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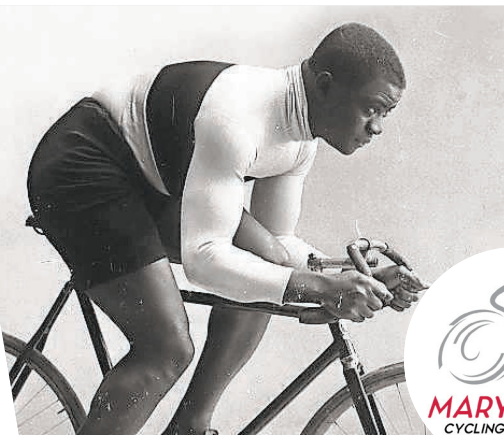


THE BALTIMORE TIMES

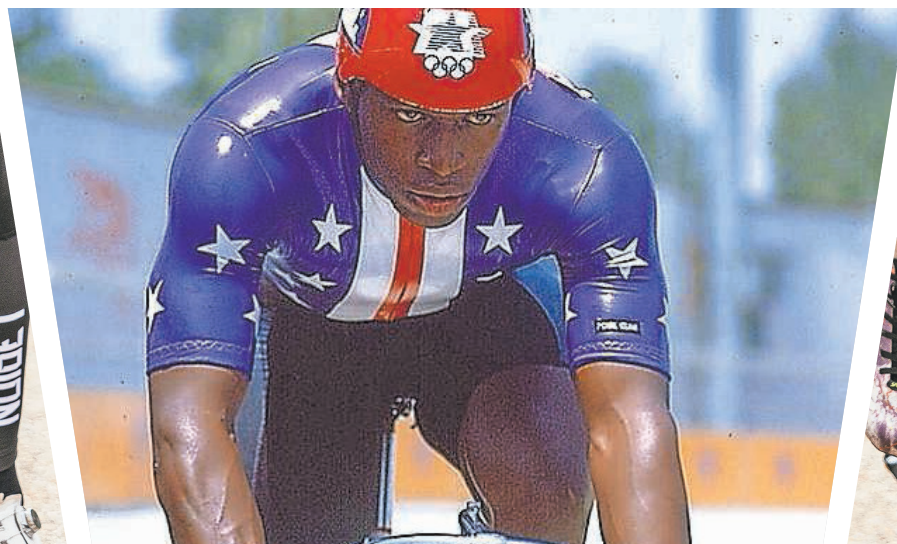
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CELEBRATING BLACK CYCLISTS



BREAKING BARRIERS ON TWO WHEELS:

Marshall "Major" Taylor and the Triumph of Black Cyclists

By Peter Bramble

In the annals of sports history, certain figures shine like beacons of inspiration, transcending boundaries and overcoming adversity to etch their names into the collective memory. Among these luminaries is the remarkable Marshall "Major" Taylor, the first Black cyclist to achieve international fame and break barriers on the velodromes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His journey from humble beginnings to becoming a global sensation serves as a testament to the human spirit's resilience and the power of passion.

Born on November 26, 1878, in Indianapolis, Indiana, Taylor's early life was marked by both the trials of racial segregation and the joys of discovering his affinity for cycling. His talent emerged early, with the local bicycle shop owner noticing his exceptional riding skills. This serendipitous encounter would set the wheels in motion for Taylor's meteoric rise through the ranks of competitive cycling.

However, the path was far from smooth for Taylor. The era in which he lived was rife with systemic racism and prejudice, with the sport of cycling being no exception. Despite his undeniable skills, he encountered numerous challenges as he pursued his passion. These included outright discrimination from fellow cyclists, spectators, and even some officials. Taylor's unwavering determination, paired with his remarkable talent, allowed him to break down barriers and claim his rightful place on the world stage.

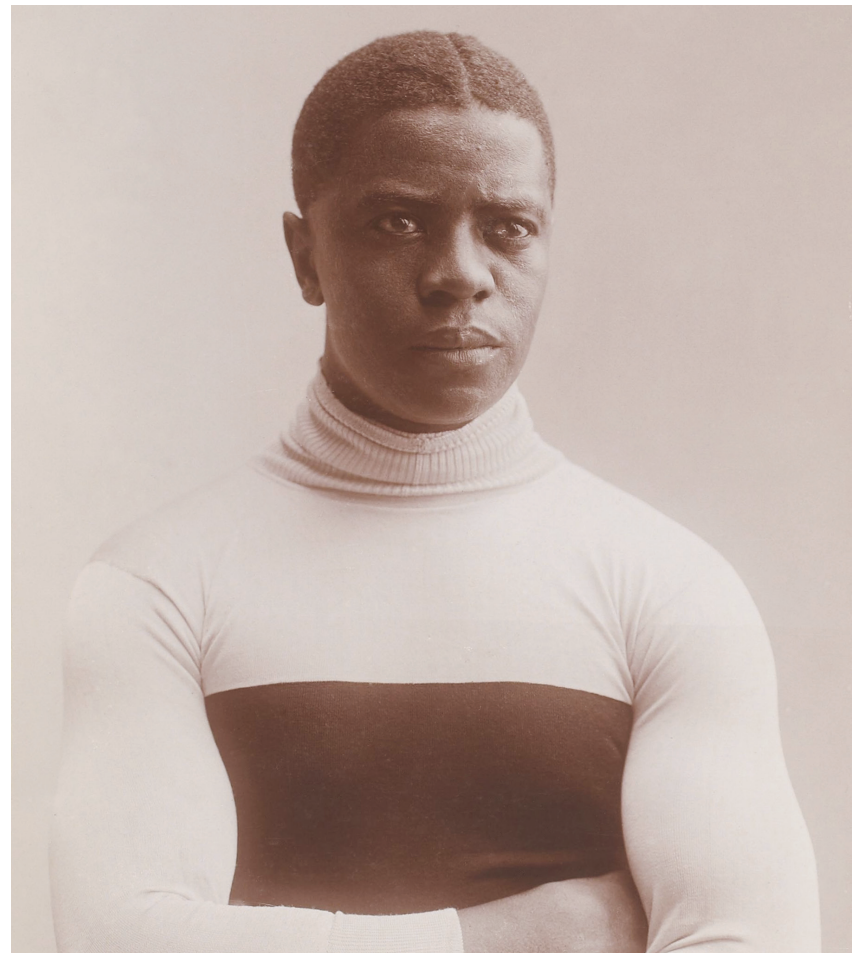
Taylor's defining moment came in 1899 when he won the prestigious

world track cycling championship in Montreal, Canada. This victory not only solidified his status as a world-class cyclist but also made him the second Black athlete to claim a world championship title – a monumental achievement at a time when racial segregation was deeply entrenched. The triumph was a resounding slap to the face of bigotry, as Taylor's unparalleled skill and unyielding spirit proved that excellence knows no racial bounds.

