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An 'Amazon' Gift to The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum



Amazon presents \$10,000 to The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum. (Left to right): Amazon Black Employee Network Chair, Mike Sanders; The Baltimore Times Publisher, Joy Bramble; The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum Co-Founder, Dr. Joanne Martin; and Amazon Operations Manager, Florian Alvarez. The presentation was a celebration of two instrumental Black institutions within Baltimore, and a thank you for the inroads they have created for the African American community. (See more on page 9) Courtesy Photo

Want to Avoid Foreclosure? Estate Planning Can Help

By Tim Chance

Beyond being the emotional cornerstone for many families, the home is often the single largest asset for most Marylanders. Homeownership is one of the most important tools for generating wealth and it is critical to protect that equity – especially in Maryland’s Black communities, which have long been subjected to predatory systems designed to extract wealth and exacerbate the racial wealth gap. Estate planning is one way to protect the family home and pass it on to the next generation.

All too often, the homeowner has passed away without leaving the property to an heir in a will or through a life estate deed – which is a legal document that allows the property to stay in the homeowner’s name during their life and then be passed on automatically to a named beneficiary upon the homeowner’s death. In this scenario, however, the property stays in the deceased homeowner’s name and creates a tangled title, which occurs when a person lives in a house, but can’t prove ownership because their name does not appear on the property’s deed.

Homes with tangled titles are far more vulnerable to being lost through tax sale and mortgage foreclosure. Without a clear title, homeowners generally have much more trouble accessing several financial assistance programs, including the Baltimore City Emergency Mortgage and Housing Assistance Program, the Maryland Homeowner Assistance Fund, the Maryland Homeowners’ Property Tax Credit Program, the Maryland Homestead Tax Credit and other water credit and home repair programs, which are all designed to help prevent the loss of the family home.

Without access to tax credits, it is much more likely that there will be delinquent property taxes, placing the home into tax sale. Tax sale is the annual auctioning of properties that are behind on property taxes or have certain unpaid housing code citations. In this auction, investors can purchase the debt owed to the city and eventually foreclose on the house if the debt remains unpaid. That same increased risk is true for mortgage foreclosure – without access to government mortgage assistance programs, delinquency grows and grows, culminating in foreclosure.

Additionally, mortgage companies are less likely to work with homeowners who are not named on the deed.

The best method to avoid foreclosure and keep your home in your family is preventative estate planning. Recording a life estate deed allows the title to seamlessly pass to your heirs and will allow them to take advantage of all tax credits that



*Tim Chance is a Tangled Title Attorney with Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
Courtesy Photo*

could help lower property taxes. If you want to avoid any tangled title issues in the future, or if you are currently facing a tangled title issue, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service may be able to help. To find

out how, simply complete our online intake application at mvslaw.org/free-legal-help/ or call our intake phone line at 410-547-6537, Monday through Thursday between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m.



*Estate planning
kate_sept2004 via Canva.com*

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Postal Service Celebrates Author Toni Morrison on New Forever Stamp

Princeton, NJ — The U.S. Postal Service celebrated the life and legacy of author Toni Morrison (1931-2019), whose artfully crafted novels explored the diverse voices of African Americans, in a first-day-of-issue ceremony at Princeton University.

“One of the goals of our stamp program is to raise awareness and celebrate the people who represent the very best of our nation,” said Pritha Mehra, USPS chief information officer and executive vice president, who served as the dedicating official. “It’s a privilege to represent the 650,000 men and women of the Postal Service, as we honor Toni Morrison with one more tribute — our new stamp that will be seen by millions and forever remind us of the power of her words and the ideas she brought to the world.”

Joining Mehra for the ceremony were Chris Eisgruber, president of Princeton University; Carla Hayden, 14th Librarian of Congress; Gene Jarrett, faculty dean at Princeton; Ruha Benjamin, professor of African American Studies at Princeton; and photographer Deborah Feingold, whose portrait of Morrison appears on the stamp.

Michael Cadden, university lecturer at Princeton’s Lewis Center for the Arts, was master of ceremonies.

“It was a privilege to photograph Ms. Morrison, an amazing author who contributed so much to the world through her works,” said Feingold. “However, it is an absolute honor to know that the same photograph capturing a moment in time is now the subject of a Forever stamp. I am delighted that my photograph was used as a source to design the stamp and to participate in today’s unveiling and celebration.”

