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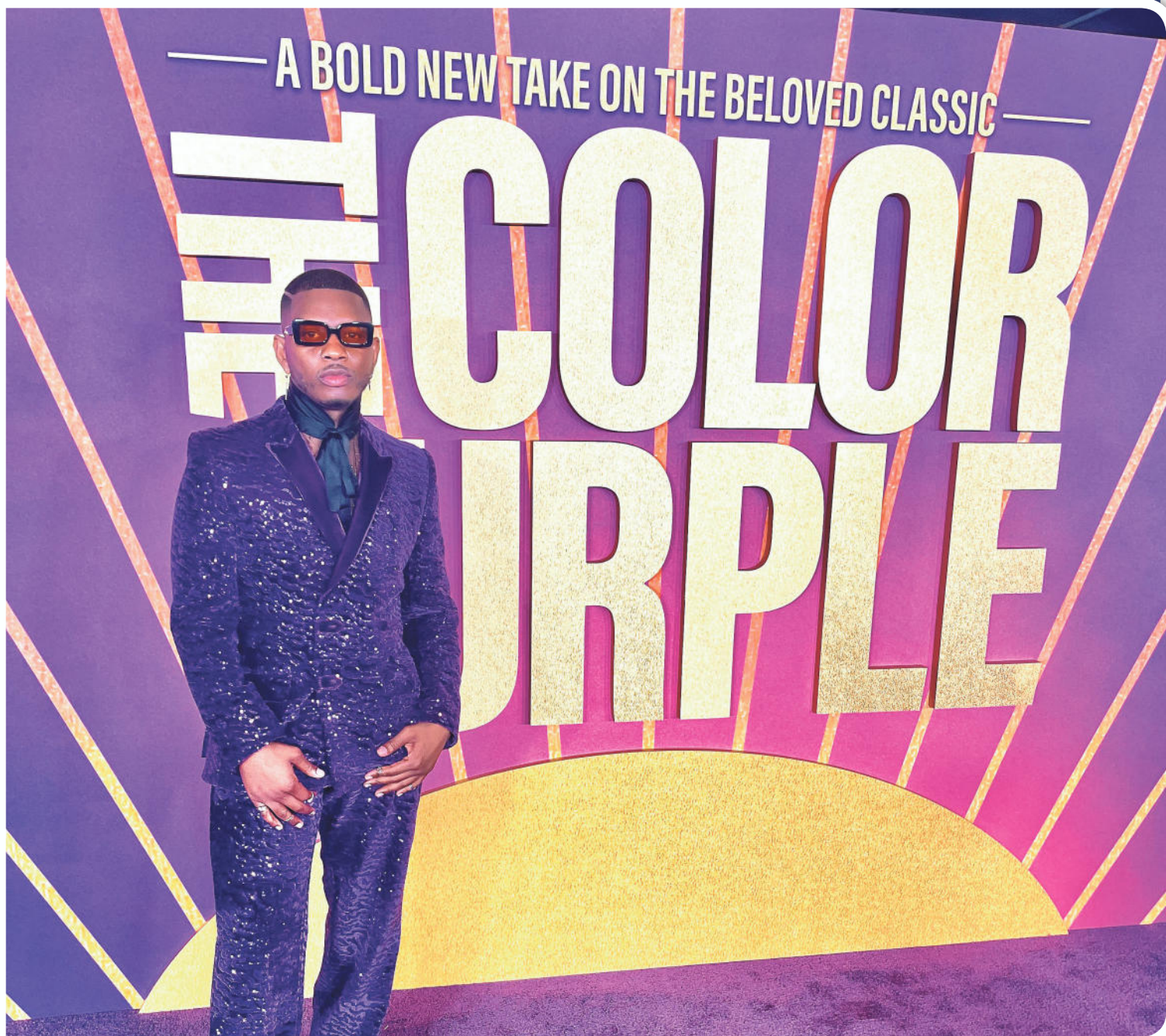
December 22 - 28, 2023

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Native Baltimorean Lends Talents to 'The Color Purple'

Rashad Corey attended the world premiere of "The Color Purple" musical drama based on Alice Walker's novel on December 6, 2023. He worked as the assistant costume designer for the film under Francine Jamison-Tanchuck, the lead costume designer. Corey grew up in Baltimore. "The Color Purple" was recently nominated for Best Costume Design by Critics Choice Awards, in addition to the film receiving nominations in other categories. The highly anticipated film will be shown in theaters on December 25, 2023.

*(See article on page 9)
Courtesy photo*



The Yuletide Holidays Are Here - Part Two!

By Karen Clay

In my last article, I discussed two ways that criminals can potentially ruin your holiday cheer. In this article, I will identify three additional ways this can happen and what you can be mindful of to avoid becoming a victim.

During times of the year, such as the yuletide season, financial donations to nonprofit organizations, package delivery and travel tend to be high. Criminals will try to take advantage of this by promoting specific scams to include charity fraud, delivery scams and travel scams. They typically will use social engineering tactics to lure you into their web of deceit in the following ways:

Social Engineering Tactics

Scammers who engage in social engineering tactics rely on your willingness to share information with them. They use their social skills to extract information from you that will gain them access to your computer, bank account, credit card or any other resource that will result in them getting your money.

They can accomplish this via email (phishing,) text messaging (smishing,) or voice communications (vishing) with the goal to gain access to financial information to do you harm. Avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails and be wary of email attachments. If the email appears to come from a friend or business, call them first to verify it was them. As the FTC website notes (<https://bit.ly/3tmAk8B>), if you receive any of the following:

- Saying they've noticed some suspicious activity or log-in attempts — they haven't.
- Claiming there's a problem with



Karen Clay
Clay Technology and Multimedia
Courtesy, Karen Clay

your account or your payment information — there isn't.

- Saying you need to confirm some personal or financial information — you don't.
- Including an invoice you don't recognize — it's fake.
- Wanting you to click on a link to make a payment — the link has malware.
- Saying you're eligible

to register for a government refund — it's a scam.