As his fame grew, Taylor continued to break records and set new standards in the cycling world. His exceptional speed and endurance were the stuff of legends, as he shattered numerous records and paved the way for future generations of Black cyclists. Despite the prejudice he faced, Taylor remained steadfast in his commitment to the sport, using his platform to inspire and uplift others.

Taylor's legacy extends beyond his athletic prowess. He was not only a cycling phenom but also a symbol of hope for Black communities around the world. His accomplishments opened doors that had been bolted shut for far too long. Through his dedication and triumphs, Taylor sent a powerful message: that the color of one's skin should never dictate the heights to which they can soar.

Tragically, like many trailblazers, Taylor's story was not without its share of setbacks. Financial difficulties and health challenges plagued him throughout his life, and he eventually retired from professional cycling. Yet, his impact continued to reverberate. Taylor's journey paved the way for future



Major Walter Taylor
Public Domain

generations of Black cyclists, who could now dream of reaching heights that had once seemed unattainable. His legacy continues to inspire cyclists of all backgrounds, reminding them that perseverance and talent can shatter even the most formidable barriers.

In recent years, efforts have been made to honor Taylor's legacy and ensure that his story is not forgotten. Monuments, documentaries, and educational programs have sprung up to pay tribute to his groundbreaking achievements. These initiatives serve as reminders of the importance of recognizing the contributions of individuals who have paved the way for greater inclusivity and diversity in the world of sports.

As the world moves forward, it is essential to remember figures like

Marshall "Major" Taylor – those who defied societal norms and fought against the odds to achieve greatness. Taylor's story is not just a tale of a cyclist's triumphs; it is a reminder of the power of the human spirit to transcend adversity and the importance of challenging prejudice and discrimination at every turn. His legacy lives on in the cyclists who continue to chase their dreams, in the hearts of those who refuse to be held back by their circumstances, and in the history books that recount his remarkable journey.

In celebrating the life of Marshall "Major" Taylor, we celebrate the indomitable spirit that drives us to break barriers, shatter expectations, and pedal towards a future where talent knows no prejudice and excellence knows no boundaries. He was a true Overcomer!

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SPOTLIGHTING NOTABLE BLACK CYCLISTS:

RAHSAAN BAHATI

By Demetrius Dillard

Rahsaan Bahati, one of the world's distinguished Black cyclists, couldn't be more excited to make the trip from the West Coast to Baltimore for the second annual Maryland Cycling Classic.

Last year, he participated in the Maryland Cycling Classic as a presenter and announcer, and will be doing the same this year.

"I'm excited to be back, I'm excited to visit the schools, I'm excited to do the bike rodeo, do the Bike Jam, charity ride and just be a part of that community," said Bahati, who retired as a professional cyclist about seven years ago after an 18-year career.

Born and reared in Compton, California, Bahati took interest in cycling at a young age. His endeavors took him to extraordinary heights in the sport, and now Bahati, 41, is one of the most influential Black bikers of the modern era.

After winning multiple competitions at the amateur level, Bahati's professional career began with the Mercury Cycling Team in California. He went on to compete for a few other teams and achieved massive success at the elite level, including first-place finishes in the Barrio Logan Grand Prix, Tour of the Gila (Stage 4), Chevron Manhattan Beach Grand Prix, Dana Point Grand Prix, Roger Millikan Memorial Criterium and THF Realty Gateway Cup Criterium, among others.

In 2010, Bahati founded the Bahati

Foundation to improve access to opportunities for youth in Los Angeles. He also co-founded the Los Angeles-based Methods To Winning Elite Cycling Team LLC.

The rarity of Black professional cyclists has been an ongoing topic of interest in the broader world of sports, race and culture.

"As much as I love that the race is in Baltimore, a predominantly Black community, especially when it comes into the city, we need more representation," Bahati added.

"I'm happy to be there on the grounds with a microphone showing young Black boys and girls that you don't have to be a bike racer; you could also [take up other roles in the sport]."

Summing up his experience as a Black cyclist, Bahati said he has always considered himself "a raisin in milk" — a metaphorical phrase highlighting the absence of diversity in cycling in the professional ranks.

"I always said that I was the raisin in milk," Bahati said. "I've raced in North America, South America, Central America; I raced Europe and I was always the only one."

Biking has taken Bahati around the world, and while his experiences and excursions have been nothing short of enjoyable, the theme has remained relatively consistent when lining up against opponents for a race — more often than not, he has been the only biker of color in pro competitions.

"I was racing in Belgium when it hit



Rahsaan Basati, a native of Compton, Calif., is an accomplished Black cyclist who will join the festivities for the Maryland Cycling Classic, which runs from Aug. 31 to Sept. 3, 2023.
Rahsaan Bahati

me. I was like, 'I'm a raisin in milk.' My experience — it's kind of a double-edged sword because cycling has brought me so many incredible things and opportunities, and I've met some incredible people... but then there's the ugly side as well," he said, acknowledging the obstacles that legendary figures like Major Taylor had to endure.

"I've always been the type of guy not

to let circumstances like that dictate where I go and who I am. I think with that upbringing from my parents — that [sic] allowed me to rise above those circumstances. Everyone can't do that and I'm aware of that, so I feel like I was one of the lucky ones to be able to navigate those treacherous waters, if you will, and still be who I wanted to be."

SPOTLIGHTING NOTABLE BLACK CYCLISTS:

CORY WILLIAMS

By Demetrius Dillard

Cory Williams has the distinct privilege of being one of the world's influential Black bike racers, and while representation and diversity seems to be an uphill battle in pro cycling, he is one of the few that has taken the sport by storm.

The 30-year-old seemed destined for success in cycling at a young age. His brothers and father were heavily involved in the sport, so it was deeply ingrained in the family's values.

Williams, a Los Angeles native, competes professionally for L39ION of Los Angeles and will be a repeat participant in the 124-mile race this year. He recalls the inaugural Maryland Cycling Classic being an indelible experience. Williams embraced the alluring scenery, challenging route and competing alongside the best bike racers in the world.

Typically, Williams doesn't ride in long road races like the Cycling Classic. He usually races in biking events called criteriums – generally shorter races consisting of several laps around a closed circuit – which is a far cry from something like the Tour De France, for instance.

Nonetheless, Williams enjoyed himself and anticipates returning for the second annual event in Baltimore.

"It was really cool and it gave me some perspective on doing these big races, and getting that experience, and enjoying something I wanted to compete in since I was a little kid," Williams said.

"The scenery was really nice. Going

out of the city to where there's basically nothing – beautiful, quiet roads – it was something that was really cool to see. Sometimes when you're riding so hard you can't really see the scenery, but there were just a couple of things that I noticed on the training ride that were just beautiful."