A letter of tribute from former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama was read



Courtesy of USPS

and a video tribute from Oprah Winfrey was played during the ceremony.

The stamp features Feingold’s photograph of Toni Morrison against a bright yellow background. Ethel Kessler, a USPS art director, designed the stamp.

Background on Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison was born Chloe Ardelia Wofford on Feb. 18, 1931, in Lorain, Ohio, where she would later recall growing up in a family filled with storytelling and song. After graduating from high school in 1949, she enrolled at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and began using the name Toni, a reference to Anthony, the saint whose

name she took when she was confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church at age 12. After graduating from Howard, she earned a master’s degree in English at Cornell University and later taught English at Texas Southern University and at Howard.

In 1965, she began working as a textbook editor in upstate New York. In 1968, she was promoted and moved to New York City to become the first African American woman senior editor at Random House, where she prioritized the publication of books by African American authors.

Morrison published her first novel in 1970 while working full-time as an

editor and raising two children. “The Bluest Eye” is a mainstay of high school and college literature classes and a canonical novel about society’s neglect and mistreatment of African American girls. Some of Morrison’s other published novels include “Sula,” “Song of Solomon,” “Tar Baby,” “Beloved,” “Jazz” and “God Help the Child.”

President Jimmy Carter appointed Morrison to the National Council on the Arts in 1980. “Beloved” won the Pulitzer Prize and secured Morrison’s reputation as a great American writer. In 1988, Morrison became the Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Humanities at Princeton University. There she taught American literature and creative writing classes and co-founded the Princeton Atelier, a seminar program to foster collaboration across multiple disciplines.

In 1993, Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, becoming the first African American woman to receive the rare distinction. Morrison received the National Humanities Medal in 2000 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama in 2012. In 2016 she held the Charles Eliot Norton Professorship of Poetry at Harvard University.

Toni Morrison died in New York City on Aug. 5, 2019, at the age of 88. In 2019, Lorain County designated her birthday Toni Morrison Day, and the U.S. Senate passed a resolution honoring her. In 2020, the Ohio legislature made Toni Morrison Day a statewide commemoration.

The Toni Morrison Forever stamp is sold in panes of 20. Customers may purchase stamps and other philatelic products through the Postal Store at usps.com/shopstamps, by calling 844-737-7826, or at Post Office locations nationwide. Forever stamps will always be equal in value to the current First-Class Mail 1-ounce price.

Women's History Month: 'Ain't I a Woman'

By Dr. Ken Morgan

This month represents Women's History Month. Today, we concentrate on Black women—some of our ancestors in the American Revolution era.

Black women and men and the so-called founding fathers fought for liberty, freedom, and democracy. Enslaved people did not count. Slavery resided as an accepted social institution in all colonies. In 1770, the population swelled to 47,000 plus enslaved Blacks in the northern colonies. All told, 462,000 enslaved people existed, or one-fifth of the population.

For a minority of Black folks in the South and black folks in the North before and after the American Revolution, gradual emancipation or free Blacks existed.

For the most part, the U.S. was a rural-based agricultural economy until the American Civil War, when it became a full-blown industrial economy, with the



*Photo credit:
unattributed, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

North conceding to the South until that time. Something had to give between the wealthy slave-owning plantation owners and the industrialists. Lincoln did not free the enslaved Black people because of altruism but to save the Union.

Look at the American Revolutionary War. "What is the price of freedom? Is it worth the cost if failure means a return to slavery or death," said Karen Cook Bell in the online Journal Black Perspectives? This was a question many enslaved women asked as they grappled with leaving behind family and friends

to gain freedom. They did not abandon their quest for freedom. Black men did the same. For most women and men, marriages were illegal.

The question mentioned above drove Black women and men to escape slavery. One-third of fugitives represented enslaved women. Most enslaved folks who ran away remained men. Pregnant women, mothers with children, and those who cared for elderly parents or friends stayed enslaved.

Abolitionist Sojourner Truth escaped slavery in 1826. Her owner, John

Dumont, did not honor his word in freeing her. Sojourner Truth left with her child, claiming not to have escaped but told her former master, "I did not run away, I walked away by daylight."

The Fraunces Tavern Museum in New York reported that many Blacks remained on the sidelines of the action during the war. About 5,000 fought on the side of the U.S. and about 20,000 served in the Continental Army of England. Why the significant differential? Blacks' freedom became guaranteed in the Continental British Army.