- Offering a coupon for free stuff — it's not real.

Be suspicious of unsolicited phone calls, visits, texts, or email messages from individuals asking about financial, private, or personal information. Do not send any sensitive information via the Internet without checking to see if the website is secure, commonly indicated by the "https://" before the web address.

Travel Scams:

Many times, travel scams will show up in the form of online ads for "free" vacations or via emails, phone calls or text messages with a notification that you have won a vacation. As a part of redeeming this "free" offer, you may be required to pay the fees or taxes associated with the vacation offer. Other travel-related scams may involve vacation rentals, cruises, or travel discounts. The best way to avoid becoming a victim is to ignore any communication that is not a result of a direct inquiry you made to a reputable company.

If you receive such solicitations or realize you are a victim, report the incident to [reportfraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud). This will help the FTC track patterns of fraud, which can lead to investigations and potentially stop fraudulent schemes



Don't let scammers steal your holiday joy. Graphic design by Karen Clay

from causing further harm. Your report also will contribute to a larger database that aids in consumer protection efforts, helping to inform and safeguard others in the community. The FTC does not resolve individual complaints, but the information you provide can be used in broader efforts to enforce consumer protection laws and advocate for policy changes that benefit all of us.

Package Delivery Scams:

The recent shutdown due to the pandemic dramatically altered how we shop, with online sales skyrocketing thanks to concerns about the health risks of shopping in brick-and-mortar stores. Post pandemic, we continue to rely on the convenience of having purchases delivered to our doors. Scammers have taken note of this trend and are capitalizing on it. A typical scam might include a text message, email, or phone call, sent by the scammer to you, informing you that you have a package waiting for you or that the delivery service (e.g., FedEx, UPS, or USPS) was unable to deliver a package.

To get the package delivered, you may be asked to click on a link and "verify" personal information or supply

payment information (like a credit card or bank routing number) to reschedule the delivery, ostensibly to "verify" you are the intended recipient. These delivery messages can be quite convincing, but they are fake and generated to attempt to defraud you. To combat this, the FTC offers detailed insights on fake shipping notification emails and text messages, which are particularly relevant during this holiday shopping season. Their advice for how to deal with this kind of scam:

- If you get a message about an unexpected package delivery that tells you to click on a link don't do it.
- If you think the message might be legitimate, contact the shipping company using a phone number or website you know is real. Don't use the information in the message.
- If you think it could be about something you recently ordered, go to the site where you bought the item and look up the shipping and delivery status there.

While we want to focus on the positive aspects of the holiday season, maintaining awareness of the ways the "holiday grinch" try to steal our joy, will help keep you and yours in a holly, jolly mood this season.



2023



WINNERS



Best Art Gallery	The Black Genius Art Show	Best Childcare/Preschool	Labourers For Jesus Excellent Childcare LLC
Best Author	Janella McRae - Every King and Queen	Best Event Planner	Global Flair Events
Best Dance Group/Ensemble	Fearless Dance Empire	Best Florist	Fleurs dAve
Best Dance/Individual	Fearless Dance Empire	Best Funeral Home	Wylie Funeral Home
Best Museum	Reginald F. Lewis Museum	Best Nonprofit Organization	Creative Nomads
Best Solo Instrumental Artist	Craig Alston	Pet Services	The Blvck Gypsy Mobile Grooming & Holistic Care
Best Theatre Company	Arena Players Incorporated	Best Air Conditioning/HVAC Service	Luhvac and Properties LLC
Best Visual Artist	Poncho Brown	Best Plumber	Sewer Slayer
Best Accounting Firm	A Little Faith Accounting & Tax Services LLC	Best Remodeler/Contractor	She Nailed It
Best Financial Services Banks & Credit Unions	The Harbor Bank of Maryland	Candles and Aromatherapy	Flourish Baltimore
Best Insurance Company	Baltimore Insurance Network	Best Barbershop	Conscious Heads
Best Tax Prep	Joan M. Pratt CPA & Associates	Best Day Spa	Zen and the City
Best Black Radio Station	WEAA	Best Hair Salon	Affordable Styles Hair Salon
Best Event Space	Reginald Lewis Museum	Best Hair Stylist	Affordable Styles Hair Salon
Best Live Performance Event	Baltimore MET Gala	Best Lash Tech / Lash Salon	Baltimore LASH Bar
Best All-Around Restaurant	BLK Swan	Best Make-up Artist	Honey Cosmetics Mondawmin Mall
Best Bakery	Crust by Mack	Best Nail Salon	Autumn OG
Best Bar & Grill	Capital Lounge Inc.	Best Skin Care Products	NKVSkin
Best Bartending	Bar 51	Best Cigar Shop	The Cigar Diva
Best Breakfast	Teavolve Cafe	Best Jewelry Store	Flourish Baltimore
Best Brunch Spot	Home Maid	Best Mens Clothing Store	WaaaH LifeStyle Brand
Best Catering	H3irloom Food Group	Best Mens Fashion Designer	DIFFERENTREGARD
Best Cookies	Aunt Kellys Cookies	Best Place to Buy a Unique Gift	Flourish - A Lifestyle Boutique
Best Cultural Cuisine	Island Quizine	Best Pop-Up Market	Blkass Flea Mkt
Best Dessert	Sistahs Sweets	Best Urban Retail	From Baltimore With Love
Best Fried Fish	Terra Café	Best Womens Boutique Shop	The Doll House Boutique
Best Ice Cream	Taharka Brothers Ice Cream- R.House	Best Womens Fashion Designer	Jody Davis Designs
Best Lunch Spot	Our time kitchen	Best Auto Body Repair	Dare-It Auto Center
Best Roastery	Black Acres Roastery - Open Works	Best Auto Dealership	Exclusive Motorcars
Best Seafood	The Urban Oyster	Best Auto Service Center	Dare-It Auto Center
Best Specialty Cocktails	Los Hermanos Tequila	Best Full Service Car Wash/Detailing	Steves Extreme Vacuum Clean & Detail LLC
Best Specialty Non-Alcoholic Drinks	Niecys Fabulous Juice Bar	Best Dental Practice	Innovation Dental Center
Best Tea Barista	Cuples Tea House	Best Fitness Class	Michele Blu Yoga
Best Vegan Restaurant	The Land of Kush	Best Massage	Sacred House