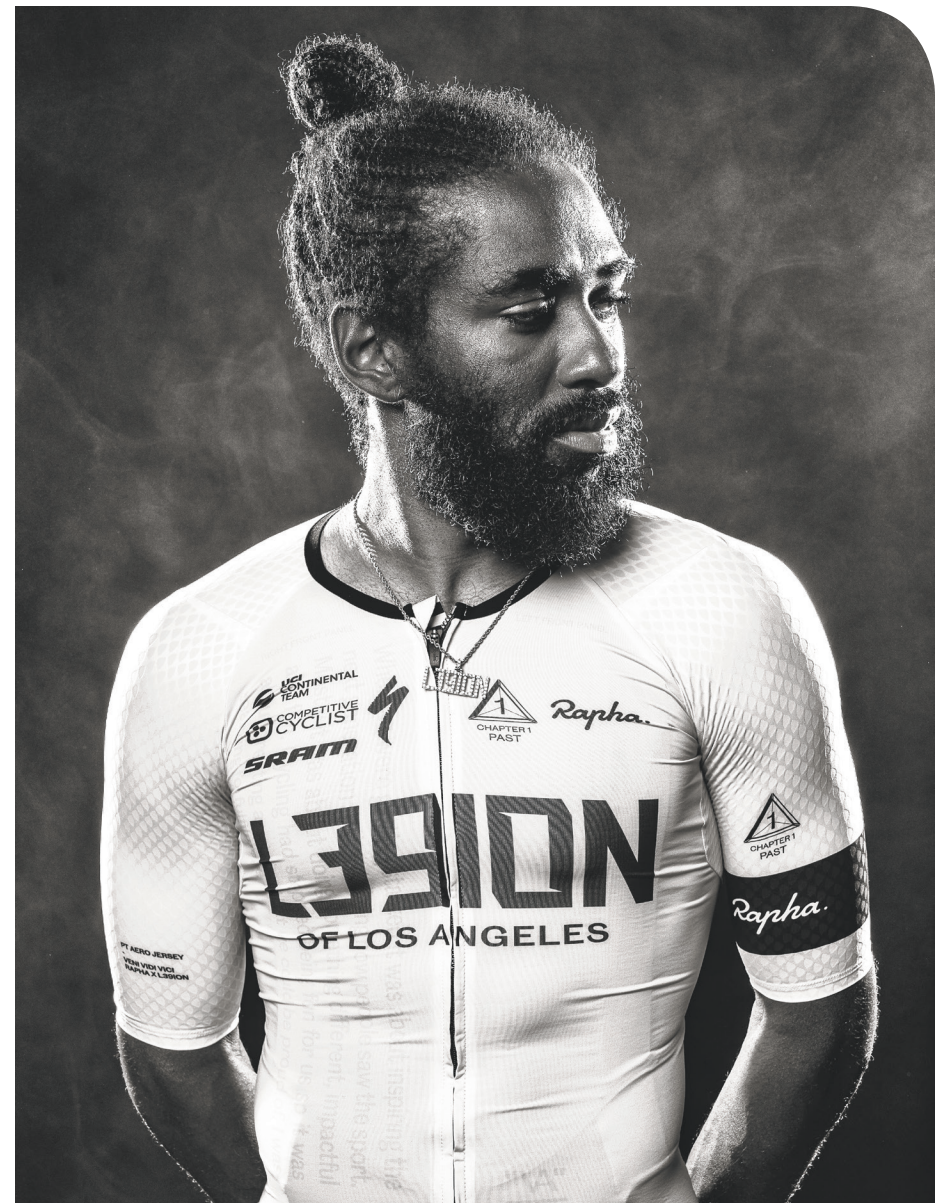
While there are numerous Black-run biking clubs and organizations across the country, there is only one known professional cycling team that is Black-owned: L39ION of Los Angeles, founded in 2019 by Williams and his brother, Justin.

Since its inception, L39ION of Los Angeles set the biking sphere ablaze and has essentially been the face of diversity and inclusion in professional cycling. The club is a UCI Continental team.

Though he was surrounded by influential figures like his father and brothers, Williams didn't see many Black cyclists growing up. However, he said he's noticed the trend shift in an upward direction, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Growing up, there were a lot less Black people on bikes. As I got older and as COVID hit, we saw a big rise in the population of Black cyclists," Williams said.

"We are super proud of seeing the demographic change when we show up to these races. We speak to them and they see us out here racing and winning, and I think that motivates them to get on the bike. So we've been super



Cory Williams, a professional cyclist who competes on the L39ION of Los Angeles, will be a participant in this year's Maryland Cycling Classic.

Kit Karzen/L39ion of Los Angeles

happy to see the population of Black cyclists grow."

As a Black co-owner of a cycling team, Williams is uniquely positioned to influence certain demographics that many other entrepreneurs in the sports world cannot.

"It's pretty unique to be the owner and a bike racer on a team," he said.

"I feel like a lot of times you're kind of pushed out of being yourself, and they try and put you into this robotic role that everyone is the same and everybody acts the same, looks the same, and I don't think that fits our culture

as Black people. So, it's been nice to express ourselves. I guess that would be the word I would use to say how it is owning a team."

In preparation for the Cycling Classic, Williams' training regimen has changed drastically. As opposed to the typical routine used to prepare for an hour-and-a-half race, he's found himself putting in much longer hours to build the endurance needed to sustain for 120-plus miles.

"Having the experience of doing the race, I know what to prepare myself for this year," he concluded.

SPOTLIGHTING **NOTABLE BLACK CYCLISTS:**

JUSTIN WILLIAMS

By Demetrius Dillard

Even prior to co-founding and co-owning a professional cycling team, Justin Williams was a well-established figure in bike racing.

Following in the footsteps of his father, Belizean cycling legend Calman Williams, Justin Williams has impacted the sport in numerous ways and seems to be nowhere near done.

Williams, 34, won't compete in the Maryland Cycling Classic this year. The event is scheduled for August 31 to September 3, 2023. He will cheer on L39ION of Los Angeles co-owner, younger brother and teammate Cory Williams, and L39ION of Los Angeles member Robin Carpenter.

For the decade and a half that he has competed professionally, Williams has amassed numerous championships locally, nationally and internationally. Most recently, Williams won the Belizean national road race championships in June 2021.

Beginning the L39ION of Los Angeles along with Cory Williams in 2019 not only marked a significant moment in professional cycling but placed the siblings among distinguished company in American sports. The two are quite possibly the only Black owners of a pro cycling team in the U.S. and are part of only a handful of Black athletes who reached the executive ranks in their respective – with the likes of Michael Jordan (who recently sold the Charlotte Hornets) and Doug Williams (NFL).

