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U.S. Navy Veteran Writes Empowering Children's Book About Vitiligo



Lid'ya C. Rivera, a HarperCollins author, dedicated vitiligo advocate, and U.S. Navy veteran encourages others to discover their confidence and self-love from within. Rivera was born with vitiligo and faced challenges because of it. She desires to impact the lives of others. Her children's picture book, "I Absolutely, Positively Love My Spots," is a story about a young girl with vitiligo who celebrates her skin. The book was illustrated by #1 New York Times bestselling illustrator, Niña Mata.

(See article on page 2) Photo Credit: Pettus Media

Empowering Children's Book

U.S. Navy Veteran Writes Empowering Children's Book About Vitiligo

By Andrea Blackstone

Some children's health disorders can be dangerous, bacterial, viral, fungal, chronic or developmental, while others such as vitiligo may present confidence or social challenges.

Vitiligo, which is a chronic autoimmune disorder, causes patches of skin to lose pigment or color. According to the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), it occurs "when melanocytes – skin cells that make pigment – are attacked and destroyed, causing the skin to turn a milky-white color."

Depigmentation—a loss of natural color of pigment—is a main symptom. Vitiligo is not contagious. It does not spread from person to person.

"While vitiligo cannot be cured, treatment may restore lost skin color,"

per information provided by the American Academy of Dermatology Association.

Treatment provided by a board-certified dermatologist can also reduce vitiligo from spreading to other areas.

Lid'ya C. Rivera is a Florida-based vitiligo advocate, confidence coach, published author, speaker, filmmaker and retired U.S. Navy Veteran who knows what it is like to be impacted by vitiligo.

Her vitiligo is in one area of her body. It is defined as "focal" vitiligo and is primarily located on her face. Rivera explained that her vitiligo affects the left side of her face, eye, eyelashes and hair. She lacked confidence for most of her life because of having the rare skin disorder.

"Having been born with vitiligo, there were many life challenges faced, including bullying by my peers and feeling like I was not normal and like an outcast which had a negative impact on me emotionally and mentally," Rivera said. "It wasn't until 2018, that I no longer wanted to continue living in darkness and shame. I decided to finally and figuratively conceal my true beauty, and since then, I have been living in freedom and advocating for the vitiligo community in hopes that they, too, begin to live in freedom and love the skin they're in."

Today, Rivera is a full-time entrepreneur and owner of the Confidence BuildHER Academy. She serves as a confidence coach for teenage girls and women. Rivera is also a graduate of Excelsior College, where she earned an Associates degree in Administrative and Management Studies and a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology.

After serving in the U.S. Navy for almost 14 years, recently retiring in February 2023, Rivera took a leap to share her first children's book called "I Absolutely Positively Love My Spots" with the world. The official release date was on June 6, 2023.



Lid'ya Rivera with readers at her book launch party in Florida on June 6, 2023 at Books-A-Million. Photo Credit: Whitehead Entertainment

Although the book's target audience is children aged three to eight years old, she believes that her book, which features a vibrant protagonist with vitiligo, will touch and positively impact everyone who reads it. According to Rivera, an extraordinary number of adults told her that they wished her book had been available when they were a child living with vitiligo.

"I wrote this inspirational picture book from the perspective of how I wish I were confident and comfortable about my skin condition," Rivera said. The purpose of "I Absolutely Positively Love My Spots," is to encourage, inspire, and educate children about vitiligo, whether they have the skin disorder or not, and to share how we should all embrace our uniqueness, as well as others in order to promote kindness, encourage self-love, and bring bullying to an end. I hope every reader learns to celebrate their differences and realize we were all born to stand out, not fit in."

Unfortunately, other children who encountered her during childhood thought she was weird, ugly, or that her

condition was something contagious. Rivera's book deal with HarperCollins has afforded her the opportunity to raise awareness about vitiligo. By incorporating her passion and purpose, the vitiligo advocate feels that she is doing her part in making the world better than she found it.

"I've always enjoyed writing, but now to incorporate passion and purpose, I feel that I am doing my part in making the world better than I found it. I am overjoyed, to say the least, yet I am more excited for the child reading this book and finding happiness from within and acceptance for their own skin," Rivera said.

"I Absolutely Positively Love My Spots" can be purchased at Target, Walmart, Barnes and Noble, Books-A-Million, independent bookstores, and anywhere books are sold. Visit <https://www.lidyacriviera.com/childrens-book> to keep up-to-date with Rivera's book tour locations and dates. Follow the book's Instagram page at @iaplmschildrensbook and Rivera's Instagram page @lidya.c.rivera.













*Lid'ya Rivera as a baby.
Photo courtesy of Lid'ya Rivera*



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Could It Be That Jared Kushner OR 'Legacy' Offspring Took Your Ivy League Slot?

By Dr. Joanne Martin, cofounder of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum



Dr. Joanne Martin, Courtesy photo

The notion that affirmative action is a new phenomenon is one of the myths surrounding a policy whose definition is murky and fraught with myths and misinformation.

The term affirmative action was first used in 1935, and though education is largely the focus of the nation's current affirmative action debate, the origins of the term are rooted in employment law. The term first appeared in the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which proclaimed that employers using discriminatory labor practices would be required to take appropriate affirmative actions.

So much of the historical journey that leads to the June 2023 Supreme Court's Affirmative Action decision begins in Baltimore with our own Thurgood Marshall. In a real sense, Thurgood Marshall helped lay the foundation for the current concept of

affirmative action. In that vein, it would be interesting to know what the future justice would have said about the Supreme Court's decision that considering race in college admissions programs is unconstitutional.

