were competing with such great newspapers as The Chicago Defender and The Pittsburg Courier and covering such events as the Emmett Till murder, the Sit Ins, Freedom Rides and The March on Washington. It was a joy to watch and work with media giants like Moses Newson, Sam Lacy, George Collins, William Worthy and Raymond Boone. The AFRO has served the community well.”

To purchase tickets for The AFRO Gala, visit AFRO.COM. Coming Next Week: Part 2.



Newsboys Darryl Smith, age 10, and an unidentified coworker, November 10, 1962. Courtesy of the AFRO American Newspapers Archives.



Current CEO & Publisher of the AFRO American Newspapers, Frances "Toni" Draper. Courtesy of Frances Draper.

Local Young Leader Starts Sorority to Promote Sisterhood in Girls, Combat ‘Mean Girl’ Behavior

By Andrea Blackstone

If you ask 12-year-old Cailyn Davis about the mean girls’ mentality, the rising seventh grader who resides in Prince George’s County, Maryland will tell you that she disliked it enough to do something about stopping it. Cailyn took a stand locally about fellow girls belittling others by forming a community sorority and nonprofit called Beta Iota Iota Beta, Inc. Girls between ages six to 16 can enjoy camaraderie while combining the purpose of having a safe place to fulfill their potential and pursue their goals fearlessly.

The sorority launched on Cailyn’s birthday in 2021. Holding meetings, having fun at outings like a waterpark, reading books, speaking to other students about building healthy friendships, and participating in community service events and speaking engagements are the kinds of activities that have been on the sorority members’ itinerary.

“I want to teach them [girls] that it’s not right to be mean to each other, and I want to let them know.... that within us you can talk to them [other members] about anything that’s bothering you,” Cailyn said.



Beta Iota Iota Beta, Inc. hosted a Mother’s Day crafting event to enable girls in the community to make items for their mothers at a community center in 2022.

Photo by Valencia Davis



A portion of Beta Iota Iota Beta, Inc. founding members assemble during an induction ceremony that was held for incoming members in 2022. Photo by Ebony Powell

Despite Cailyn’s young age, she is no stranger to leadership. Beauty Is In The Books preceded the sorority’s formation. The ambitious preteenager explained that the nonprofit initially focused on reading. It turned into a social club because she wanted to add other activities.

“Beta Iota Iota Beta, Inc. is a sorority that I brought together to bring girls from all over the world together as a sisterhood, so that they won’t look down on each other and be mean to each other,” Cailyn said.

She further explained that she dealt with girls who are now sorority members who had previously experienced being bullied.

“I just wanted to make them feel safe and know that they can come talk to their sisters about anything.”

Cailyn added that 15 girls from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia are currently sorority members. Allowing girls who reside in other places to join the sorority is a future goal. A parent of one of Cailyn’s sorors helped with ideas in setting up the sorority, along with Cailyn’s mother, Valencia Davis.

Davis is a serial entrepreneur and

is also known to help the community. She serves as Director of Operations for Beta Iota Iota Beta, Inc. Davis explained that the reading program, Beauty Is In The Books, was initiated under the nonprofit Valuable Blessings, Inc. that she leads as chief executive officer and president. Her nonprofit provides empowerment and leadership services. Cailyn was inspired to start the sorority because of the example Davis sets.

“My mom has multiple businesses, and I want to be like her,” Cailyn said.

Kelsi Grays, 14, is the president of Beta Iota Iota Beta Inc. who agrees with Cailyn’s mission to correct mean girl behavior. The Prince George’s County resident who will be starting the ninth grade in the fall was originally the president of Beauty Is In The Books book club. Creating goals, providing meeting plans, and helping other members are some of her duties. When Cailyn asked her to assume the new role, she agreed to support Cailyn’s vision.

“I think that it is important for me to remind other girls to stay positive and learn about sisterhood because it can really help young girls’ self-esteem,

confidence and growth. We should also learn about sisterhood because girls will be able to communicate and express their feelings appropriately with other people,” Kelsi said.

The teenager added that displaying kindness and uplifting each other is better than being a mean girl. Joining the sorority helped Kelsi to open up and create relationships with new people. Some girls have benefited from membership because they now have a space where they do not have to worry about being picked on or judged, according to Kelsi.

“It’s okay to bond and create a sisterhood relationship with other young girls, and to stay positive and encourage other young girls to stop ‘the mean girl act,’ open up, and express themselves to other people,” Kelsi said.