Born and raised in Los Angeles,

Williams' specialty seems to be criterium racing though he has excelled in nearly all disciplines.

"I want to change the sport of bike racing in America," Williams said in a 2021 interview with Red Bull. "It has to be different, so it's more vital and appeals to a broader group of people. It's a lot of responsibility to take on that change, but I stopped letting people control what my destiny is going to be a long time ago."

Williams' career began in track racing with key wins in the USA Cycling Junior Track National Championships from 2006 to 2008. After competing on the professional road racing circuit in Europe from 2007 to 2010, Williams took a hiatus from the sport. He then returned to pro racing in 2016 and wound up winning 16 races in his first season back. He won back-to-back National Amateur Criterion championships in 2018 and 2019.

Over the course of his career, Williams shared some of the same observations as so many other Black cyclists: the glaring lack of diversity. Oftentimes, he found himself as the only minority competing in many of the bike-racing events he participated in. These experiences are some of what led him to team ownership.

Now, L39ION of Los Angeles is widely considered the face of diversity in pro cycling as the Williams brothers lead a generation of game-changers in bike racing.



Justin Williams, a professional cyclist who competes on the L39ION of Los Angeles, is one of the most influential Black figures in cycling.

Kit Karzen/L39ion of Los Angeles

SPOTLIGHTING
NOTABLE BLACK CYCLISTS:

NELSON BEASLEY VAILS

By Demetrius Dillard

From riding through the streets of New York City in his younger days as a bicycle messenger to emerging as a historical figure in the sport of bike racing, Nelson Beasley Vails owns one of the most legendary stories in modern sports.

Vails, now a retired road and track cyclist, made history in the 1984 Olympic Games as the first Black American to win an Olympic medal. That moment solidified his position in Black cycling royalty, along with the likes of Major Taylor and Herbie Francis.

For the second consecutive year, the Baltimore area will welcome the trail-blazing cycling pioneer for the second annual Maryland Cycling Classic. Vails will be the ambassador for the event and will travel to a few Baltimore City schools to speak to students.

“My experience last year was pretty fun,” Vails said, adding that he suspects the Cycling Classic will be twice as noticeable this year. “The first year with the event – I thought the public took to it quite well, especially the cycling community.”

Vails, a 2009 U.S. Bicycling Hall of Fame inductee, said he hopes the Maryland Cycling Classic will serve as an inspirational catalyst for diversity in cycling, particularly for local youth.

“To open up the eyes to people of color, people like us, to the elite world, this is a start,” said Vails, a native of Harlem, N.Y., who now resides in California.

“This Maryland Cycling Classic is

a start for those kids to get their eyes open and say ‘Wow, I can actually do this because I ride a bicycle anyway.’”

Vails, 62, is still heavily involved in the sport. If he isn’t riding around his neighborhood, he’s hosting bike-riding events to encourage others to stay active and motivated. During the Cycling Classic weekend, he and others will be offering bicycles.

In addition to a bike giveaway, the Maryland Cycling Classic will feature a Community Bike Jam at Patterson Park on September 1, 2023 and Bridges of Hope Charity Ride on Sept. 2. The weekend will also feature an opening ceremony and team introduction, a street festival, stage presentations to introduce the professional cyclists and a Health & Wellness Expo.

Similar to the CIAA Basketball Tournament in February, the Maryland Cycling Classic has quickly become one of the more highly anticipated sporting and cultural events in Baltimore.

Along with winning an Olympic silver medal in Los Angeles in 1984, Vails competed professionally from 1988 to 1995, going on to earn a reputation as one of the world’s top sprinters in cycling. The 1983 Pan American Games gold medalist was inducted into the Lehigh Valley Velodrome Cycling Hall of Fame in 2005.

Racism in cycling wasn’t openly apparent to him as a Black cyclist, he said, reflecting on his journey from local success, to national prominence, to international stardom.



Nelson Vails is one of the most influential Black cyclists in the history of the sport. He will return to the Maryland Cycling Classic as an ambassador. Brian Black Hodes.

As it relates to the present-day quest for diversity, there is a demand for involvement from women of color in USA Cycling programs, Vails emphasized.

As an ambassador, Vails worked closely with Maryland Cycling Classic guests, VIPs and sponsors and will

likely do the same this year. His role also reflects Black excellence in cycling.

“My role around the event as well was representation of someone of color that has been there, done that along with how we can get [cycling] programs sustainable and not just talked about,” he said.

ACKNOWLEDGING THOSE WHO **PAVED THE WAY** FOR BLACK CYCLISTS

By **Demetrius Dillard**

Without a Major Taylor, Oliver “Butch” Martin or Herbie Francis, there would be no Rahsaan Bahati, Nelson Vails or Justin Williams.

Despite the numerous challenges that stood in their way — from discrimination, to structural inequalities, to being denied access to biking events due to their race — Black bikers of the past persevered through the hardship, knowing that the future they envisioned exceeded the present struggles they faced.

Marshall Walter “Major” Taylor, largely considered the greatest American cycling sprinter of all time, is credited as the man who broke the color barrier in bike racing. His path to notoriety was nothing short of extraordinary, setting numerous track cycling records en route to being the first Black American world champion in the sport.

Taylor was once quoted saying he had to “blaze his own trail” (no pun intended) in bike racing because he had no Black cyclists to offer him advice or guidance. His notable accomplishments, which came at the turn of the 20th century characterized by a grim era in American history, would leave a lasting impact and opened doors for not only Black cyclists, but Black athletes as a whole.

Francis came along during the Civil Rights era. The New Yorker made history in 1960 as the first Black Olympic cyclist competing for the United States.

Francis, who was born in Miami and raised in Harlem, competed for Union Sportiva Italiana and Continental Sports Club before going on to make history at the Olympic Games in Rome.

A well-regarded sprinter who raced locally during the early 1960s, Francis lost to Jackie Simes in the quarterfinals of the 1963 U.S. Nationals in Northbrook, Ill., before reportedly fading off the biking scene.

Francis later competed in the Flushing Velodrome but did not go to the 1964 Olympic Trials. He later joined the Army and served in the Vietnam War. He passed away in 1988 at the age of 48.

Though some may argue his cycling success was short-lived, Francis’ achievements would chart a path forward for Black cyclists at the international level.

Accordingly, Martin built on the success of his predecessor and mentor, Francis.

The prominent Olympian-turned race promoter was the second Black American cyclist to compete in the Olympics. Esteemed a pioneer in cycling, Martin began riding in 1963 with Unione Sportiva Italiano, where he was tutored by Francis, according to some accounts. He raced as a pro until 1973, also competing at the 1971 Pan American Games.

He officially left his mark on the sport by appearing in the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, followed by the 1968 Games in Mexico City.