The British offered freedom to enslaved people in the South to come to their fortresses, mainly to disrupt the economy, not out of their hearts to render them freedom. Black men and women risked their lives going to the British strongholds.

The revolutionaries responded in the vaunted House of Burgesses in Virginia, where much of the talk and ferment of revolutionary speech began by our so-called founding fathers. "Execute the enslaved people or send them to the West Indies for treatment far worse than the heinous slavery, said the would-be revolutionaries. After the American Revolution, harsher laws prevailed in the South. More police patrols to catch runaway slaves circulated. Rapes ran rampant.

Sojourner Truth said in her epic poem in the National Women's Museum, "I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a Woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen most all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out in my mother's grief, no one but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?"

Her poem remains true today, despite our advances even with Black emancipation, the Supreme Court Ferguson v. Plessey decision, women's suffrage, Brown v. The Kansas Board of Education, the 1960s civil rights acts, and Title IX.

The struggle continues!

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THE CASH CAMPAIGN OF MARYLAND HOSTS 16TH MONEY POWER DAY

Baltimore, MD — The CASH (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) Campaign of Maryland is holding its 16th **Money Power Day**®, the region's BIGGEST free financial fitness fair, returning in-person for the first time since 2019. Money Power Day® returns to the Poly-Western High School campus at 1400 West Cold Spring Lane on Saturday, March 18, 2023 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. There's even free parking and lots of bus service. The Opening Ceremony at 9:30 a.m. features Fox 45's Lady T as MC. Sara Johnson, Co-Founder and C.O.O. of the CASH Campaign of Maryland, joins her on the main stage along with special guests Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman and Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott. Also, Pastor Jonathan Wade of Macedonia Baptist Church will give a blessing to start the day off right.

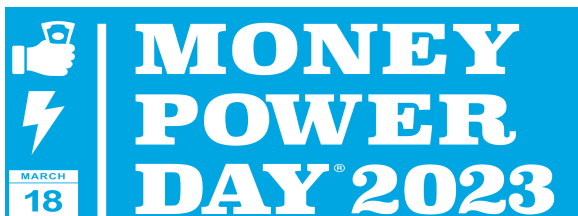
Money Power Day® is the signature event of the nonprofit CASH (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) Campaign of Maryland and its partners. This energy-packed community event is designed to help "Boost Your Financial Well-Being" with exciting activities that will inspire and inform people of all ages and income levels. The event is full of FREE workshops, exhibitors, credit counseling, financial planning, kids' activities, and more. Money Power Day® is always a "shady-free" zone — only vetted trustworthy, reliable/safe, high-quality services are offered by CASH and their partners.

People are encouraged to attend whether you're an aspiring entrepreneur interested in learning how to grow or start a small business; a family looking to secure its future with a will, save money or buy a home; a teen or adult who wants to learn about career & college options, how to pay for higher education, or deal with student debt. Children will have fun playing financial games and get balloon hats to wear. Anyone who wants to pull their credit report can and find out what it means. There's so much to see and do at Money Power Day®!

For more information or to register for Money Power Day® go to www.moneypowerday.org

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT AT MONEY POWER DAY®? It's FREE! No Charge for quality information and services:

Exhibitor Hall with 40+ vetted-for-quality nonprofits, businesses, and government organizations provide on-site financial services, information and education that participants can use immediately to boost their financial power.



Small Business Zone — Get one-on-one advice from entrepreneurship experts. Learn about business planning, structure, taxes and more. Have a business idea? Enter the "Pitch Your Side Hustle" contest for a chance to win: 1st Place \$500, 2nd Place \$250! Register for the contest at www.MoneyPowerDay.org

Workshops cover topics that help people learn the steps to achieving financial dreams, such as how to buy a home, start or grow a small business, prepare for home ownership, getting out of debt, plan & protect your legacy, financial coaching, or planning for college.

Credit Café assists participants in pulling their free credit reports then meet with an expert for credit and financial information.

Kids Zone full of financially-focused activities for youth ages 4 - 12. Featuring Aberdeen Proving Ground Federal Credit Union's "Super Savers Money Club" with their financially-focused "super hero" Violet who will help kids defeat Evil Dr. Spendit! Balloon animals and hats will be made on site!

College & Career Access Zone helps students, potential students & their families find ways to save for education, meet with financial-aid specialists who will be available to advise you on FAFSA and financial aid letters, and offer advice on career pathways.