Cailyn Davis is the founder of Beta Iota Iota Beta, Inc.

Photo by Bell Brice Studio

Information about new member inquiries in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia is available online via <https://www.beautyisinthebooks.org/>. Early applications will be reviewed from August 1- 31, 2022 for local girls who subscribed to the sorority’s email list on the website. You may email info@beautyisinthebooks.org to follow up about joining Beta Iota Iota Beta, Inc.

Nonprofit Celebrates 10-Year Anniversary of Providing Single-Parent Homes with Scholarships

By Andrea Blackstone

Back in 2004, Jaemellah Kemp was a single working mother with a son enrolled in kindergarten. She was faced with choosing whether to buy her child school supplies that he needed or food for the week. With assistance given by family and friends, Kemp was able to cover both necessities. The predicament sparked Kemp to realize that “challenging financial decisions such as these plagues many single-parent households on a daily basis.”

In response, Kemp launched It Takes Two, Inc in 2010. Her mission to give back to students from single-parent homes commenced in Prince George’s County, Maryland. Kemp provided scholarships for school supplies, books, and uniforms. The CEO and nonprofit founder’s actions led to over 1,000 students receiving assistance throughout Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Prince George’s County, Montgomery County, and in the District of Columbia.

“We have expanded our scholarship program to provide laptops, tutoring and Internet in response to COVID-19, and we are still continuing that on today by having our students engaging in needs assessments so that we can determine the best awards package for them,” Kemp said.

Kemp added that board members, community partners, and local businesses like Wegmans and the Walmart Foundation have made contributions, but “the people” have played a major part in helping to support students who participated in the nonprofit’s programs over the years. Information on the nonprofit’s website states that It Takes Two, Inc normally awards between \$200-\$500 in scholarship awards to each scholarship recipient from elementary school age to the college level. However, Kemp told The Baltimore Times that because

of a successful fundraising campaign, approximately \$100 more will be awarded per scholarship recipient this year.

To celebrate reaching a 10-year-journey full of milestones, It Takes



Jaemellah Kemp, founder and CEO of It Takes Two, Inc, began her nonprofit journey by providing scholarships for school supplies, books, and uniforms to youth from single parent homes in Prince George’s County, Maryland. It Takes Two Inc.’s 10-year anniversary, dinner celebration, and awards ceremony will be held on Saturday, August 6, 2022, at Village Commons Community Center, located at 1326 Main Chapel Way in Gambrills, Maryland from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Tickets are currently on sale.

Photo by University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC), formerly University of Maryland

Two, Inc will be holding its annual anniversary dinner and youth awards event on Saturday, August 6, 2022, at Village Commons Community Center, located at 1326 Main Chapel Way in Gambrills, Maryland from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. Mikeya Dunnigan, a Tools for Success Scholarship alumnus and recent Michigan State University graduate, will cohost the event with 13-year-old Sydney Thomas. She is a Positioned for Greatness Youth Program participant.

Additionally, four awards will be given to young people who were nominated by their community in leadership, service, student-athlete, and youth entrepreneur categories. A special award called the ‘Rising Phoenix’ award will be presented to

another young person.

Juwan Blocker, a two-time speaker for It Takes Two, Inc, will be sharing insight at the upcoming event about his political activism when he was a young student, in addition to wisdom that he has cultivated over the years. As a civic-minded teenager, Blocker joined his Student Government Association at Parkdale High School in Hyattsville, Md. After becoming a Student Member of the Prince George’s County Board of Education, Blocker successfully “advocated to lower the voting age to 16 in the city of Hyattsville,” according to his website.

Kemp noted that Blocker has a spirit to give back and show what is possible.

“One of our missions is to create tomorrow’s leaders today, and he (Blocker) personifies that in how he started off in high school in the Student Government Association, how he carries himself, and how he speaks highly of others,” she said.

Blocker is actively serving in the D.C. National Guard and working as Deputy Legislative Director for Maryland Comptroller, Peter Franchot. The Bowie State University alumnus is currently pursuing a master’s degree at University of Baltimore. Blocker stated that he will provide “nuggets of wisdom,” and speak about his unconventional path to success to “tell young folks that what you do in life isn’t always a straight path,” when he serves as It Takes Two, Inc’s guest speaker soon.

“I look forward most importantly to celebrating these young folks that have stood out and said ‘Hey, I’m going to be unapologetically myself and stand out,’” Blocker said.