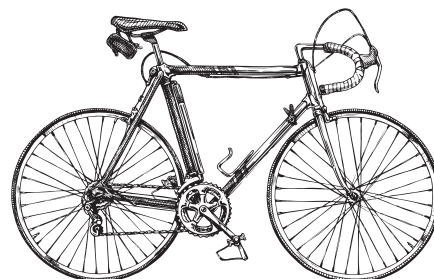
His Olympic appearances were supplemented by four wins in races in Europe in the mid-1960s. Martin won more than 50 races in his career that included international wins in Italy, Canada and Mexico.

Shortly after retirement, the New York native coached the 1974 Montreal World’s Championship men’s U.S. 100 K Team. Martin was the first U.S. National Road Coach for the USCF from 1975 to 1977 and coached the U.S. Road Team at the Montreal Olympic Games in 1976.

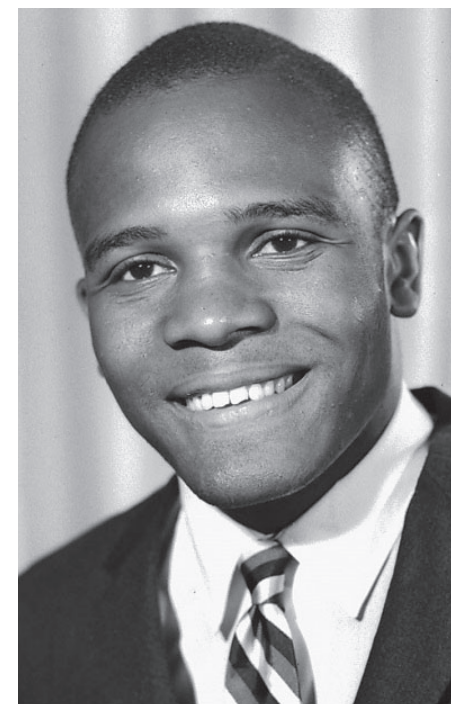
In addition to serving as the race director of the 1988-1989 Tour of the Americas, Martin directed two more biking events in 1990 and 1993. Martin, now 77 years old, reportedly resides in Portland, Oregon.

After leaving an indelible legacy on the sport, Martin was inducted into the U.S. Bicycling Hall of Fame in 2005.

Martin, Francis, Taylor, Katherine Knox and other Black heroic sports figures who might have been lost in the annals of time manifested Black excellence in cycling while demonstrating the fight that continues.



Oliver “Butch” Martin



in USA, U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) (1960)

Herbie Francis



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PEDALS OF RESILIENCE: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME, GRIT, AND TRIUMPH

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URSULA SPENCER

Ursula Spencer, the founder of Dope Nerds®, stands as a self-taught technologist and successful tech entrepreneur with an impressive three-decade-long journey. She began her exploration into technology by teaching herself how to hack at age 11, eventually launching her first tech company at 21. Her fascination with virtual reality in 2009 took her into the realm of virtual world-building in Second Life, a platform enabling users to create and explore virtual 3D environments.

Dope Nerds® was founded in 2020 as the only Black-owned, woman-owned VR Solutions Provider in the United States. Pushing Dope Nerds® to new frontiers, their XR expertise spans a variety of applications, from developing groundbreaking custom experiences like the "Pedals of Resilience" for clients like The Baltimore Times, to crafting scenario-based training for corporate HR, to forging innovative pathways in trauma therapy and wellness.

Ursula also launched Dope Nerds Impact, the nonprofit arm of Dope Nerds®, to break down barriers to digital inclusion so youth and under-valued communities can access technology.



BAILEY

Bailey is a ten-year-old student, author and Chief Inspiration Officer of Dreamreacher Creative. Her first book "In The Wind" is an effort to share 100 ideas to uplift young people and has been well received by parents and educators.

Since publishing "In The Wind," Bailey has been invited to speak at schools, libraries and conferences. Bailey has also worked with the Children's Museum of Atlanta as an ambassador, writer and producer.

Bailey's spoken word recording titled "This Is Us" is streaming on all platforms and she has created a visual art series exploring mental health to raise awareness about families dealing with dementia.



SHARONE REID

Sharone Reid is a dynamic and experienced speaker with a passion for the photo booth industry. As the owner of Focus and Fabulous Events, a successful photo booth rental company, Sharone has established herself as a leading expert in the field.

Sharone is a sought-after keynote speaker and has presented at numerous industry events, including the International Photo Booth Expo since 2017 and Strong Women Photo Booth Conference since 2018. She is also the host of the Chit Chat Photo Booth Podcast, where she shares her insights and expertise with other industry professionals.

Sharone's success is known for her ability to connect with people and build long-lasting relationships that benefit her business and her clients. In 2020, Sharone was nominated for the Metropolitan Business League Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

Sharone lives by the motto, "If you do what you love, you will never work a day in your life." Her passion for the photo booth industry and her commitment to excellence make her an ideal speaker for any event.



ROBERT HANSEN

Robert was born in New York City, raised on the shores of Jersey and currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California. He attended the School of Visual Arts in the lower eastside of New York where he studied Graphic Design. His love for visual art led him to a 16-year career in retail as a Visual Merchandiser for Nordstrom, Macy's Herald Square and Hickey Freeman Suits on 5th Avenue.

Having won several awards for Visual Presentation, he set his sights on another design heavy industry, special events. Robert worked production on high-profile events as NIKE World Basketball with mentor

Damon Haley and weddings for clients like Usher with mentor Diann Valentine. He also served as Art Director for several regional television commercials; as well as an award-winning Production Designer for a short film.

He was encouraged by his mother to go back to basics and develop his love of fine art. Her death in 2021 resonated with him and reignited his passion to create art that makes one take a closer look, literally. In a short time, he has caught the attention of celebrities and TV Networks.



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PEDALING THROUGH TIME: A GLIMPSE INTO THE HISTORY OF CYCLING IN BALTIMORE

By Dena Wane

Introduction

Baltimore, a city known for its rich history and vibrant culture, has played a significant role in the development of cycling as both a recreational activity and a mode of transportation. From its early days as a bustling port city to its modern urban landscape, Baltimore's history of cycling reflects broader trends in transportation, urban planning and social change.

Early Cycling Days: Late 19th Century

The roots of cycling in Baltimore can be traced back to the late 19th century, when the city underwent a transformation due to industrialization and urban expansion. The introduction of the "safety bicycle" in the 1880s, with its chain-driven rear wheel and similar-sized wheels, made cycling more accessible to a broader range of people. This innovation set the stage for the cycling craze that swept across America.