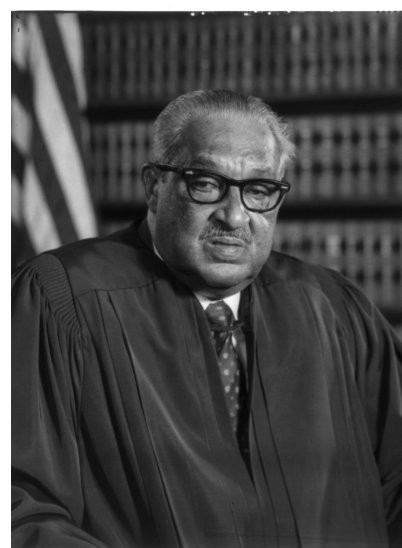
It was, after all, Thurgood Marshall who was rejected from the University of Maryland Law School because he was not white. In truth, there never seemed to be an issue with race-based admissions when it came to rejecting the likes of a Thurgood Marshall or other Blacks to schools created for whites.

Fortunately, for Thurgood Marshall this discriminatory act paved the way for him to come under the mentorship of Charles Hamilton Houston, Dean of the Howard University Law School. Houston encouraged him and the other law students to view law as a vehicle for social change. And so, they did! Their work under Houston's guidance would lead to the landmark 1954 decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which rejected the separate but equal doctrine and held segregation in public education unconstitutional.

One of Thurgood Marshall's first legal victories would be *Murray v. Pearson* (1935), a suit accusing the University of Maryland Law School of violating the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause by denying Donald Murray, an African American applicant, admission to the law school on the basis of race.

Other successful suits would follow, further connecting Marshall to the evolution of affirmative action and its objective of achieving full and fair participation of women and minorities.

Many people find it disheartening that Clarence Thomas would be selected to occupy the seat held by Thurgood Marshall. Justice Marshall fit comfortably among a liberal



*Thurgood Marshall,
Associate Justice of the
Supreme Court of the US
Photo: Library of Congress*

majority. Justice Clarence Thomas is quite at home on today's Supreme Court dominated by a conservative, right wing majority. In fact, the two men are polar opposites and a stark study in contrasts.

Thurgood Marshall's career prior to becoming a Supreme Court Justice was mainly as a lawyer for the NAACP. Arguing and winning 29 of 32 civil rights cases before the Supreme Court, he amassed a record as a strong protector of individual rights, voting rights, and civil rights.

Ironically, before becoming a Supreme Court Judge, Clarence Thomas worked as chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Liberal Democrats and civil right groups repeatedly accused him of not aggressively enforcing anti-discrimination laws and of failing to demonstrate a commitment to civil rights and civil liberties. Thomas was vocal in his opinion that racial quotas

and affirmative action programs patronized Blacks. "According to the Center for American Progress, Thomas' positions in the court's recent civil rights cases demonstrate that he may be more opposed than any other justice to the government's consideration of race in programs that help African Americans."

Like John Roberts and the Court's other conservative justices, Clarence Thomas' rulings reflect the myth that the pre-1965 conditions of racial discrimination that led to the Voting Rights Act or to affirmative action, no longer exist or are no longer relevant today. Thus, Thomas voted with the rest of the right wingers in *Shelby County v. Holder* to strike down the "pre-clearance" requirement of the Voting Rights Act. The court ruled that the pre-clearance requirement was outdated and no longer necessary since there is no longer blatant discrimination against "certain" voters. Thus, destroying the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Another point of difference between the two African American Supreme Court Justices is on the subject of affirmative action. Thurgood Marshall stated that affirmative measures, such as busing students to ensure diversity in schools are necessary. Clarence Thomas, on the other hand, asserts that affirmative action violates the constitutional rights of white students.

Ultimately, a major outcome of the quest by right wing conservative jurists to strike down affirmative action via the Supreme Court has perhaps been, inadvertently, an effort to erase an essential part of the legacy of Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. I predict that history will speak more kindly of Thurgood Marshall than of John Roberts and his Right Wing Gang of Five. Stay tuned!

Elder Abuse

Be NICE and NOT MEAN Let's All Work Together To Protect Our Seniors

By Ursula V. Battle

Elder abuse is any form of mistreatment that results in harm or loss to an older person and refers to intentional or neglectful acts by a caregiver or "trusted" individual that may lead to harmful outcomes.

Baltimore County Health Officer Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch talked about the importance of not being MEAN (Mistreat, Exploit, Abandon, Neglect) to our vulnerable elders, but instead the importance of being NICE (Nurturing, Integrity, Compassion, empathy).

"We all know that abuse comes in various forms, but some people resort to being downright MEAN to the elderly," said Dr. Branch who also serves as Director for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). "Preventing and reporting elder abuse is everyone's responsibility."

HHS promotes health and prevents disease through education, advocacy, linkage to resources, and treatment to improve the quality of life for Baltimore County residents.

"We all must keep our eyes and ears open to see what we see and don't see and to hear what we hear and don't hear," said Dr. Branch. "Each of us has a responsibility to report suspected abuse."

According to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), elder abuse is a silent problem that robs seniors of their dignity, security, and in some cases, their lives. The mission of NCOA is to improve the lives of older adults and to impact the health and economic security of 40 million older adults by 2030, particularly in underserved communities.



Gregory Wm. Branch, M.D., MBA, CPE, FACP, Baltimore County Health Officer and Director for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Courtesy Photo

Signs of elder abuse include: depression; confusion; withdrawal; isolation from family and friends; unexplained bruises; burns or scars; malnourishment; bed sores; poor medical care; and changes in banking or spending patterns.