Invisible Scars: The Impact of Chronic Unemployment on Mental Health and Well-Being in Minority Communities

By Jayne Hopson

American mythology promotes the notion our nation is the land of equal opportunity. This flawed belief belies the fact the United States was founded on sanctioned the practice of racially gendered slavery. The “peculiar institute” of slavery may have been abolished, but many of its social disparities persist to this day.

Historically, mental and physical health of Black Americans has suffered at the hand of care delivery system offering less access to medical treatment because of poverty, indifference or both. The connection between chronic unemployment and poor mental and physical health is usually as silent as the grave, nevertheless posing a great danger to the well-being of thousands of Black men and women.

There are many who believe that hard work and ambition is a surefire way to achieve the “American Dream,” of a stable, upwardly mobile career. Gainful employment is the most reliable way to a portfolio of highly desirable middle-class benefits, including employer subsidized health insurance, a living wage that supports the purchase of a home and a path to prepare for a comfortable retirement.

However, if you are a poor Black ex-offender who has paid his or her debt to society and is seeking a fresh start on the right side of the law, your dream may never be fully achieved. Everyday scores of “ex-offenders are denied the opportunity to gain entry into the workforce because potential employers are unwilling to hire them,” said Stephen Shepard, Baltimore Attorney and Counselor at Law.

“This is especially true for African Americans who are more likely to



Jayne Hopson
Courtesy Photo

receive serious criminal charges for offenses than their white counterparts,” writes Shepard. This directly impacts the “ability of individuals and families to move up the income ladder over their lifetime and across generations.”

“Moreover, ex-offenders comprise a large and rapidly growing portion of the United States population. According to one estimate, more than 1 out of every 100 American adults is presently incarcerated. In 2009, there were 729,295 offenders released from federal and state prisons combined, and the majority of offenders who are presently incarcerated will be released back into society as ex-offenders at some point in the future.”

Shepard says “one estimate suggests that there are presently over 12 million ex-offenders in the United States, which represents approximately eight percent of the working-age population. Being labeled an ex-offender in America is essentially the modern equivalent to a “scarlet letter” because of the stigma associated with a criminal record. In what some have referred to as the “collateral sentencing



Stephen Shepard, Attorney and Counselor at Law

consequences” of incarceration.

As a result, “ex-offenders are frequently denied valuable social and economic opportunities to fully participate as members in American society simply because they have a criminal record. Ex-offender status negatively affects eligibility for various government benefits, such as public housing, financial assistance, food stamps and student loans.

Additionally, ex-offender status limits certain rights and privileges, such as “voting rights, drivers’ license privileges, and rights to foster and [adopt] [children].” As one commentator noted, “these collateral sentencing consequences effectively operate on ex-offenders as “a powerful form of social disenfranchisement.

Perhaps the most problematic collateral sentencing consequence is that ex-offenders are frequently denied opportunities to obtain legitimate employment and earn an honest living. It is well established that

denying employment opportunities to ex-offenders increases the likelihood they will recidivate or commit a new criminal offense.

Ex-offenders faced with few, if any, opportunities for legitimate employment may feel left with no other choice but to commit another crime. Thus, ex-offenders who recidivate are not necessarily “bad people,” but may have few opportunities to legitimately earn a living because of a prior “bad decision.”

Nevertheless, citizens who are systemically barred from securing a good, steady job can grow to feel like an unproductive member of society, lowering their self-esteem and possibly triggering chronic illnesses.

Next week: For ex-offenders and their loved ones, the new year 2024 could be the time for a fresh new start, perhaps identifying low or no cost legal assistance to seek an expungement or identifying ways to overcome the stigma of incarceration.

Final Resolutions: 4 Tips And Tools To Improve Your Family's Money Skills In 2024

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To help start the new year off strong, have open and honest conversations as a family about finances. The beginning of the year is a great opportunity to review your family's expenses. Use this moment to review spending and savings habits, and discuss how to improve them this year. By having these open conversations with your kids, you can help them better understand the basics of money and lay a strong foundation for financial independence.

Not sure where to start? Check out these four tips that can help your family talk about your finances and build better money habits together.

1. Saving made easy for 2024

Managing your money can be overwhelming, but it doesn't need to be. The end of the year can be especially hectic with additional expenses like holiday shopping and travel costs. To make things easier in 2024, automate your savings to help reach your financial goals faster.

With tools like Chase Autosave, customers can set up repeating, automatic transfers from their Chase checking into their Chase savings account. This presents a great learning opportunity for families to discuss the importance of savings, working towards a goal and building healthy habits.

Parents, you can show your children how you determine your savings goals and then help them set their own financial goals for the new year. Once they've figured out how much they want to save, help them set up a plan to get there.

2. Work together as a family to improve your finances

Working toward a common goal can make everyone feel like they have a



Photo courtesy of Pexel

stake in the ground. Setting financial goals together for 2024 and creating a monthly budget will help organize finances throughout the year.

As a Chase checking customer, you can open a bank account with a debit card for kids. For kids 6-17, Chase First BankingSM comes with its own debit card and parental control, while offering several other benefits like setting spending limits and allowing them to experience money firsthand. This opens the line of communication between parents and kids about building good money habits.

3. Build healthy financial practices

Make financial discussions a regular part of family conversations.