Baltimore embraced this trend enthusiastically, with cycling clubs and enthusiasts emerging throughout the city. The League of American Wheelmen, founded in 1880, advocated for better roads and cycling infrastructure, leading to the gradual improvement of road conditions in Baltimore and beyond.

Baltimore's Cycling Renaissance: 20th Century

The early 20th century marked a period of continued growth for cycling in Baltimore. The city's expanding network of streets and avenues provided cyclists with new opportunities to explore their

surroundings. Cycling became a popular recreational activity, and numerous cycling events and races were organized, drawing participants and spectators alike.

One notable event was the annual 100-mile One Wheelers Club race, which attracted skilled cyclists from across the region. The event not only showcased cycling prowess but also fostered a sense of camaraderie among Baltimore's cycling community.

The bicycle's practicality as a means of transportation also became evident during this period. As the city's population continued to grow, urban congestion and limited parking options led many to adopt bicycles as a convenient way to navigate Baltimore's bustling streets. Additionally, cycling offered an affordable alternative to automobiles, especially during times of economic hardship such as the Great Depression.

Challenges and Resilience: Mid-20th Century

The mid-20th century brought about significant changes to Baltimore's urban landscape, and cycling faced both challenges and opportunities. The rise of automobiles and the expansion of roadways shifted urban planning priorities, often to the detriment of cycling infrastructure. As a result, cycling began to wane in popularity, with fewer cycling clubs and events taking place.

However, cycling enthusiasts and advocates remained resilient. In the face of changing times, Baltimore's cyclists continued to promote cycling as a sustainable and healthy mode of transportation. The city's cycling community persisted in organizing

events like Bike to Work Day, which aimed to encourage more people to embrace cycling for daily commuting.

Modern Revival: Cycling in Contemporary Baltimore

In recent decades, a renewed interest in cycling has emerged, both in Baltimore and across the United States. The city's urban planners have recognized the importance of integrating cycling into transportation infrastructure. Dedicated bike lanes, shared-use paths and bike-sharing programs have all contributed to making Baltimore a more bike-friendly city.

The rise of the "bike culture" has further propelled cycling's revival in Baltimore. Independent bike shops, cycling cafés, and community-led initiatives have fostered a sense of belonging among cyclists.

Beyond recreation and transportation, cycling has become a tool for social change in Baltimore.

Community organizations have used cycling to promote health and fitness in underserved neighborhoods, advocating for increased access to cycling resources and safe spaces for riding.

Conclusion

The history of cycling in Baltimore is a testament to the city's ever-evolving nature. From its early days as a leisure activity for the elite to its modern resurgence as a mode of transportation and community engagement, cycling's journey in Baltimore reflects broader societal changes and values.

As the city continues to evolve, so too does its cycling culture. The efforts of dedicated cyclists, advocates and urban planners have paved the way for a more bike-friendly Baltimore. With an eye toward sustainability, health, and community, the history of cycling in Baltimore serves as an inspiration for cities around the world seeking to create vibrant and livable urban environments.



"Rover safety bicycle of 1885" by Jonathan Cardy is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

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MEDICINE

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN CYCLISTS FIND SISTERHOOD, INCREASE REPRESENTATION

By Andrea Blackstone

Cycling is not a sport exclusively reserved for men.

The contributions of Black women cyclists are often lesser known. However, Monica Garrison— founder, executive director and chief storyteller of Black Girls Do Bike (BGDB), is a trailblazer who makes significant leaps to close the cycling gender gap.

“She is tasked with fueling 100+ BGDB chapters worldwide and a network of 180+ lady leaders. She believes that the simple act of riding a bike can be a catalyst for wonderful, life-changing experiences for women of all ages,” according to blackgirlsdobike.org.

Garrison founded the nonprofit in the spring of 2013. Through it, women who embrace cycling “as a tool for function, fitness, freedom and fun” can find camaraderie, advice, organized rides or skill sharing.

Kim Dennis lives in Baltimore, Maryland’s Pigtown neighborhood. She explained more about BGDB.

“Ride leaders are called ‘Sheros’ in Black Girls Do Bike. Since May of 2022, I have been ‘co-Shero’ of Black Girls Do Bike: Baltimore of which there are over 1,100 Facebook members,” Dennis said. “There are over 100 Black Girls Do Bike chapters across the United States and internationally.”

Dennis mentioned that her love of cycling began when she was a nine-year-old girl who received her first 10 speed Sears Free Spirit bicycle. The Baltimorean grew up in Jersey City, New Jersey.

“I enjoy cycling because it’s fun. There’s something so exhilarating about feeling the wind on your face as

your legs pedal in the open air,” Dennis said.

Her cycling passion grew when she relocated to Baltimore and began participating in athletic events called duathlons.

“I found out about Black Girls Do Bike: Baltimore in 2015 after talking to friends who suggested that I join so that I could meet other women cyclists. I’ve met many who I now call friends,” Dennis said. “Black Girls Do Bike: Baltimore has grown greatly in numbers which is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many women were looking for a safe place to join and with a gendered group who understood their needs and concerns.”

BGDB’s Baltimore chapter meets Saturday morning at least once a month in the Baltimore area.

Dennis added, “The rides are a blend of Short & Sassy (0-10 miles) and Bold & Beautiful (10-30 miles). The rides are specifically for all female cyclists.”

Riders from beginners to triathletes are welcome to join the chapter.

“We ride together in a group and don’t leave anyone behind. It’s helpful whenever the more experienced cyclists join our rides as they tend to have helpful tips to educate the group,” Dennis said.

Denise Calloway, a Baltimore City resident and Facebook administrator of BGDB’s Baltimore chapter, is a casual rider who enjoys riding with less competitive pressure. She noted that most of the time when newer cycle members are present, chapter rides begin at Thomas Dixon Park (BWI Loop).

“It is a good network to find others who cycle at your same ability, to have safety in numbers on a ride, and to be there for those that need the



Members of Black Girls Do Bike: Baltimore finished a 19.7-mile group ride along the BWI Airport loop trail on May 21, 2022. (L-R:) Tanya Thompson, Denise Calloway, Neiunna Jones, Shannon Snyder, Renita Ross and Kim Dennis. Kim Dennis

encouragement to go get out for the day to ride,” Calloway said. “BGDB is more of a support group where women of color can find a supportive space to enjoy bicycling. There are no fees, just sign up on the Facebook group and people are asked to not solicit members. I am a member of both the Baltimore and Washington, D.C. group.”

Carla Douglas resides in Chesapeake, Virginia. She has been a Black Girls Do Bike in Hampton Roads member for a little over five years. Douglas averages riding 100-125 miles a week all year, peddling four or more days a week. She said that 500 members are in her chapter.

“I’ve been cycling since 1995 but I’ve been consistent for the last five years,” Douglas said.

She also serves as a “Shero.”