According to the Maryland Office of the Attorney General, which enforces the state's antitrust, consumer protection and securities laws, one in five seniors over age 65 have been the victims of fraud. The Maryland Office of the Attorney General estimates seniors are losing a staggering \$2.9 billion a year to identity thieves and con artists.

Dr. Branch said that studies show that for every one case of elder abuse that is reported to authorities, 24 cases go undetected or unreported.

"We work with our sister agencies to try to ensure the health and safety of

our elderly Baltimore County residents," said Dr. Branch. "We stand on the shoulders of our elders. Yet, there are those who abuse and exploit our older citizens."

Individuals who suspect abuse or neglect should call our Baltimore County Department of Social Services' Information, Referral and Screening number at 410-887-TIME (8463). Experienced screeners take information needed to assess each situation and determine the appropriate course of action.

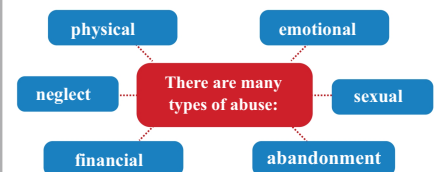
In addition, County residents who are homeless (or in danger of becoming homeless) can call 410-887-8463 to receive a shelter needs assessment, referral to available resources, and/or information about available homeless shelter beds in Baltimore County.

"The Baltimore County Department of Social Services stands ready to help those in our community that are vulnerable," said Dr. Branch. "We are our brothers' keeper and have a responsibility to say something when we suspect someone is at risk of abuse or neglect. The TIME is always right to make the call."

For more information about these and other resources offered by HHS, [tps://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/health/](https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/health/). To learn more about the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division including how to protect yourself, to report fraud or abuse, and other resources, visit www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/seniors.aspx.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF ELDER ABUSE

Abuse can happen to any older person, by a loved one, a hired caregiver, or a stranger. Abuse can happen at home, at a relative's home, or in an eldercare facility.



Watch for these signs of abuse:



► Seems **depressed, confused, or withdrawn**



► **Isolated** from friends and family



Has **unexplained bruises, burns, or scars**



Appears **dirty, underfed, dehydrated, over- or undermedicated**, or not receiving needed care for medical problems



Has **bed sores** or other preventable conditions



► Recent **changes in banking or spending patterns**

Talk with the older adult and then contact the local Adult Protective Services, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, or the police.

Visit <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/topics/elder-abuse> to learn more about elder abuse and how to get help.



Building a Path to Generational Wealth Through Homeownership

Homeownership has long been a symbol of the American dream. Our homes often represent far more than just shelter – they are central to family life and building strong communities.

The economic impact of homeownership can't be overlooked either. Homes are the largest source of wealth for Americans, which makes buying a home one of the most important steps people can take toward creating generational wealth and securing their family's financial future. In fact, according to Chase's latest First-Time Homebuyer Study, over half (58%) of respondents are likely to purchase a home in the next 12 months and 70% see homeownership as an important step to building wealth.

While owning a home might be a goal for many, it can feel out of reach for those who have faced barriers to homeownership in the past. The good news is that many resources are available today to help people buy a home and stay there as long as they desire.

Here are three tips to help you qualify for a mortgage to purchase a home of your own.

1. Build and improve your credit.

It's important to know where you stand so you can make a plan to maintain, improve or build your credit. Generally, a higher credit score means you'll be able to qualify for the most competitive interest rates, which could help you save significantly. You can get a copy of your credit report for free at annualcreditreport.com, or



Photo courtesy of JPMorgan Chase & Co.

check your score through your financial institution.

If you have a low credit score, you can work on raising it by paying down credit card and loan balances and making bill payments on time. Avoid opening or looking for any new credit cards or loans while in the process of buying a home, as the credit checks required will lower your score and increase your debt-to-income ratio.

When applying for a mortgage loan, you'll be asked to submit payment history to show you have a steady income. If you're thinking of switching jobs before buying a home or while going through the buying process, consider waiting until after you have closed on your home.

2. Save for a down payment and look for financial resources.

It's a common misconception that you must put down 20% of the home price as down payment—there are many lower down payment options available, such as Chase's DreaMaker mortgage that could qualify you for down payments as low as 3%. However, keep in mind that the more you pay upfront, the less your monthly mortgage payment will be. Look for online mortgage calculators or speak to a lending professional to get an idea of how different down payments could affect your mortgage.

Take the time to research financial resources that may be available to you. Many state and local governments offer first-time homebuyer programs, which encourage residents to buy

within their home state, with incentives that can include covering a down payment or lower interest rates. Lender-backed financial resources may be available, too.

3. Find the mortgage option that works for you.

One mortgage doesn't fit all, and there are many options to suit all lifestyles and budgets. A 30-year conventional mortgage is most common, but you can also get a loan term of 10, 15 or 20 years.

Some mortgages have a fixed interest rate, which means it doesn't change over the life of the loan. There are also adjustable rate mortgages, which usually offer lower interest rates in the beginning,

but adjust at certain intervals over time, typically increasing your overall payment. Get in touch with a lending professional who can help you understand your options.

The bottom line

Starting the homebuying process can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to do it alone. There are many tools, resources and professionals dedicated to helping you achieve the goal of homeownership.

For more tips and information on home buying, visit chase.com/mortgage, and try out the Homebuyer Assistance Finder at chase.com/affordable.

Empowering the local workforce

We've invested nearly \$100 million in workforce development. Alongside hundreds of other employers and community partners, we're increasing the talent pipeline by helping our neighbors get the skills and experience to build careers that support families and fuel our economy.



Here in Greater Maryland, we're investing in our community by investing in people's futures. I'm proud of the work we're doing to help train and identify talent for in-demand careers by contributing to local initiatives through employer and academic partners.