Financial Planning Zone — Meet one-on-one with a Certified Financial Planner® to receive advice and insights about your financial future. Build the foundation for your financial plan with tips and tools shared during your financial planning session.

Shredding & Additional Services: The ever-popular shredder truck will be parked out front for your spring-cleaning shredding needs from 9am – 12Noon. Application assistance for public benefits, and more, all day!

Food Distribution by Food Rescue Baltimore while supplies last.

Fun Photo Opportunities & "Money Grab Booth" with the chance to win prizes, plus other fun activities!

92Q Jams and Magic 95.9 will be there with station prizes from 10am – 12noon!

ABOUT THE CASH (CREATING ASSETS, SAVINGS AND HOPE) CAMPAIGN OF MARYLAND: For over 20 years, the nonprofit CASH Campaign of Maryland has worked with its partners across the state to promote programs, products, and policies that increase the financial security of low-to-moderate-income individuals and families across the state. Most services are available at no cost to participants including free tax preparation, financial education classes and financial coaching. www.cashmd.org, @CASHMD www.moneypowerday.org www.bmorefreetaxes.org

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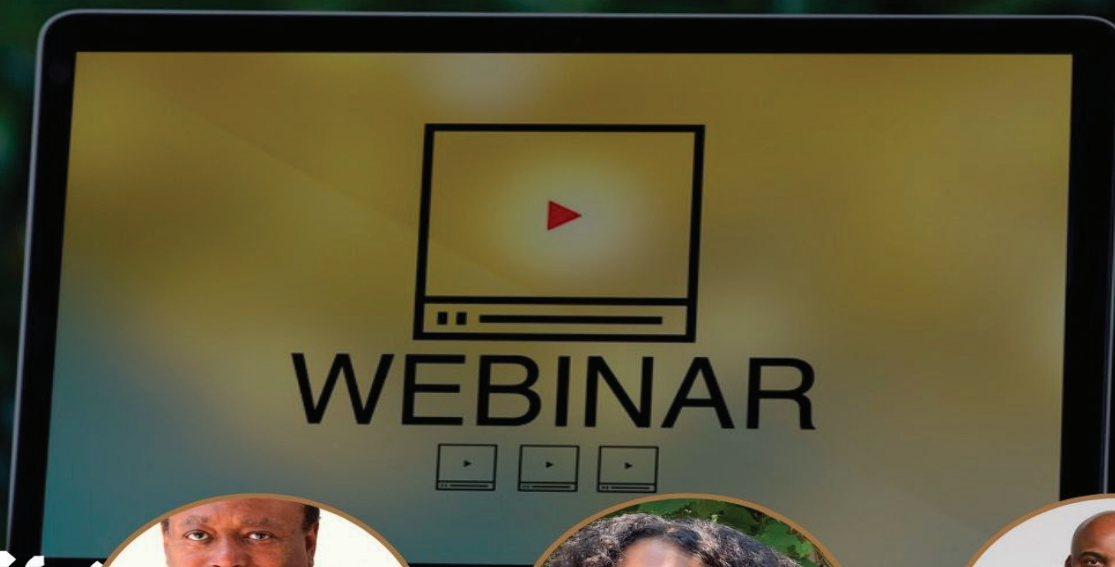
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Beauty Supply and Salon Owner Gives Back to Youth in Need

By Andrea Blackstone

Beauty supply stores are often present in African American communities, but Black owned beauty supplies remain a rarity. Lamiya Kirby, owner of Joyce Essentials, opened the doors of her beauty supply store located at 375-A Gambrills Road in Gambrills, Maryland because she “never felt comfortable going into the local beauty supply stores.”

Kirby grew up in Annapolis. She whipped hair into shape on the side for friends and family when she was a student attending Delaware State University. The business owner transferred schools and became a Coppin State University alumna. She later took an entrepreneurial leap by opening Joyce Essentials in 2021. Her store is named after Joyce Gross—her late grandmother.

“She’s always been a huge inspiration for me,” Kirby said, reminiscing.

Kirby, who also works in the social work field, blends business with offering free community support.

“We have a bunch of haircare and skincare products. It’s a store in the front and there’s a small section in the back for a salon, where I do serve foster parents and foster children,” Kirby said.

Kirby is also a licensed stylist who opened the salon portion of her



Lamiya Kirby helps a student in Anne Arundel County with grooming needs.