“As a ‘Shero,’ my primary responsibility is the admin [administrator] in our social media group. Also, it’s my responsibility to

organize monthly rides for the group members. I provide information about cycling; its health benefits; nutrition; upcoming rides in the area; safety information and equipment recommendations,” Douglas said.

She further noted that being connected with other women who look like her and who also enjoy being outdoors, are health conscious and value a healthy lifestyle, are enjoyable elements of membership.

“The support and encouragement is unmatched. We share everything from recipes, off-season virtual rides, to hotels for out-of-town events,” Douglas said.

Dennis added that cycling is a therapy session that helps her to keep moving, literally and figuratively.

“I’m at peace on my bike,” Dennis said.

Learn more about BGDB via <https://www.blackgirlsdobike.org/> and <https://www.blackgirlsdobike.org/chapters>.



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BLACK-OWNED BIKE SHOP

HBCU ALUMNUS, 'TRIATHLETE' KEEPS FELLOW CYCLISTS PEDDLING

By Andrea Blackstone

Matthew Onojafe, founder and CEO of Jafe Cycling, LLC is a full-time entrepreneur based in Prince George's County, Maryland. The company is 100% Black owned.

"We sell bicycles, bike related apparel, accessories and [we provide] services for both repair and maintenance on bicycles," Onojafe said. "Jafe Cycling was born during the pandemic as a way to promote health and wellness to the immediate community most affected by the [corona] virus. Cycling has always been a form of exercise and mental therapy for me personally, and I simply wanted to share that outlet with others around me that I thought could benefit."

The business owner offered a tip for individuals who are in the market for purchasing a bicycle.

"You want to first identify brands that make reputable bicycles, then narrow that down to a model you like best. Components or a groupset is the next key. Sometimes [spending] a few extra bucks for better gears will save you many future headaches and finances for rides to come."

Onojafe further noted that bike maintenance depends on how frequently a cyclist rides.

"However, routine services such as tune ups and tire changes should all take place at least once a year, and traditionally before the spring cycling season. One may need more," Onojafe said.

Jafe Cycling, LLC is an authorized dealer for Cannondale, Giant, Deros and Fuji bikes. Cycling accessories such as inner tubes, bike pumps, gloves and water bottles are also available for purchase. The business provides a range of options to further accommodate a variety of customers.

"We sell some really high-end bikes, such as full carbon race bikes with electronic shifting. We also have youth mountain and trail bicycles for sale. Any bike that we do not have physically in stock, our customers can go online, purchase what they like and have it shipped directly to the showroom," Onojafe said.

Onojafe also mentioned that the majority of the bikes that are sold in the Prince George's County, Maryland location range between \$1,200- \$3,000. However, Jafe Cycling's reach has extended to other states.

"We have had customers purchase bicycles from us down in Dallas, Texas. We have had several people from Delaware, Virginia Beach and even North Carolina drive up for bicycle repair services [and] bicycles fits, all to simply show their support of what we have created and are doing here in the state of Maryland."

Onojafe added, "We are a full-service repair shop and perform tasks from a simple brake adjustment, or drivetrain clean, all the way down to a complete bike overhaul, which involves taking your bicycle completely apart, cleaning, regreasing [it] and putting it all back together."

Onojafe reflected on starting his enterprise in a two-bedroom apartment, while repairing riders' bicycles in the living room, resulting in destroyed carpet.

Before opening Jafe Cycling, LLC, Onojafe obtained his bachelor of science in Fiber Optic Engineering from Norfolk State University. The member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated's most previous corporate title was working as a business development manager for a fiber optic integration company.

Today, Onojafe wears many hats as a business owner. He is



(L-R:) Matt Onojafe, owner of Jafe Cycling, LLC with Justin Williams, a Belizean-American cyclist and rider-manager for UCI Continental team L39ION of Los Angeles, at the Armed Force Cycling Classic hosted in Arlington, Virginia in 2023. Fafi Photography

the company bike mechanic who handles all customer bicycle repairs and interactions. Additionally, the entrepreneur does everything from handling custom apparel development to overseeing his company's marketing and branding through daily social media postings. The bustling platform has attracted over 11,000 followers.

Onojafe does more than sell bikes.

"I am also a cycling enthusiast, so I connect with about 22 cycling clubs here in the D.C., Maryland, Virginia metro territory consisting roughly of over 4,500 cyclists, attending local bike rides and other social engagements," he said.

Onojafe stated that when he learned that he would soon become a father in 2014, cycling became a way for him to prepare for the inevitable "dad bod" and clear his mind to prepare for his new chapter in life.

"I have been cycling now for about eight years, and this year specifically, I competed in my first triathlon. So, while I am certainly a cyclist first, based on my USA Triathlon membership, I believe that I can now say that I am a 'triathlete,'" Onojafe said.

He added, "I love how cycling immerses you in nature, and truly



Matt Onojafe, (right) owner of Jafe Cycling, LLC participates in an Earth Day event. Jafe Cycling, LLC was an onsite vendor that hosted a clinic on how to repair a flat tire while out on a bike ride. WoodAngledPhotography

allows you to lose yourself on a trail or open road. Any time I feel stuck or in a rut, I know now that I'm only one bike ride away from a clear mind."

Jafe Cycling, LLC is located at 1441 McCormick Drive, Suite #1050 in Lake Arbor, Maryland. Visit <https://www.thetrailsdmv.com> for more information.



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Bicycling: The Two-Wheeled Path to Improved Health

By Jayne Hopson



Jayne Hopson
Courtesy Photo

If you've ever enjoyed the thrill of a bike ride or the breeze on your face while pedaling down a scenic trail, you're not just partaking in a leisurely activity. Cycling, both as a recreational pursuit and as a form of transportation, has been proven to offer a myriad of health benefits that can lead to a longer, happier life.

Central to the health benefits of cycling is the enhancement of cardiovascular health. Like all aerobic workouts, cycling increases heart rate, pumps more oxygen to the muscles, and aids in the efficient burning of calories. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), regular cardiovascular exercise like cycling can decrease one's risk of coronary heart diseases, improve heart function, and even reduce heart disease-related symptoms in patients.

As reported by the AHA, cycling just 20 miles a week can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease by 50 percent. "Rhythmic pedal strokes enhance heart and lung function, improving blood circulation and oxygen distribution throughout the body. Over time,

this can lead to reduced risks of hypertension, stroke, and heart attacks, says the AHA."

Beyond heart diseases, cycling has been shown to reduce the risk of several other chronic ailments. A study published in the British Medical Journal found that people who commute via bicycle have a lower risk of developing cancer and cardiovascular disease. The regular and moderate exercise from cycling can also help regulate blood sugar levels, reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes.