Janet

Janet Currie
President, Bank of America Greater Maryland

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Honoring National Fried Chicken Day, July 6

Readers Who Love to Cook and Eat Fried Chicken Submit Recipes

By Andrea Blackstone

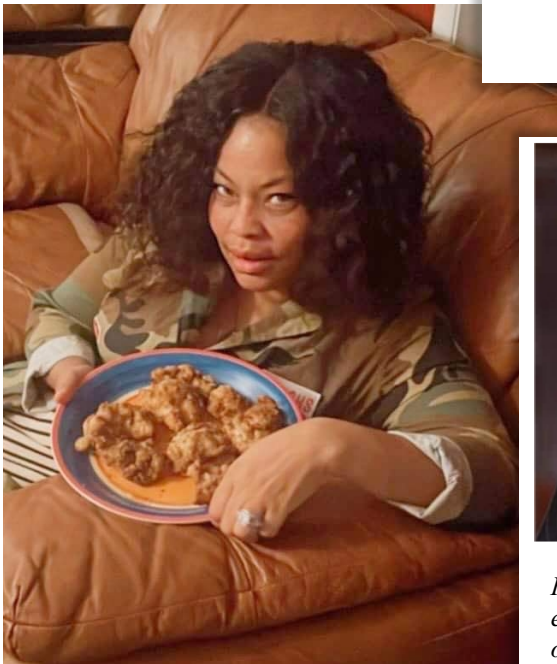
National Fried Chicken Day was on Thursday, July 6, 2023. Although it is officially observed in the United States on this day, the comfort food remains a popular favorite throughout the year. Across America, fried chicken recipes can be found in cookbooks and there is no shortage of restaurants that serve fried chicken, especially in the South. Fried chicken also remains a favorite to make at home. Dr. CaSandra Vaughn and Valerie Mullins share their tasty recipes and perspective about how they arrived at making homestyle fried chicken.

Dr. CaSandra Vaughn

Dr. CaSandra Vaughn and her father, Rev. Dr. Alfred C.D. Vaughn often cooked together since it was relaxing for the late reverend. He had been



A plate of "Vaughn Crispy Chicken."
Photo credit: Jerimiah Thomas



Dr. CaSandra Vaughn, co-creator of Vaughn Crispy Chicken enjoys the recipe that she cooks at home.

Photo credit: Jerimiah Thomas



Rev. Dr. Alfred C.D. Vaughn passed away earlier this year. He served as Senior Pastor of Sharon Baptist Church in Baltimore. Dr. CaSandra Vaughn is his daughter who enjoyed cooking with her father. The pair created "Vaughn Crispy Chicken."

Photo credit: Dr. CaSandra Vaughn

cooking with his daughter since she was a teenager.

"The dinner table has always been a staple in the Black community, and until death, daddy made sure that was our one equal ground," CaSandra said.

CaSandra is a television talk show host and publicist who recalls always paying attention to her father in the kitchen.

She recalled her father saying that "cooking not only feeds your family, but feeds your soul."

Some of her best memories and lessons were created while the father and daughter cooked together.

"It was our time when my dad wasn't a pastor. He was just daddy," CaSandra said. "Cooking together positively impacts and creates a bond for children and parents because it gives parents an opportunity to teach lessons without lecturing. It gives a fun way of comparing life issues with methods of cooking."

Pastor Vaughn passed away on March 19, 2023. CaSandra unpacks her memories of time spent with her father. She still loves making "Vaughn Crispy Chicken," which is a recipe that the close pair created together. CaSandra reminds us that fried chicken is a soul food tradition, so cooks should use their

soul filled with love when they prepare it. The chicken recipe gives a sweet and savory flavor with a hint of spice, according to CaSandra.

"I enjoyed preparing this because it allows me to reminisce about moments that my dad and I shared cooking and talking about food. My dad bragged that he never used a recipe that he didn't cook from the heart and my dad had a huge heart that impacted the world," CaSandra said.

Vaughn Crispy Chicken

Preparation time: 60 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

8-12 chicken breasts
4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup of apple cider vinegar
1 cup of water
2 tablespoons of garlic powder
2 tablespoons of Old Bay Seasoning
2 tablespoons of McCormick Montreal Seasoning
2 tablespoons of honey barbecue
2 tablespoons of ground turmeric
1 tablespoon of parsley
3 teaspoons of black pepper
1 teaspoon of pink Himalayan salt
Olive Oil for frying

In a shallow glass dish, mix 1/2 cup of apple cider vinegar and water. Soak chicken in the mixture for 30 minutes. Rinse the chicken off and place in a separate bowl. Pour all of the seasoning except the parsley on the chicken. Spread seasoning on the chicken breasts until seasoning covers all of the chicken. Set seasoned chicken in the refrigerator for 10 minutes. Pour the olive oil into a pan and heat. Pour 4 cups of flour into a glass bowl. Place the chicken breasts in the flour and mix to evenly distribute the flour on each piece. Use cooking tongs to place each piece in the pan. Cook on each side for 7 minutes until thoroughly cooked. Remove each piece from the pan and place on a napkin. Dab excess grease off. Place chicken on a serving dish and sprinkle the parsley on top.

Valerie Mullins

Val's Healthy Air Fried Chicken is a recipe that was created by Valerie Mullins, a busy resident of Virginia who always loved her late mother's fried chicken. Lucinda Collier, who once worked in a school cafeteria, told her daughter that it was better to learn how to cook than to buy prepared food.

"She started me off cooking bacon and eggs. Then, I learned to prepare Jell-O, cakes, easy pies and chocolate chip cookies. Then, she taught me how to make fried chicken by watching her," Mullins said, reflecting on her childhood growing up in Long Island, New York.