Whether it be what or where they're spending, how much they're earning or their savings goal, you'll have plenty of opportunities to discuss good money habits with your kids. To get a clearer picture of your spending and saving habits, check out their Spending Snapshot in the Chase Mobile® app. You and your kids can also set up real-time account alerts to ensure you know exactly where and how they are spending their money.

4. Prepare students heading back to school

Now that 2023 is coming to a close, it's time to prepare students heading back to school for their second semester. Before winter break is over, talk with your high school and college students about their finances and help them feel confident in their future by laying the groundwork for financial independence.

Accounts like Chase High School CheckingSM, for students 13-17 and co-owned by the parent, and Chase College CheckingSM, available to students 17-24 with no monthly service fee for five years while in college, provide access to digital banking tools to help them stay on top of their finances throughout the semester.

Using these four tips, your family can start the new year off with optimism about the state of their finances. To learn more and continue the conversation, visit chase.com/studentbanking.

Chase Mobile® app is available for select mobile devices. Message and data rates may apply. Bank deposit accounts, such as checking and savings, are subject to approval. Deposit products provided by JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. Member FDIC.

Breaking News! Jesus was indeed born in December! Christmas is correctly dated!

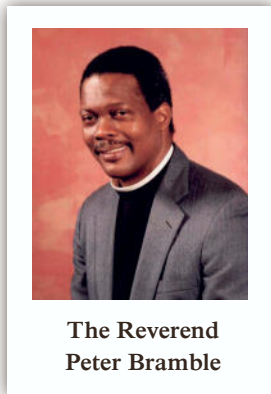
By The Reverend Peter Bramble, Ph.D, STM, MAR, LTH

As we get ready to celebrate Christmas, it is fitting to take a look at how we came to celebrate December 25th as the birthday of Jesus. Many people who are against this grand celebration try to bring discredit to the holiday by saying that the date is wrong and was chosen in an effort to adopt the celebration of the Winter Solstice which is celebrated by pagans on the birthdate of the sun. But we beg to differ. This article will show that the December dating of the birth of Jesus is actually based on the Bible itself. And the choice of the date of the 25th of December was also thoughtfully placed!

Recently, a preacher from Delaware was on YouTube calling Christians “heathen” for claiming that Jesus was born in December. He declared that he had the proof. His proof was taken from St Luke’s Gospel, Chapter One and Verse 26 where it is clearly written: “In the sixth month, The Angel Gabriel was sent to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, and the virgin’s name was Mary.”

The preacher then continued to prove his case. He said emphatically that the sixth month was June. And that is true for our calendar which is solar (sun) based. But it is not true for the Jewish calendar, now running for over five thousand (5,700) years, which is lunar (moon) based.

See, for us, our year begins in



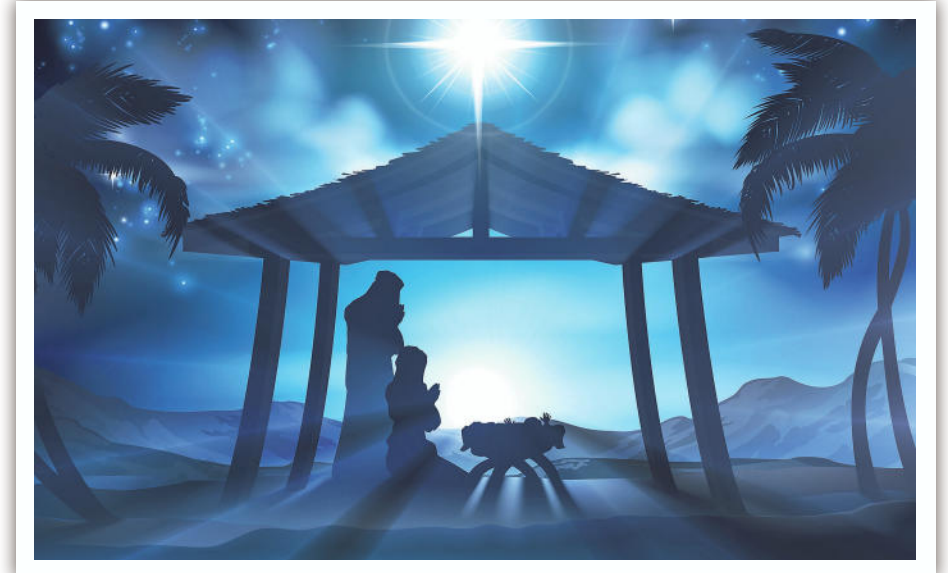
The Reverend
Peter Bramble

January and the sixth month is indeed June. The Jewish people (and Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, who were Jewish and functioning off the lunar calendar), their year begins roughly between September 19 and October 17, give or take a day or two.

If what is stated above is true, then the “sixth month” when the Angel

Gabriel appeared to Mary suddenly becomes mid-March to mid-April. Jesus would have been conceived in March and if one counts nine months forward—the time it takes before a baby is naturally born, we can and indeed MUST conclude that Jesus was born in the mid-December to mid-January time period.

When the first Christians placed the time of the birth of Jesus, they were most certainly aware of the time the Bible says Jesus was conceived—in the sixth month! But they were Jews, and their first month was September! That is why in the calendars of the Roman and other Catholic Churches, March 25th is celebrated as the Feast of the Annunciation, their sixth month and exactly nine months before December 25th, which is Christmas Day—a fixed, rather than moveable feast for Christians. Amazingly, some parts of the Christian Church actually celebrate January 6th as being more important than December 25th. And they have been doing this for centuries now! All this is still within the time frame of how the Jewish calendar would have



served to place the conception of Jesus as being in the sixth month on the Jewish calendar—our March-- and Jesus’ birth coming nine months later, in December.

Christians, therefore, need not be doubtful about Christmas and its dating. It is dated correctly, according to Scripture in Luke 1:26 and the Jewish Calendar, where the New Year often starts in September.

While we are on the topic of dating Christmas, here is another theory about how it was dated in ancient times. And this theory was used by the ancients to pinpoint December 25th as the actual date of the birth of Jesus.