*Robert Cradle, founder of Rob's Barbershop Community Foundation and Lamiya Kirby, owner of Joyce Essentials
Photos courtesy of Rob's Barbershop Community Foundation*

business in 2022 because of a unique partnership that arose with a nonprofit leader. Robert Cradle, the founder of Anne Arundel County-based Rob's Barbershop Community Foundation, is known for bridging a gap to support underserved people who lack access to grooming services. Kirby met Cradle because he became a regular customer who patronized Joyce Essentials.

“He told me about the things he does. I asked him if it was something that we can work together to do because I wanted to give back to the community,” Kirby said. “We found a target audience and we realized that there were kids in school who received reduced lunch that don’t have access to haircare. We also targeted foster parents and their children.”

These parents are typically unaware of how to care for their foster children’s

hair because the children may not have the same hair texture as them. Kirby explained that the individuals who are referred to her are scattered around Anne Arundel County. She provides natural hair care services such as cornrows, two strand twists and silk presses for girls and lock maintenance and shape-ups for boys. The first service is free of charge.

Cradle mentioned some of Kirby’s winning attributes that stood out along with her willingness to participate to serve youth.

“You rarely find somebody with a combination of product knowledge, and then the skill of providing natural hair care and she has a psychology degree,” Cradle said. “Lamiya’s learning how to operate her own project the same way we’ve been doing for 22 years.”

Cradle hopes that Lamiya can run a project on her own someday. Kirby added that she wants to lend a hand to youth long term.

Other grateful youth in need who currently sit in her salon chair are students who receive free or reduced lunch at Van Bokkelen Elementary School located in Severn, Maryland. Their services are provided without them ever needing to pay.

“All of the children that have come from the school are repeat customers. I see them once a month,” Kirby said. “From what I’ve learned from the children that I’ve served so far, some just can’t afford it [paid hair services] or they don’t have time, or some just don’t care to do their hair, honestly. The school has selected a lot of the children [for referrals]. I notice that their grades may be affected by them not being able to get their hair done because there’s a lot of bullying going on.”

Kirby wants more people to know about the services that she offers. She mentioned that she is open to explore additional options to help more youth beyond ones who are currently served. Kirby is open to individuals reaching out to her to explore how she may lend a hand more in Anne Arundel County.

“There may be a target audience that I can look into and come up with a program for them as well,” Kirby said.

Cradle noted Kirby’s impact by being a cohort member of his nonprofit. She “reduced the barriers to grooming for Anne Arundel County children in foster, adoptive or kinship care children by 30 percent” and since November of 2022, Kirby “has reduced barriers to grooming for Van Bokkelen Elementary School students by two percent.”

Kirby was selected as “Fox 45’s Champion of Courage” in February. You may donate to support youth in need of grooming services by visiting www.joyceessentials.com. Inquiries may also be sent to Kirby through the website.

An ‘Amazon’ Gift to The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum E-Commerce Closes Out Black History Month with \$10,000 Donation

By Ursula V. Battle

An “Amazon” event took place on Wednesday, March 1, 2023 as e-commerce giant Amazon presented a \$10,000 donation to The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum to close out Black History Month. During the month of February, Amazon’s Sparrows Point Fulfillment Center obtained seven wax figurines from the museum.

The display of the wax figures was spearheaded by Amazon’s Black Employee Network’s (BEN). The mission of BEN is to recruit, retain and empower Black employees. BEN also connects members with mentors and provides career and personal development workshops.

The presentation was a celebration of two instrumental Black institutions within Baltimore, and a thank you for inroads they have created for the African American community.

“At Amazon we are customer obsessed,” said Mike Sanders, Amazon Black Employee Network Chair. “We think big, and we stand alongside our customers to help solve big issues. This includes supporting organizations that make a difference, like The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum. We believe it’s meaningful and impactful to give back locally, and we’ll continue to look for ways to be good neighbors.”

Located at 1601-1603 E. North Avenue, the museum was established in 1983 by Dr. Joanne Martin and her late husband, Dr. Elmer Martin. The museum is the first wax museum of African American history in the nation. The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum is gearing up for a multi-million dollar facility. Described as the cornerstone of a vibrant revitalization initiative in the East Baltimore corridor, these efforts include 25,000 square feet of new construction. Amazon’s \$10,000



Amazon Employees, The Baltimore Times Staff, and The Baltimore Times Publisher, Joy Bramble pose with wax figures from The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum. Mrs. Bramble is pictured center next to her wax figure.. Courtesy Photo

donation will go toward youth outreach and program expansion.