Last year, Mullins created a modified chicken recipe of her own

after reading one that was included with a tiny Ninja air fryer that she purchased. Mullins made a conscious effort to skip using a skillet to fry chicken with grease popping in exchange for air fried chicken. Since she is currently monitoring her cholesterol intake, Mullins proposes the idea of cooking a healthier version of fried chicken that is appetizing without sacrificing a flavorful, favorite dish.

"I suggest people invest in an air fryer," Mullins said. "Enjoy great tasting Southern fried chicken using an air fryer."

Mullins also mentioned that an older child could also cook her recipe that is large enough to make a small serving of fried chicken with a miniature air fryer.



Valerie Mullins used a small air fryer to make a healthier fried chicken recipe. Photo by Andrea Blackstone



Valerie Mullins holds a batch of her fried chicken. Photo by Andrea Blackstone

Val's Healthy Air Fried Chicken

- Rinse a small package of party wingettes well with water and a little white vinegar.
- Use two medium sized bowls
- In one bowl add 1/2 cup arrowroot
- Add two pinches of Himalayan sea salt
- Add two pinches of coarse black pepper
- Add two pinches of Seasoning Salt (or smoked paprika for spicy flavor)
- In the second bowl, add egg wash or egg whites made from four cracked eggs.
- Dip chicken pieces individually in the egg wash and then roll in arrowroot.
- Arrange pieces of chicken in an air fryer.

(Mullins recommends using parchment paper or air fryer liners in the air fryer). Cook approximately 14 minutes on each side until golden brown. Cooking time varies based on the size of chicken pieces and the type of air fryer. Enjoy golden brown crunchy chicken without the oil!

40+ Years in Gospel Radio and Still a 'Hit'

By Ursula V. Battle

Part 1 of a 2-Part series on WEAA Gospel on-air personality Ernestine Jones.

WEAA Gospel on-air radio personality Ernestine Jones vividly recalls how her broadcasting career began.

"I always listened to the radio and wanted to be a news reporter," said Jones. "So when I was in my early 30's, I had a cassette player with a microphone. I got a newspaper and recorded myself reading some local news, sports and weather."

She continued, "I had no appointment, but took the cassette to a gospel station I always listened to called WBGR, where Bishop Naomi Durant was in charge, Kelson 'Hot Rod' Fisher was the

Undeterred, Jones said she stayed and waited to see the late Bishop Durant who passed away in 2020.

"I sat at the door and did not leave because I knew that Bishop Durant was getting ready to end her radio shift," said Jones. "When I saw Bishop Durant coming out of the on-air studio, I jumped up from the chair, got in her face and begged her to listen to my cassette and tell me if I had any talent. Bishop Durant sternly told me to leave because I did not have an appointment."

However, what happened next would "chart" Jones' career.

"I turned toward the door," said Jones. "When I touched the door knob, Bishop Durant yelled 'Hey Miss, I remember that's how I got started in this business by bogarting my way to the top, so I will listen to your cassette. Come into my office.' Now I was shaking like a leaf when she called me into her office. Hot Rod and Lee Michaels also came in. They all listened and I was hired that day on the spot."

What followed has been a broadcasting career that has spanned 40 years and counting. Jones has spent over 30 of those years at Morgan State University on WEAA 88.9 FM. The legendary broadcaster is on the air from 5 a.m. until 7 a.m. and hosts "Gospel Grace at Daybreak."

"Radio has opened doorways for me to reach people through the songs I play on the air," said Jones. "The songs I play touch and inspire them. So many people have called to tell me the songs I play have lifted them and their loved ones while they were in the hospital and were a source of encouragement. For me, to touch people, inspire them and motivate them through the songs I choose to play, has been and is the most uplifting thing in my

life. Songs like "We Fall Down" by Donnie McClurkin which lets us know that we all have problems in the fall, but we can get back up."

While WBGR Radio launched her career, her love for music and broadcasting dates back to when she was



Music has always been a love of Jones, who played the tuba at Western High School. Courtesy Photo

a child singing in the choir at her late father's church.

"During my early years, I was moved by the news, but even more amazed at the newscasters," said Jones. "I would listen to news on the radio and watch the newscasters constantly on the television instead of going out of the house to be with others. I was fascinated at how clearly the enunciation of words were expressed. While attending school I always wanted to speak clearly and even when taking French classes at Pimlico Junior High School, I made it a point to pronounce French words so exact, and was even labeled the teacher's pet for always getting 100's on tests and sounding like I actually came from France."

Jones is a graduate of Western High School where she mastered the tuba; was a part of the band/orchestra; was selected to be in the BSO; and sang with Souls for Victory Gospel Choir. She is a graduate of Baltimore City

College and earned several scholarships to attend Morgan State University. She attends the Huber Memorial Church, where the Rev. Dr. P.M. Smith is pastor. The recently retired paralegal is married and has been a member of Huber Memorial Church for over 20 years. She serves on the Television Ministry and is the voice-over announcer for Huber's on-air "Living Hope" television broadcast on WMAR-TV Channel 2.

"What God has for you, it is for you!" exclaimed Jones noting that 1st Corinthians 2:9: which says "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" is her favorite scripture. "I want my story to inspire others to follow their dreams."

Coming next week: Part 2.



Jones in the studio of WEAA 88.9 FM where she has worked for over 30 years. Courtesy Photo

assistant and Lee Michaels was the on-air personality. When I got there with no appointment, the secretary told me that Bishop Durant did not see anyone without an appointment."



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Black Mental Health Alliance, A Resource to Remember

By Andrea Blackstone

July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month.