It is said that ancient peoples believed that great religious leaders died on the day they were conceived. The early Church believed that Jesus died on March 25th, the first Good Friday. Enterprising scholars could actually check this out by researching whether there was a Jewish Passover on what would have been March 25th in the year Jesus died. We know that Passover and Easter could never come before the Spring Solstice because it was only after the first Full Moon after the Spring Solstice that Passover, and consequently Easter could be dated.

If it were indeed true that ancients believed that great religious leaders

died on the day they were conceived, and Jesus was known to have died on March 25th, then it’s an easy count from the day of conception—March 25—to the day of birth, nine months later, December 25.

This is just another argument to help Christians gain more confidence in the factual basis of their faith which is often ridiculed and attacked in these modern days. The Christian Faith is grounded in historical facts about a man who was born, most likely in December and crucified most likely in March. We know that He was born, and we choose to celebrate his birth on December 25th without apology. We know He died at Passover time, and we believe He arose from the dead Easter Day.

So, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, when they come! And we use this period of Advent to prepare for this great message: God, the father of all things good, sends His son Jesus to incarnate good and goodness into the lives of humans. Just think about that conceptually for a moment. God, the Father of goodness sends his son to incarnate the goodness of God into the life of mankind. Light shining in the darkness, and we hope that the darkness will comprehend the real meaning of Christmas, this season.



GIVE BLACK 4 THE HOLIDAYS

A DIGITAL MARKETPLACE

The Baltimore Times and Times Community Services, Inc. have teamed up with other civic-minded corporations and organizations to promote Black Businesses during this year's holiday shopping and gift-giving season.

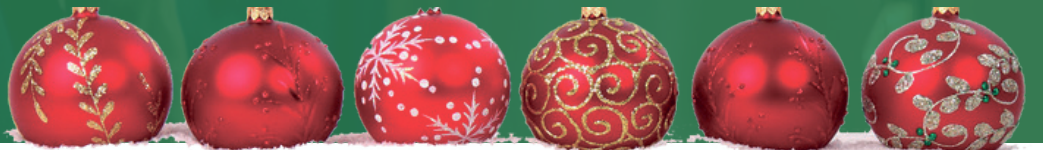
Please join us in supporting Black Entrepreneurs and the jobs that they provide by GIVING BLACK 4 THE HOLIDAYS...

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Esteemed Educator Brightens Christmas for Youth Through Online Initiative

By Andrea Blackstone

Lenora Felder recalls growing up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when Christmas was always a magical time in her home.

"It was my dad's favorite holiday, so he would always play music all day, and call up all of our relatives to wish them a Merry Christmas. We were serious decorators with specific color schemes. It was important that people drive by our home and feel yuletide. Christmas was a very festive time for us," Felder said, reflecting on her childhood.

She also recalls that her generous aunt provided trash bags filled with gifts.

"We [my sister and I] thought she was rich, but in reality, she just worked at the post office," Felder said, reliving fond memories.

Felder—the Director of Special Projects at Statesmen College Preparatory Academy for Boys — began spreading holiday cheer by using the #RichAuntiesRichUnclesXmas drive on Twitter (now X) in 2020 to provide items for families who need a hand.

Recipients can purchase requested items for young people such as: toys, books, electronics, clothes, sports equipment, instruments, bedroom furniture and business start-up equipment.

Felder started the drive in 2020 during the pandemic, when many people felt depressed and lost their jobs.

"If [there was] ever a time to do that, it was then," Felder said. "Life is this journey that can be difficult, so it's important that you have beacons of life that let you know that it gets better."

Felder, who refers to herself as a "one woman show" had an idea to mobilize people to serve infants to 19-year-olds.

"This drive uses Amazon or Target wish lists only. This way, donors can



Lenora Felder, founder of #RichAuntiesRichUnclesXmas Drive
Lenora Felder



The Redd sisters Courtesy photo

select the items that they want to buy and they are sent directly to the recipient," Felder said.

Donors sign-up using a Google form. Felder emails them with instructions and a spreadsheet of Amazon or Target Wish lists. When donors prefer to send monetary donations, she buys items directly from the wish lists. Other donors donate whatever they can afford.

Felder explained that she wants children, especially Black children, to have as many fond memories as possible.

"I want them to expect goodness because they deserve it. So, I hope they know that they are loved and that their Christmas is magical," Felder said.

She further noted that she spends hours each day making sure she posts on social media, promotes the drive, monitors wish lists and buys gifts. Her X pals provide assistance by reposting her posts, buying gifts and sending the promotion to individuals in their networks.

"Donors are all motivated by various

things. Some tend to donate to lists that they connect with. For instance, I buy all microphones and instruments because I believe in children making the living room the "juke joint," Felder said.

She also instructs recipients to add a blurb about their children who are on the lists because some donors connect to characteristics or circumstances.

Felder added, "The drive is created to primarily help Black single moms. They have a difficult task trying to create Christmas magic on their own, so they get priority, but our drive includes Black families with kids up to 19 years old and some donors specifically request that gifts be given to moms."

She added that, including this year, at least 500 families have received help.

"Each family gets no less than 10 gifts," Felder said.

Terrel Redd, a Baltimore, Maryland resident, mentioned that The Rich Aunties and Uncles Christmas drive allowed her to give her nieces the kind of Christmas mornings that her parents

worked so hard to provide.

"It has been a magical lifesaver every year! To see them smiling and bubbling with excitement, not knowing how many people helped them [to] have those moments that will be in their core memories, truly makes me emotional. I am truly grateful for this village of kind people," Redd said.

Felder noted that many of the families seeking Christmas help have up to five siblings on their lists.

"It's a lot of work but the reward is worth it," Felder said.

Although the submission window is closed, if Felder receives more donors, she can open it up for families in need of Christmas help. Felder stated that approximately 20 people have contacted her about submitting a list. Additional mothers are contacting her daily.