“I was pleased to be involved in a project initiated by Amazon’s Black Employees Network who made sure that Black History Month was recognized at their place of work,” said Dr. Martin. “They are trying to make sure that our history is preserved. It’s always good when a younger generation is concerned with that and are using their power and influence to ensure that happens.”

BEN also engages with the local and regional chapters of the National Society of Black Engineers, leads recruiting initiatives with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and partners with other organizations.

In 2018, two members of the BEN leadership team raised a business idea, which then became their full time jobs. They created a team that launched the black haircare store, Textures & Hues, on Amazon.

“Allowing us to have our wax figures on exhibit gave us wonderful visibility and I am grateful for that opportunity,” said Dr. Martin. The \$10,000 will help us to meet some needs. I thank Amazon for their generosity.”

The immersive exhibit showcased prominent colleges and universities, organizations and trailblazers. The wax figures included Baltimore Times Publisher Joy Bramble. A journalism pioneer, Bramble founded this free weekly newspaper

in 1986 along with her husband Peter Bramble. Like the Martins, the Brambles started their pioneering business on a shoestring budget.

“The event was fantastic,” said Joy Bramble. “It was wonderful to see that Amazon recognizes what Black businesses are doing. I am very excited that a big business like Amazon sees the contributions of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum and opened a gateway for people around the country to see some of its wax figures. I applaud them for not only providing this wonderful opportunity, but for providing this beloved institution with a monetary donation.”

Networking with Intention

Women's Month Brunch Comes to Baltimore

By Andrea Blackstone

Ja’Nai McKinney, 35, knows that women can benefit from networking with other individuals more often. While Women’s History Month offers a timely opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of American women, it also provides a chance to highlight helpful tools that can be utilized by everyday women who are potentially tomorrow’s trailblazers.

McKinney uses her gift of connecting women with each other by hosting empowerment and networking brunches. Fellow women who attend them are encouraged to bring business cards.

“At the beginning, we ask everyone to walk around and meet new people and exchange information. This gives women a chance to meet and network,” McKinney said, noting that more women are showing up to attend her events. “So far I’ve had women come from Annapolis, Baltimore, Philadelphia and D.C.”

The Annapolitan’s is a full-time daycare teacher. She also serves as an events manager at Euphoria NightClub, located in Baltimore, Maryland. A year has passed since McKinney began combining food and intentional networking opportunities. Her blossoming idea began by creating an Instagram chat.

“Instagram only allows you to have a certain amount of people in the chat, so I had the idea to do a brunch so I can have more businesswomen come. I felt that women should be able to come together to empower, motivate and uplift each other,” she said. “There were times I needed to lean on other sisters for advice and help, so I wanted to create a safe place where many women could do that.”

Brunches feature different women who come to speak about an array of things that women go through in life.

McKinney, who possesses a family legacy of uplifting others, also helps the



Ja’Nai McKinney celebrates one year of hosting networking and empowerment brunches for women.

Photo credit: Catch This Flash Inc.

homeless and participates in holiday giving events. Her late father, Kirby McKinney served as director of Stanton Community Center in Annapolis. According to McKinney, he worked with former mayors Dean Johnson, Ellen Moyer and Joshua Cohen in Annapolis. Kirby performed various youth services and holiday givebacks.

“My father taught me the love of people, my mother and godmother taught me strength, my sisters taught me motivation, and my daughter and nephews taught me hope,” Ja’Nai said.

Tyrone Davis is Ja’Nai’s brother who kept her motivated after her father’s passing. Davis assists her with community events and givebacks. But Ja’Nai’s signature niche is empowering women. She feels like women are the backbone of households, families and businesses.

“We know how to work through hardships and overcome obstacles,” Ja’Nai said.

She also noted that women can sometimes be hard on each other, but Ja’Nai feels that just one woman can break the cycle and show others how women can “be better together.”

Nailah Queen is a serial entrepreneur who attends Ja’Nai’s events.

“Attending the brunches has been very beneficial to me both personally and professionally. Personally, I have made a vast amount of connections and have built relationships with some amazing women I’ve met at her events. As a speaker, I have been able to showcase my expertise to an audience of women who fit the build for my business coaching clients,” Queen said.

Ja’Nai stated that she hopes that attendees leave her events better than when they entered them.