Although stigmatizing people who need mental health healing should have faded into nothingness long ago, even discussing mental illness can still be challenging in homes and in communities. However, therapy is not a dirty word.

The Office of Minority Health (OMH) noted that American author and mental health advocate Bebe Moore Campbell "was driven to bring awareness to the unique mental health struggles of racial and ethnic minority communities through her personal experiences with a family member's mental illness."

Moore, a founding member of the National Alliance on Mental Illness Urban Los Angeles, died in 2006.

The U.S. House of Representatives announced July as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month in 2008. It recognized that "improved access to mental health treatment and services and public awareness of mental illness are of paramount importance."

Plenty of work remains. Empowering Black people to experience increased compassion, support and optimal mental health is undeniably an important task.

"African Americans are 20 percent more likely to have serious psychological distress than Whites are" and "African Americans' depressive occurrences are more disabling, persistent, and resistant to treatment than those experienced by Whites," per National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

Andrea Brown, the executive director of Baltimore-based Black Mental Health Alliance (BMHA), leads a nonprofit that continues the work of helping individuals, families and children with their mental health needs.

"Our vision really is to develop culturally relevant educational training and seminars, so that Black people and brown [people], but specifically Black people, really are able to realize optimal mental health. The core of what we do is training, but we also have a referral program and a therapist database. So, we've got an expansive database of culturally competent and patient-centered, licensed mental health professionals," Brown said.

It is critical to note that it can be more difficult to connect with a Black therapist because the numbers of available clinicians changed because of pandemic burnout. Additionally, Brown explained that the digital divide can be a huge barrier.

"There are times where teletherapy is available, but because the Internet in some urban areas is just poor, the digital divide is real," Brown said, also noting

that it can also be problematic in rural locations.

BMHA's value is immeasurable to those who seek referrals that are provided with a human touch through a concierge approach. After individuals fill out what resembles a questionnaire, they are asked a series of questions to pair them with clinicians, or even a healing circle.

"Those are things that we do culturally to be able to wrap our arms around Black people," Brown said. "We make referrals across the country." Another resource is community conversations—a forum to share the truth about mental health and wellness in the Black community and the risks in not addressing the trauma.

"It is centered around a Zulu greeting, 'Sawubona.' It means 'I see you.'" Some post-pandemic offerings are now available online.

Another benefit of connecting with BMHA for members who are clinicians is continuing education units through the nonprofit. Additionally, programs are offered for young people.

Brown added that cultural differences in mental health support do exist. Dr. Maxie Collier, the first Black health commissioner for Baltimore City, who was also a licensed psychiatrist was BMHA's principal founder. Fikre Workhen, a social worker from Ethiopia, and Senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, a registered nurse, were thought leaders who assisted with developing trainings for workshops and forums. Senator Nathan-Pulliam leveraged her work in the General Assembly to appoint a task force to examine health disparities in communities of color which included mental health.

Collier made observations about mental illness misdiagnosis of Black men and boys. The trio wanted therapy to be viewed through a culturally competent lens.

"They concluded that culturally-competent mental health providers were scarce and that increased training would increase this pool," per information provided on BMHA's website.

Brown added that since life experiences that Black and brown people have are very different from those of their counterparts, therapy must be examined "from the lens of systemic racism."

BMHA turns 40 on December 9, 2023.

"But then in January, we will announce our healing tour. And so, we're going to certain cities in the country, to host workshops," Brown said.

Community resources and speakers will be integrated into hosted offerings. Establishing details are in development. There are a number of things planned in the upcoming year for the community.

Visit www.blackmentalhealth.com for more information about BMHA.



*Andrea Brown, executive director of the
Black Mental Health Alliance
Photo Credit: Jermaine Gibbs Photography*

Rambling Rose

BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON ONE CARIBBEAN 3-DAY FESTIVAL IS COMING TO DRUID HILL PARK



By Rosa Pryor

Hello my friends,
My goodness! This is going to be a heavy-duty week that will keep you jumping up and down, doing the James Brown, starting with Dr. Elaine Simon's Baltimore-Washington Caribbean Festival. What a way to start a weekend. The 2023 Baltimore Washington One Carnival is an annual Caribbean-centric event that draws thousands of spectators and participants to Druid Hill Park and the surrounding areas in Baltimore. Officially known as the Baltimore Washington One Carnival, 2023 marks this event's 42nd year which is organized by the Caribbean American Carnival Association of Baltimore, in conjunction with the DC Caribbean Carnival Committee. Carnival depicts Caribbean cultural expressions, historical significance and the most memorable, compelling performances by masqueraders and the community marching bands. Optimism and pride are the hallmarks that drive the Caribbean Festival, renowned for its colorful ethnic parade with creative and talented participants. Their efforts to promote their rich heritage and culture made the process of assimilation a much easier experience for the Caribbean people. Thousands of residents and visitors line the street with great anticipation for the parade to lead them to the festival site. Throughout the Baltimore-Washington One Carnival Festival, attendees get to enjoy live music and performances on stage and have access to plenty of mouth-watering Caribbean cuisine and a variety of arts & craft vendors.

I have had the joy of covering this event for 36 years, and I have always found it very exciting to see the different costumes, handmade by the many individuals who are wearing them, the music and the parade are one of a kind. The carnival brings you the sights, sounds and food of a Trinidad style street carnival. You will experience firsthand the rich culture of the Caribbean, spectacular costume, joyous revelry, and a generous dash of international flavor will once again bring the community plenty of spice that will dazzle all your senses. I will say the best example of this phenomenon is the festival's parade, which will mesmerize you and those who participate as masqueraders, drummers, stilt walkers, floats, steel bands and everyday folks in the community. You will forget all your problems just for a little while. The Baltimore Caribbean Carnival Festival is an annual 3-day event starting at noon with a parade on Saturday, July 8th surrounding Druid Hill Park. I will see you there!