As the special evening draws near, Kemp reflects on how much progress has been made through her act of obedience and stepping out on faith to support youth and families.

“It’s humbling and rewarding to see the families that we have been



(Left to Right) Se’lah Sutton, Sameenah Sutton, Jaemellah Kemp, Iyla Martin, and Calvin Langford, Jr. help feed the needy on July 16, 2022. It Takes Two, Inc Positioned for Greatness Youth Program participants join forces for a service day. Photo by Renee Cort-Sutton




(Left to Right) Se’lah Sutton and Sameenah Sutton take a stand against bullying by wearing orange in October 2020. It Takes Two, Inc’s program participants attended the PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center Unity Day. Photo by Renee Cort-Sutton

able to support in some capacity, and just to know that we’ve been able to lighten their burden just a little bit by providing them with a hand up, not a handout,” Kemp said.

Tickets are available to purchase for It Takes Two, Inc’s 10-year anniversary, dinner celebration, and awards ceremony that will be held on August 6, 2022 via Eventbrite or <https://ittakestwoinc.org/events>. Donations can be made to the nonprofit by visiting <https://ittakestwoinc.org/donate>, or the event page.

Megan Look contributed to this article.



Ravens Lamar Jackson Gets Mixed Results in Top QB Lists

Lamar Jackson
Photo courtesy of BaltimoreRavens.com

By Tyler Hamilton

The offseason has become the time for lists as content and stories are scarce. The recent lists of top quarterbacks have not been kind to Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson. It's almost as if the former MVP has suddenly lost his superpowers like the movie, "Space Jam."

Jackson was considered a top five quarterback last year. Now he finds himself outside of the top 10, according to some of the recent lists.

ESPN's Jeremy Fowler surveyed more than 50 league executives, coaches, scouts, and players to help us stack the top 10 players at 11 different positions, including quarterback. Fowler's quarterback poll named Jackson as an honorable mention. Here is the excerpt from the post:

"Keeping a quarterback with an MVP award and a 37-12 record as a starter

off a top-10 list is surprising, but that's exactly what more than half of the voters did. Despite standout moments in 2021 -- including 442 passing yards on Monday Night Football against the Colts in October -- Jackson finished the year with a career-low 50.7 QBR. He struggled mightily in his last three full games with six interceptions and 13 sacks as teams blitzed him heavily. And he missed the last month of the season with an ankle injury, fueling concern about how his running style will hold up long term.

"Hard to stay healthy when you run that much; he's actually gotten a lot better as a passer," an NFL offensive coach said. "But if you play that way [with a run-heavy attack] and it's a close game and you're down, it's really hard to win, because you're asked to do what you only minor in, not major in, and that's passing the ball when they know you are gonna pass it."

An NFC personnel evaluator added, "Innately competitive, driven and mentally tougher than just about anybody. You just run into a few issues late in the year: For as much as you run him, you get worn down."

Jackson is one of the league's most polarizing players. His style of playing quarterback is different from the traditional pocket passer. Although it places a strain on opposing defensive coordinators and has worked wonders for the Ravens offense, there are some who want to discredit Jackson.

Mike Sando of The Athletic compiled a list that ranked quarterbacks and placed them in tiers based on feedback from 50 NFL coaches and executives, including six general managers, eight head coaches, 10 evaluators, 12 coordinators, six quarterback coaches and seven executives.

Jackson finished in Tier 2 and ranked 10th on Sando's list. He may have finished in the top 10, but that didn't shield him from criticism.

One anonymous defensive coordinator that Sando spoke to had a rather unflattering take on Jackson.

"If he has to pass to win the game, they ain't winning the game," the defensive coordinator told Sando. "He's so unique as a player, but I don't give a s--t if he wins the league MVP 12 times. I don't think he'll ever be a 1 as a quarterback. He'll be a 1 as a football player, but not as a quarterback."

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and the Ravens are more than pleased with Jackson. And rightfully so. Jackson has led Baltimore to the playoffs in three of the four seasons that he's been their starter.

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- Amur Lane from Sta. 7+74.38 to Sta. 11+32.70
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- Willow Oak Drive from Sta. 1+10 to 16+94.11
(From Alley "AA" to Old Frederick Rd.)**
- Maple Wood Drive from Sta. 0+00 to Sta. 13+47
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- Scarlet Oak Lane from Sta. 0+60.66 to Sta. 3+18.93
(From Uplands Parkway to Willow Oak Drive)**
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