If you would like to consider participating in the drive, please visit <https://x.com/lenvalyrian/status/1727762676770537516?s=46> to learn more about #RichAuntiesRichUnclesXmas.

Native Baltimorean Lends Talents to 'The Color Purple'

By Andrea Blackstone

Rashad Corey, a talented costume designer/assistant costume designer, developed expertise identifying and building realistic characters who appear on the big screen.

"It's not about always putting people in the finest things or the things that might look the cutest or look the most fabulous, but it's really identifying with the script and who that character is, and what they would wear and what they would do," Corey said, explaining several critical elements of costume design.

He added, "Say for instance, from 'The Color Purple,' we went through so many different eras... from the early 1900s all the way up into 1946. So, it was really a lot of research and education of that time. It wasn't just about what they wore, it was about the demographic of the people."

Corey worked as the assistant costume designer for "The Color Purple" musical/drama under Francine Jamison-Tanchuck, the costume designer and industry veteran.

Amazingly, Corey, who is also a stylist, spoke an opportunity to work on "The Color Purple" into existence in 2022, after Oprah Winfrey released the cast and the concept of the film. Corey loved the movie and cast of vibrant Black people.

"I put a post out there [on social media] and I shared Oprah's post. I said 'I want in on this Black excellence. I said #Goddoitforme,'" Corey said.

He put action behind his words, gathering contacts and taking bold steps. A series of events led to opportunities to prove that he was a skilled, fast learner. Originally, Corey was brought in as a costumer who would help on set with costumes that the designer had already created. A



Rashad Corey, Oprah Winfrey and Francine Jamison-Tanchuck. Winfrey was one of the producers of the bold new take on the beloved classic.

Photos: Crew member of "The Color Purple"

supervisor ended up connecting him with the designer who interviewed him. Corey was instructed to pull clothes for a fitting for Louis Gossett, Jr.

"With that fitting, Mr. Gossett was completely amazed and felt like he was in character. He told my designer, Ms. Francine, how pleased he was after the fitting was over," Corey said.

Then, Jamison-Tanchuck asked Corey if he ever thought about being a designer.

"At that point, I'd only been in the film industry for three years. To get to a design level in the film business in three years is unheard of, so I was completely astonished that she asked me that question, because at that point, I knew what the interview was for an assistant designer," Corey said.

The go-getter who became a part of Jamison-Tanchuck's design team for "The Color Purple" grew up in Baltimore, Maryland enduring challenges. Corey recalled being bullied, suffering from rejection, being

molested as a teenager by a pastor in 2005 and endured a humiliating trial.

School was very challenging for Corey, too.

While sitting in class, Corey doodled and sketched images from his head. Then, Corey failed the sixth grade. It was a wake-up call for him.

"But I always wanted to design. I always wanted to style. I always had an eye for fashion and building characters, but more so, I always had a vision and a passion for what I'm doing now."

Corey's mother, Wanda Clark, attempted to get her son enrolled into a school that had a program for stage production design and costume. After sketching to create a whole portfolio, he was rejected and crushed.

"When I wasn't accepted to that program, I put down my passion, stopped sketching and I stopped dreaming. I stopped even wanting to design," Corey said.

He headed to study psychology in college. Along the way, Dr. Jamal



Rashad Corey at work.

Bryant prophesied that he saw Corey working in the fashion industry, without knowing that he wanted to design and stopped designing.

Corey added, "He said my name would be in lights and I would go very far."

He never gave up on fulfilling his destiny, despite discouraging events. Corey was inspired to get back to working on his dream. After attending The Art Institute of Philadelphia, Corey earned a bachelor's degree in Fashion Marketing.

Corey offered inspiring words for anyone who might feel discouraged. He recommended taking trauma and tragedies to build momentum and triumph from them.

"I always knew that God was building my story and building my testimony. So, nothing good comes to people that don't believe. Believing in yourself and believing in God who empowers you to do what you do, is the most important thing," Corey said.

"The Color Purple" musical/drama will be released in theaters on December 25, 2023. Learn more about the movie via <https://www.thecolorpurplefilm.net/>. Follow Corey on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/theerashadcorey>.

City Leaders Announce Major Effort to Narrow Baltimore's Digital Divide

By **Demetrius Dillard**

Baltimore City has officially moved one step closer to closing the local digital divide.

Last week marked a significant milestone in Mayor Brandon Scott's tenure as Baltimore City's chief executive.

Scott, along with the Baltimore City Office of Information and Technology (BCIT), announced the Baltimore City Digital Inclusion Strategy – a five-year plan (2024-2029) that will directly address the city's digital divide with a measurable course of action designed to expand access to technology and digital resources for many of Baltimore's most disadvantaged residents.

"Digital equity is not just a matter of fairness but also a catalyst for economic growth and community development," Scott said.

"Our digital inclusion strategy encompasses a range of initiatives designed to eliminate the barriers faced by certain neighborhoods and individuals in accessing and benefiting from digital technology."

The Baltimore City Digital Inclusion Strategy, released Dec. 13, 2023 outlines a thorough, progressive approach to further develop Baltimore's digital infrastructure and help residents and businesses harness the power of technology for their well-being and the betterment of the city.

BCIT's Office of Broadband and Digital Equity (BDE) will oversee the development, and subsequent implementation, of the digital inclusion strategy. The strategy would not have been possible without extensive collaboration between city leaders, residents, community organizations, federal and state agencies, technology experts and other stakeholders.

As part of the strategy's planning process, BDE gathered resident and

stakeholder input from dozens of canvassing conversations, focus groups, interviews, surveys and town hall meetings. These feedback opportunities happened in-person and virtually between August 2022 and September 2023.

"Baltimore City has an unprecedented opportunity to narrow the digital divide. The digital revolution changed the way we live and work. But not all of Baltimore's residents share in the opportunities this digital age offers," says the digital inclusion strategy's executive summary.