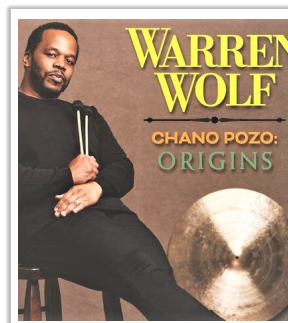
Now let me talk about a group of my musical children, named the Palovations. I personally worked with these three guys back in the day. I am so happy to know they are still together and doing well. Avery Yancy is one of the original group members and the leader of this trio. The group once had five members and now has three. They concentrate mostly on performing songs from the Motown era, specifically The Temptations. The members are Avery Yancy, Michael Thomas and Eugene Baily. They call him "Sonny." There will be more written about this fantastic group in my later Rambling Rose column," but right now before I run out of space, I want to invite you to their show at City View, located at 6700 Security Blvd. in Gwynn Oak, Maryland every Friday, starting Friday July 7 from 6-10 p.m. Admission is free. Miss Maybelle is the mistress of ceremony. We will see you there.

I've got to go folks. See you soon. Remember, if you need me, call me at 410-833-9474 or email me at rosapryor@aol.com. UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.



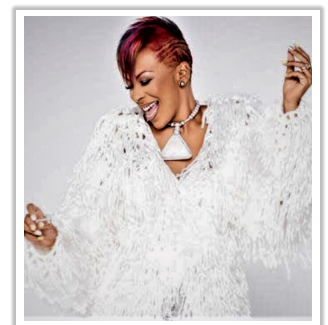
Baltimore-Washington Caribbean Festival is back in Baltimore Druid Hill Park this year beginning with a Caribbean-style parade on Saturday, July 8, 2023.

The Palovations, Baltimore's own renowned singing group, will set the stage on fire with their one-of-a-kind show on Friday, July 7, 2023 and every Friday this month at City View, located at 6700 Security Blvd. in Baltimore from 6-10 p.m. Free admission.



Warren Wolf's "Chano Pozo: Origins" CD release celebration with Alex Brown, Blake Meister, Brent Birkhead, Charles Wilson and Imani-Grace Cooper will be held at Keystone Korner, located at 1350 Lancaster Street in Baltimore on Friday and Saturday, July 7-8, 2023 from 7-9:30 p.m.

Sylvester Logan Sharp, the legendary lead singer from CHIC, is celebrating her wedding anniversary and birthday at Keystone Korner on Sunday, July 9, 2023 from 5-7:30 p.m. at an All White Party.



Tim Green, renowned saxophonist with Ethel Bailey, Alex Brown, Jeff Reed and one of Rosa Pryor Music Scholarship Fund, Inc.'s Success Son, Quincy Phillips will be performing at Keystone Korner, located at 1350 Lancaster Street in Baltimore on Wednesday, July 12, 2023.

Food Poisoning Poses Greater Threat to African Americans

By Jane Hopson

It is a well-known fact that Black patients suffer from higher rates of hypertension, diabetes, kidney disease and other chronic illnesses. While “most cases of food poisoning are not fatal and typically result in mild symptoms that resolve without medical intervention, pre-existing diseases like high blood pressure and kidney disease can lead to severe complications and death” says the World Health Organization (WHO).

Food poisoning is entirely preventable. “These dangerous and sometimes deadly outbreaks could have been prevented,” says Bill Marler, food safety lawyer and publisher of “Food Safety News.” Yet, Marler says “each year, millions in America are sickened from food-borne pathogens such as E. coli O157:H7, salmonella and listeria. The cause of the outbreak is usually a contaminated food source, an unsanitary processing or storage facility or unclean food handling.”



Jane Hopson
Courtesy Photo

Marler’s name may be unfamiliar, but the 1993 lawsuits he won on behalf of hundreds who became ill after eating contaminated Jack in the Box burgers are well-known. In addition to securing settlements worth over 50 million dollars, Marler has successfully implemented stricter inspections, better enforcement of regulations, and is

credited with requiring improved testing methods to prevent foodborne illnesses.

It is fair to say our food supply is safer because of Marler’s advocacy. Nevertheless, the integrity of our food supply should not be taken for granted. Although foodborne illnesses may not grab headlines “it is an ongoing public health problem. This is especially true for underserved patient populations suffering from high rates of chronic illnesses,” says Marler.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the federal agency responsible for tracking and investigating foodborne illnesses. They operate surveillance systems, conduct outbreak investigations, and provide guidance and resources to prevent and respond to foodborne diseases.

Food poisoning can exacerbate symptoms and complications of various underlying diseases. While the specific impact can vary depending on individual circumstances, here are some examples of diseases that may be worsened by food poisoning from the CDC:

- **Gastrointestinal Disorders:** Individuals with pre-existing gastrointestinal conditions, such as inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn’s disease, ulcerative colitis), irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), or gastroenteritis, may experience aggravated symptoms due to food poisoning. Diarrhea, abdominal pain, vomiting and overall digestive distress can be intensified.
- **Diabetes:** Food poisoning can disrupt blood sugar control, potentially causing fluctuations in glucose levels in individuals with diabetes. Diarrhea and vomiting can lead to dehydration, making it challenging to maintain stable blood sugar levels. Moreover, certain bacterial infections associated with food poisoning may affect insulin production or utilization.
- **Kidney Disease:** People with kidney disease, especially those on dialysis or with reduced kidney function, may face complications from food poisoning. Bacterial infections caused by foodborne pathogens can strain the kidneys and worsen renal

function. Dehydration due to diarrhea and vomiting can also impact kidney health.