There are also benefits for those in need of relief from arthritis. A painful joint disease, arthritis, can significantly diminish a patient's quality of life. Long term use of prescription medications to manage pain and improve mobility may have dangerous side effects. "Outdoors or indoors, cycling is one of the most effective workouts for people with arthritis, says the Arthritis Foundation.

For those looking to shed some pounds or maintain their current weight, cycling is an excellent way to achieve those goals. According to the AHA, depending on the intensity and individual weight, one can burn between 400 to 1,000 calories in an hour of cycling. Paired with a balanced diet, it's an effective tool for weight management.

It's not just physical health that stands to gain from cycling; mental health does too. Cycling, especially in nature, can act as a form of meditation. The repetitive pedal strokes, the steady rhythm of breathing, and the ability to zone out and focus on the path ahead all contribute to reduced stress, anxiety, and depression. Moreover, exposure to sunlight and fresh air is known to increase levels of the 'feel-good' hormone serotonin, naturally elevating one's mood.

City residents might be wondering: how can cycling in urban areas, with all its pollution, be beneficial for lung health? Surprisingly, American Lung Association studies have shown that cyclists, joggers, and pedestrians inhale fewer dangerous fumes than those inside cars. The consistent deep breaths taken during cycling ensure that pollutants have less chance of settling in the lungs, keeping them healthier.

Contrary to popular belief, cycling isn't just a leg workout. While the quadriceps, hamstrings, and calves are primarily engaged, cycling also demands work from core muscles to keep balanced and even the arms and shoulders to steer. Over time, regular

people turn to bikes over cars, the better the air quality becomes for everyone.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for hopping on that bike is the possibility of a longer, more fulfilling life. A study conducted in 2017 found that those who cycle regularly have a lifespan that's, on average, longer than non-cyclists. Moreover, the blend of physical and mental health benefits ensures that this added time is quality time.

The health benefits of cycling are comprehensive and extend beyond the individual to the community and the environment. Whether it's a serene ride through the countryside, a rigorous



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cycling can improve muscle tone and flexibility. The circular motion of pedaling also aids in lubricating the joints, particularly in the knees and ankles, reducing the risk of arthritic problems.

While not a direct health benefit, it's worth noting that increased cycling can lead to reduced traffic congestion and pollution, which in turn contributes to a healthier community. Clean air is a public health asset, and the more

mountain trail, or a simple commute to work, cycling promises a healthier, happier future for all who embrace it.

With the rise in awareness about climate change and the need for sustainable practices, cycling also offers an eco-friendly option for transportation, exercise, and leisure. So, the next time you consider how to improve your health and well-being, remember that the answer might just be as simple as a bike ride.

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Rambling Rose



DR. PHIL BUTTS' BIG BAND PERFORMING AT DIAMONDZ EVENT CENTER, CABARET STYLE

By Rosa Pryor

Hello, my friends,

I'm hoping that everyone is happy and enjoying life. Yes, I have been a little under the weather after a couple of spinal surgeries. I thank you for your love and prayers. I am much better. I must take it easy for a couple of weeks, but this is not going to stop me from having fun while supporting my musical friends and getting out to enjoy life.

One of my favorite groups, Dr. Phil Butts Big Band is awesome. I don't want you to miss this dynamite band. I want you all to meet me at Dr. Phil's show. Let me tell you a little bit about this guy. He graduated with a bachelor of science degree in Music Education. After a brief tenure with the Vagabonds Band, he obtained a teaching position with Anne Arundel Public Schools in 1970. He was appointed band director at Arundel High School where he sought to educate and mentor music students. He continued his education by earning two masters and a doctorate degree in Music Education. If you haven't already, check him out at his show with his big band on Sunday, September 10, 2023 from 4-8 p.m. at Diamondz Event Center, located at 9980 Liberty Road in the Kings Point Shopping Center in Randallstown, Maryland. The event is cabaret style, BYOB and BYOF, with complimentary setup. Enjoy the show with his song stylist, Larzine.

Let's switch things up a little. Howard G, a comedian and my brother, will be doing a comedy roast on Saturday, September 16, 2023. The event will be hosted by Rickey Shackelford. Showtime starts at 7 p.m. and it will be at Café 12, located at 5627 Reisterstown Road in Baltimore, Maryland. We will see you there.

The 27th Annual Baltimore County African American Cultural Festival is scheduled to held on Saturday September 16, 2023 at 400 Washington Avenue in Towson, Maryland. It will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. There will be lots of live entertainment, such as Jump Street Band, Clarence Ward & Dat Feel Good, Aaron Hill Trio, lots of vendors, food and much more. You should check it out.

Hey! I think the ladies would be interested in this. I was just informed that there will be a sneak preview of Primark's Arundel Mills store opening on September 6, 2023 at 7000 Arundel Mills Circle, located in Hanover, Maryland. Primark is a leading international retailer that offers high quality fashion at value prices. It will open to the general public on September 7, 2023. Check it out!

Before I leave, I want to give my condolences to the Tyner Family who lost a man that many people know as the oldest founder of the Banderleros Motorcycle Club, which is still located on Edmondson Avenue in Baltimore. Roland Tyner, known to many as "Duke," was so loved not only within his family, but amongst people like me who he taught how to drive a motorcycle. He was the "Godfather" of the motorcycle clubs in Maryland. The viewing is Friday, September 15, 2023 at Chatman-Harris Funeral Home West, located at 5249 Reisterstown Road, from 3-7 p.m. His service is Saturday, September 16, 2023 at the Patapsco Arena. The wake is at 10 a.m. and the funeral will be held at 11 am. The repast will also be held also at the Patapsco Arena, located at 3301 Annapolis Road. Ronald will truly be missed by so many people. He had such a beautiful soul. The Tyner family is in my prayers.

Well, my dear friends, I have to go. If you need me, you can call me at 410-833-9474, or email me at rosapryor@aol.com. Until the next time, I'm musically yours.



A homegoing service for Roland "Duck" Tyner, the oldest founder of the Banderleros Motorcycle Club, is approaching. The public viewing is Friday, September 15, 2023 at Chatman-Harris Funeral Home West, located at 5249 Reisterstown Road from 3-7 p.m. The funeral service is scheduled for Saturday, September 16, 2023 at Patapsco Arena, located at 3301 Annapolis Road in Baltimore. The wake will be held at 10 a.m.; the funeral is scheduled for 11: a.m.



Dr. Phil Butts Big Band with song stylist Larzine will be performing at the Diamondz Event Center, located at 9980 Liberty Road in Randallstown's Kings Point Shopping on Sunday, September 10, 2023 from 4-8 p.m. "A Moment to Remember" is cabaret style, BYOB and BYOF with complimentary setup. For ticket information, call Larzine at 410-493-5022, or Charles Nixon at 443-676-4543.



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