"In a world where we rely on technology, we recognize the urgency of ensuring all Baltimore residents can access digital resources. Our Digital Inclusion Strategy rests on a belief that digital equity can support a thriving, prosperous, and equitable city."

Providing a clearer picture of the city's digital divide, the strategy cites research from the Abell Foundation indicating that 73.3 percent of white households in Baltimore City have wired broadband, compared to 50.2 percent of Black and 46.4 percent of Hispanic households. Additionally, 80.7 percent of white households have desktop or laptop computers, compared to 60 percent of black and 47.5 percent of Hispanic households.

The plan also highlights four actionable goals that will help anchor the city's activities and investments in the digital ecosystem:

- **Reliable High-Speed Internet:** Starting with the most underserved communities, Baltimore City residents will have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet based on investments in future-proof fiber optic networks.
- **Technology and Devices:** Baltimore City residents will be able to get a modern computing device.
- **Digital Skills Training:** Baltimore

City residents will have access to digital skills training, helping them use computing devices and safely navigate the internet.

- **Technical Support:** Baltimore City residents will receive technical support — in multiple languages — to master internet access and devices.

The 73-page plan also details strategies to achieve the aforementioned goals; the planning and community input process; feedback; equity considerations; solutions; aligning strategies and actions to goals; fiber as a technology solution to support digital equity; Baltimore City broadband profile; and more.

"We were very thoughtful in ensuring that we had a comprehensive approach to reaching our goals; this is actually something that we're very excited about because it's the first time that Baltimore City has very clearly articulated a path forward," said Kenya Asli, who serves as the director of BDE.

"This plan is a commitment to build a Baltimore that leaves no one behind in the digital age. The strategy will not only help enhance the quality of life for our residents, but also make Baltimore a more competitive and resilient city."

Early on in his administration, Mayor Scott announced plans to close the digital divide by 2030. In 2021, he allocated \$35 million of Baltimore City's \$461 million in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding toward broadband and digital equity, Asli highlighted, adding that the BDE office was successful in securing additional funds from the Office of Statewide Broadband that will enable city officials 50,000 Chromebooks to income-eligible households.

Partnerships with Enoch Pratt Library, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, and several other city agencies and organizations will equip BDE to successfully implement the digital inclusion strategy.



Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott announces the launch of FreeBmoreWiFi—Baltimore's free public Wi-Fi network—at Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center, December 2023.

Shelby Swann Photography



BDE Director Kenya Asli speaking at Baltimore City's Digital Equity Forum, May 2023.

Shelby Swann Photography

City leadership didn't waste time in putting the digital inclusion plan into action.

On December 18, 2023, Scott and the BDE office hosted an event to announce the launch of Baltimore City's public-facing Wi-Fi network, "FreeBmoreWiFi," at Cherry Hill's Middle Branch Fitness and Wellness Center.

The network is a major component of the digital inclusion strategy to provide affordable, reliable and accessible internet to all residents.



The proposed ritual, The Overcome: A Black Passover, is the concept of a yearly celebration of and by African Americans commemorating the significance of overcoming slavery, Jim Crow, and institutionalized racism to ascent as leaders in all walks of life. This proposed ritual has been compared to the yearly commemorated Jewish Passover. The book *The Overcome: A Black Passover* delineates the logical explanation of a celebration. *Overcome: Rite, Liturgy & Songs* outlines the actual celebratory ceremony. So, like those of Jewish ancestry, ***there is no going back to Egypt and for African Americans, there is no going back to slavery!***

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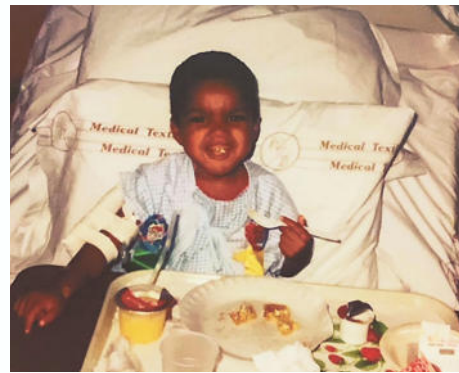
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*Austin Lee and his mother volunteer at Children's National Hospital.
Courtesy photo*



Four-year-old Austin Lee after his first kidney transplant. Courtesy photo



Austin Lee with his second living kidney donor. Courtesy photo

Two-Time Kidney Transplant Recipient Grateful for a New Lease on Life

By **Andrea Blackstone**

Austin Lee, a 34-year-old Silver Spring Maryland resident, knows what it feels like to be impacted by kidney disease early in life. The two-time kidney transplant recipient was born with a rare birth defect called posterior urethral valves.

The birth defect is described as “a rare, congenital, fetal lower urinary tract obstruction (LUTO) anomaly characterized by an abnormal congenital obstructing membrane or leaflets that are located within the posterior urethra associated with significant obstruction of the male bladder restricting normal bladder emptying,” according to GARD, a program of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that provides information about genetic and rare diseases.

A medical emergency emerged. Lee’s two native kidneys became nonfunctional.

“I had the first kidney transplant when I was 4 years old,” Lee said. “Before I was even born, the doctors believed that I would have serious health complications as they visually witnessed a big mass inside of my abdomen filled with fluid. The decision to abort the pregnancy was then presented to my mom.”

Lee further stated that he was born

in Germany when his father served in the military. While the Lee family lived overseas, doctors informed Clarissa Lee (Austin’s mother) that if he was born alive, he may not live long due to health challenges.

“I made the decision not to abort the pregnancy,” Clarissa said.

Austin and his family moved back to the United States when he was 6 or 7 months old. Austin stated that he received medical care at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, since his father was serving in the military.

The renal pediatric patient spent the bulk of his time in the hospital as a toddler. Even drinking water or juice was difficult for Austin. He also began dialysis at just 1½ years old.

Clarissa ended up donating a kidney to Austin as a living donor in 1993.