“I hope they get some type of motivation and encouragement to keep going. I hope they learn things they may not have known. Also, I hope they feel they were able to network and meet different businesswomen,” Ja’Nai stated.

Ja’Nai’s next Women’s Month Brunch will be held on Sunday March 26, 2023, from 12-4 p.m. at Dream Mega Lounge, located at 10 South Calvert St. in Baltimore. Speakers will include Jente Green, Dr. Rhonda Lawson, Dr. Tasheka Green, Jasmine Allen, Asia Williams and Latisha Montague. Amani McGlotten, Ja’Nai’s 14-year-old daughter will present facts about Black women in history.

Ja’Nai added that it is important to celebrate these women during Women’s History Month to pay tribute to women who have paved the way for women today, including younger women who will come after us.

Queen feels that Ja’Nai has a passion for connecting women in a safe space that fosters support, encouragement, collaboration, growth and unity.

“It radiates through her message whenever she speaks life into the women at her events and it’s genuine. She is a woman of God that is walking in her purpose,” she said.

Please visit <https://Womensmonthbrunch.eventbrite.com> to obtain more information about Ja’Nai’s next event. The upcoming networking and empowerment brunch will celebrate the one-year anniversary of her efforts to bring women together. Admission is free.



(L-r) Ja’Nai McKinney, her daughter Amani McGlotten, mother Beverly McKinney and sister Lacy McKinney during an inaugural event.

Photo credit: Catch This Flash Inc.



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National Kidney Month

A Husband and Father Gets the Gift of a Double Transplant

Maurice Drake is a husband and father who understands the immeasurable impact that organ donation can make on a person's quality of life. Drake—a Pasadena, Maryland resident—was diagnosed with diabetes in 2005. By 2014, Drake's doctor began expressing concern about his kidney health.

"The doctor said I should pay attention to my kidneys a little bit more and suggested trying a vegetarian diet and limit what I was eating," Drake said.

He was required to limit protein amounts that he consumed while increasing his vegetable intake.

"But by 2016, I really had actual trouble with the kidneys and went into kidney failure," Drake said, adding that diabetes caused the health crisis. "I began dialysis in 2016 by doing hemodialysis with a temporary central venous catheter (CVC) placed in my upper chest. A few months later, I switched to peritoneal dialysis to be able to do dialysis at home. I continued with peritoneal dialysis until late 2019 after getting a second bad infection that led to me having my peritoneal catheter removed."

Hemodialysis removes waste products from the blood by use of a machine when a person's kidneys are not functioning normally. Peritoneal dialysis is typically an at home treatment for kidney failure that sends a cleansing liquid through the abdomen by a tube.

Drake prayed and stayed positive through treatment changes.

"My doctor suggested that I switch back to hemodialysis, but this time using a fistula (a surgically created access point) placed in the wrist area of my arm. The fistula couldn't be used right away, so I had to get another CVC placed for dialysis at the center three days a week," Drake said.

After a few weeks, Drake decided to try home hemodialysis to avoid the trips to a dialysis center. First,



Maurice Drake during a training for using the home hemodialysis machine on January 6, 2020. Photos courtesy of Maurice and Jacqrai Drake

Drake was required to complete a training course to prepare for using the equipment at home. Although he was scheduled to begin home hemodialysis, the very next week he was called by MedStar Georgetown University Hospital's transplant team. March of 2020, Drake was informed that a kidney was available for him. He never had to do home hemodialysis after all. While preparing to leave home, he called his employer to provide notice that he would not be coming to work.

"I had to be ready by the morning. I was signed up with MedStar Georgetown," Drake said.

Diabetes affected his pancreas and kidneys. Drake only knew the organ donor passed away. He remains unaware about the detailed circumstances that led up to his ability to have a double transplant.

"I had a pancreas transplant at the same time," Drake said. "The pancreas transplant took care of the diabetes so I'm no longer diabetic."

After Drake's surgery was performed, time was also needed

to drive back and forth to MedStar Georgetown for checkups and appointments. Today, Drake describes his health as "very good." He has more freedom to enjoy experiences with his loved ones, including dips at the beach or in a pool if he chooses. These activities were once off limits.

"I don't have to worry about diabetes now," Drake stated.

Jacqrai Drake, Maurice's wife, recalls the old routine of setting up a cyclor machine for peritoneal dialysis for her husband's home use.

"I would go to work and Maurice would sleep during dialysis. Then, he would then go to work. It's what we did for years," Jacqrai said. "Having two young kids and Maurice doing dialysis, and us trying to work, it was a lot emotionally and mentally."