- **Immune Disorders:** Individuals with compromised immune systems, such as those with HIV/AIDS, organ transplants, or undergoing chemotherapy, are more susceptible to severe complications from food poisoning. Their weakened immune response makes it harder to fight off the infection, potentially leading to more severe symptoms and prolonged illness.
- **Liver Disease:** Liver disease, including cirrhosis, hepatitis, or fatty liver disease, can be worsened by food poisoning. Infections from certain foodborne pathogens may impair liver function and contribute to liver damage. Additionally, dehydration and electrolyte imbalances resulting from food poisoning can negatively affect the liver.

The CDC adds “It’s important to note that these conditions do not necessarily make individuals more prone to food poisoning, but rather food poisoning can worsen their existing health issues.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for protecting public health by ensuring the safety of food, drugs, and medical devices. They provide the following guidance related to food safety:

Cleanliness and Hygiene:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before handling food, after using the restroom and after touching pets.
- Clean and sanitize kitchen surfaces, cutting boards, utensils and dishes regularly.
- Wash fruits and vegetables under running water before consumption.

Safe Food Storage:

- Store raw meats, poultry and seafood separately from ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination.



Photo Credit: Shutterstock

- Keep the refrigerator temperature below 40°F (4°C) and freezer temperature at 0°F (-18°C) to slow down bacterial growth.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly (within two hours) in shallow containers to cool them quickly.

Proper Cooking:

- Use a food thermometer to ensure that meat, poultry, seafood and egg dishes are cooked to the appropriate internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.
- Avoid consuming raw or undercooked eggs, meat, or seafood.

Safe Food Handling:

- Avoid cross-contamination by using separate cutting boards and utensils for raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep raw meats, poultry, and seafood away from other foods in the shopping cart and during storage.
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave using the defrost setting.

Be cautious with High-Risk Foods:

- Take extra care with high-risk foods such as raw or undercooked eggs, raw sprouts, unpasteurized dairy products, deli meats and refrigerated pâtés or meat spreads.

Practice Mindful Eating Out:

- Choose reputable restaurants and food vendors that follow proper food safety practices.
- Ensure that foods, especially meat, poultry, and seafood, are thoroughly cooked.

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Sports

Greg Lewis Already Fits in as Ravens WR Coach

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens have gone to great lengths to address their wide receiver group. The additions of free agents Nelson Agholor and Odell Beckham Jr., along with using first round pick former Boston College receiver Zay Flowers brings an influx of talent.

One move that has gone under the radar is the addition of Greg Lewis as the wide receivers coach. He's entering his ninth season as an NFL coach. Lewis comes to the Ravens after serving as the Kansas City Chiefs running backs coach in 2021 and 2022. Lewis joined the Chiefs as the receivers in 2017 and held that role until 2020.

The former NFL receiver is already settling in nicely with his new team. That's in large part thanks to a previous connection he had from his playing days as a receiver for the Philadelphia Eagles.

"What made it [Baltimore] a good fit is just being around Coach [John] Harbaugh in Philadelphia," Lewis said. "Just knowing how he operates and the expectation that he has for the organization and the team that he's in front of."

Lewis was with the Eagles from 2003 - 2008. Harbaugh was the special teams coach for the Eagles when he and Lewis were in Philadelphia. Harbaugh's final season was 2007 when he was the defensive backs coach. Reuniting with Harbaugh excites Lewis because he gets to be a part of a proven winner, especially one with so many additions to the position he's coaching.

Beckham is already impressed with his work ethic and competitiveness. It actually caused Harbaugh to compare Beckham to when the Eagles added Terrell Owens en route to a Super Bowl run in 2004. The common thread is how hard they worked. Lewis has had



*Greg Lewis, Baltimore Ravens wide receiver coach.
Photo courtesy of BaltimoreRavens.com*

extensive conversations with Beckham and chose to allow those to remain private, but the one thing Lewis did say, is that Beckham has a consistently positive approach.

Then there's the rookie, Flowers. Lewis has already been impressed with Flowers' explosiveness and quickness. He said it's been fantastic working with Flowers who he categorized as an "eager learner that wants to be great."

"It's a tight-knit group. They care about one another, they want to see each other do well, and that's been a positive," Lewis explained. "The 15th guy is getting helped by the first guy, or the second guy is getting helped by the 14th guy, or it could be vice versa. And you love that with guys at this level – to help each other get better – because iron sharpens iron, and we want to be the best we can be."

Baltimore needs as much help as they can get at receiver. Tight end Mark Andrews once again led the team with 73 receptions, 847 yards and five touchdowns. Their leading receiver last year was Demarcus Robinson who

finished with 49 receptions, 458 yards and two touchdowns.

Fortunately, Devin Duvernay is returning after scoring three touchdowns last year, the most among all receivers. Duvernay injured his foot during practice in December and was placed on injured reserve. He's working his way back. Lewis called Duvernay a "true pro" and credited him for his professionalism on the field as well as the classroom. The group has plenty of versatility for Lewis to work with. Assistant wide receivers coach Keith Williams is there to help. Williams used to train various NFL receivers before joining the Ravens. One of the receivers that Williams trained was former Chiefs and Ravens receiver Sammy Watkins. That's how Lewis became familiar with Williams. Now they're working together. "I've learned a tremendous amount from him. He sees it from a different angle than I see it at times, and that's a positive, because you grow together. I say stuff, and he learns stuff, and then he says stuff, and I learn stuff, and that's helping our group get better," Lewis said.

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