The CDC reported that 6.0 million adults who are aged 18 and over have been diagnosed with kidney disease. An additional report found that "during 2000–2019, the number of ESKD (end-stage kidney disease) cases reported in the United States increased 41.8%; the number of prevalent cases

approximately doubled."

The question can become how many living or deceased donors will donate kidneys to them.

Jacqrai is a registered donor who thinks being one is important. It resonated with her deeply as it impacted someone she knew. She added that her husband received his life changing call about his transplant one night before COVID hit in March of 2020. Only the people who were getting procedures could come inside of the hospital.

"Everything had to be virtual, and then I picked Maurice up that Saturday to bring him home after his successful surgery," Jacqrai recalled.

Maurice's experience reminds how families can be impacted by a generous stranger's willingness to become an organ, eye or tissue donor. The Drake family's gift was received as a family unit. They can continue life together.

"I'm grateful that we have more stability," Jacqrai said. "I'm grateful for the time. We got more time!"

Please visit <https://www.donatelifemaryland.org/how-to-register/> to learn about becoming an organ, eye and tissue donor.



Maurice and Jacqrai Drake have been married since 2002.

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Ravens Lamar Jackson Situation Takes a Strange Twist



Lamar Jackson

Photo credit: Patrick Smith/Getty Images

By Tyler Hamilton

Imagine if a former MVP that once led the NFL in passing touchdowns were to become available for teams to acquire. One would expect there to be a buzz among teams clamoring to get a shot at making said player their new quarterback.

Well, that's exactly the case with Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson, except teams are lining up to say they don't have interest in him. The Ravens placed the non-exclusive franchise tag on Jackson.

If Jackson were to agree to sign with another team and Baltimore declined to match the offer, Jackson's new team would send two first-round picks to the Ravens. The non-exclusive tag is nearly \$13 million less than the exclusive designation, coming in at \$32.4 million.

According to multiple reports, the Washington Commanders, Las Vegas Raiders, Atlanta Falcons and Carolina Panthers are among the teams that are not interested in

acquiring Jackson. These reports came out hours after the non-exclusive tag was placed on Jackson.

Am I missing something? Why would teams instantly say they have no interest in a quarterback of Jackson's stature?

"Lamar Jackson is a Unanimous MVP," former NFL quarterback and current ESPN analyst Robert Griffin III said. "He has lead the NFL in Passing Touchdowns, is 26 years old, is 45-16 as a starter and All the QB needy teams are saying they aren't interested. Don't smell right to me."

Added former NFL defensive back Bryant McFadden who works for CBS Sports, "The owners are making it a point to not allow another Deshaun Watson type of contract."

Even future Hall of Famer JJ Watt had something to say.

"Why are all of these teams so publicly "out" on Lamar Jackson, an MVP winner in his prime at the most important position in the entire NFL," Watt said.

What am I missing here?

Per Yahoo Sports' Charles Robinson, the Ravens and Jackson are still far apart. Jackson is reportedly seeking something in the range of Deshaun Watson's fully guaranteed \$230 million deal with Cleveland Browns.

Jackson has cemented himself as one of the top quarterbacks in the NFL, despite not playing in a passing scheme that fully showcases his ability as a passer. Previous offensive coordinator Greg Roman was known more for his extensive run play catalog that featured Jackson.

Jackson rushed for over 1,000 yards twice in the last four years. He was unable to complete each of the last two seasons due to injury but still rushed for at least 700 yards in both seasons. The Ravens have a 45-16 record with Jackson as a starter. Jackson has proven himself to be able to carry The Ravens at a minimum into the playoffs.

Some have made a fuss about his 1-3 record in the playoffs with

the Ravens, but he led them to the postseason three times. His only postseason win came on the road against the Tennessee Titans in January 2021. The two-time Pro Bowler has managed a total of 900 passing yards and three touchdowns across his four playoff games.

It's safe to say that Jackson has proven himself as a commodity that should be in high demand across the league and especially with the Ravens. Baltimore has a new offensive coordinator in Todd Monken who has already raved about Jackson.

"He has an elite skillet," Monken said during his introductory press conference. "It's obvious when you watch him on film, the things he can do with the football and the plays that he makes. I think he's underrated as a passer in terms of his ability to make plays and throw it down the field."

It's going to be an interesting ride. Buckle up.

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