“I wanted to give him [my son] the best chance at living a full and meaningful life and that was only possible through being his first living related kidney donor,” she stated.

Later, Austin’s health took another turn.

“The first transplant gave me the gift of life for 14 years. In 2006, I went into renal rejection for the second time and at the age of 17 years old,” Austin said.

The resilient young man needed to undergo peritoneal dialysis for an additional three years. When

Austin was a high school student, he received his second kidney transplant in 2010 through a kidney paired donation program from an unrelated living donor named Stella Christian. Through the program, two living donors and two recipients can arrange for a “swap” for two simultaneous transplants to take place, if the recipient from one pair is compatible with the donor from the other pair, according to the National Kidney Foundation. Dr. Keith Melancon performed Austin’s transplant surgery.

Austin also reflected on Christian’s kidney donation.

“She saved my life,” he said.

Today, Austin has a new lease on life. He can travel freely, pursue his dreams and he can give back.

“I’ve been a Donate Life/ Infinite Legacy volunteer ambassador for over 10 years,” Austin said.

Austin serves as an advocate on behalf of various kidney organizations to promote kidney disease awareness, including Donate Life Maryland (DLM) and Infinite Legacy. DLM handles registrations of the state’s organ, eye and tissue donors. Infinite Legacy is a nonprofit organ procurement organization. Additionally, Austin educates the pediatric patient community about kidney disease; currently serves as a Patient Family Advisory Council

Member of Children’s National Medical Center to improve the overall care and experiences for patients and families of the hospital; and he serves as a patient family advisory council member for the American Society of Nephrology.

Austin remains grateful to receive the gift of life twice. His 14th kidney transplant anniversary is coming up in June.

“The thing that makes this so special for me is because my first transplant that I received from my mom lasted for 14 years. This transplant is almost to the 14-year mark,” Austin said.

He reminded that living donors give kidney patients their freedom back, and a second chance to achieve goals and dreams that they may feel that they may not have once been physically able to do.

Clarissa agreed that it is important to be a living donor or a registered organ, eye or tissue donor.

“It is important because everyone deserves to live their best possible life,” she said. “I felt extremely blessed and grateful to God. And if I had another kidney to spare I would do it all over again!”

Please visit Donate Life Maryland via <https://www.donatelifemaryland.org/> to learn more about organ, eye and tissue donation.



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Michael Owens/Getty Images

Ravens Get Back to Identity with Rushing Attack

By Tyler Hamilton

The Baltimore Ravens have always maintained the identity of a powerful rushing attack. Over the years, running backs like Jamaal Lewis, Ray Rice and Justin Forsett have posted outstanding seasons. Lewis ran for 2,066 yards in 2003.

Previous offensive coordinator Greg Roman had the Ravens consistently finishing as one of the top 5 rushing teams, but Ravens coach John Harbaugh wanted a change at coordinator, so he brought in Todd Monken. It was critical for Baltimore to continue running the ball with success.

“It was important in the sense also to have elements of the rushing attack that we built [and] worked so hard on the last four years,” Harbaugh said. “We didn’t want to run away from that run game, because we had a lot of reps under our belt and a lot of institutional knowledge with that. Our players understood it – a lot of the plays we’d been running, and they fit our guys really well. That’s one thing that was an important part of it.”

The Ravens are currently the NFL’s

top rushing offense, averaging 163.8 yards per game. They’re able to find success without having a primary back thanks to the group including Justice Hill, Keaton Mitchell, and Gus Edwards.

Jackson leads the Ravens in rushing yards with 741 while Edwards’ 11 rushing touchdowns lead the team. The 23-7 win over the Jacksonville Jaguars was an example of the balanced Ravens rushing attack. Jackson ran for 97 yards. Mitchell carried the ball only nine times but posted 73 yards. Edwards had 58 yards but picked up the only touchdown on the ground.

Mitchell’s speed and suddenness added an explosive aspect to Baltimore’s rushing attack, but he suffered a knee last Sunday night against the Jaguars and will likely be out for the rest of the season.

“That was very tough. I believe [Keaton Mitchell’s run] was going to be a touchdown,” Jackson said. “He’s lights out. He was just starting to get started, so that’s tough to see. My thoughts and prayers are with him because he’s a guy. That was a crazy injury.”

Fortunately, the Ravens have a veteran in Melvin Gordon to fill in.

“Melvin Gordon [III] is a high-pedigree football player in this league. It’s almost kind of shocking that we’re going to have the opportunity to put him into the mix right now, and he’s been wanting to be into the mix,” Harbaugh said.

Baltimore’s 251 rushing yards were a key factor in their dominance over the Jaguars. They’ll need to produce an equally dominant performance in another prime-time matchup when they travel to the West Coast to face the San Francisco 49ers on Christmas Day.

The Ravens return to M&T Bank Stadium the following week for a showdown with the Miami Dolphins with the top seed in the AFC potentially being on the line. Baltimore can seal their own fate by winning the final three games, but their focus is a week-by-week basis.

“That’s how these guys are,” Harbaugh said. “These guys are going to be thinking about one thing – thinking about the next game. 1-0 has been their mantra.”

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Minority Subcontractor/Supplier Schummer, Inc. seeking Certified Minority Subcontractors for: Trappe, MD - Trappe Sewage Pumping Station Upgrades, Phase 1. Bids due in our office January 20, 2024. Certified MBE’s & WBE’s for: Excavation, Paving, Pipelaying, Plumbing, Electrical, Pipe, Precast, Concrete, Pumps, Aggregates, and Trucking. Fax quotes to: 410-798-1709 or email: schummerinc@aol.com For more information call 410-956-8080.

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Minority Subcontractor/Supplier Schummer, Inc. seeking Certified Minority Subcontractors for: Bid 001 – Chesapeake Complex Wastewater Holding Tank, Anne Arundel Co., MD. Bids due in our office Jan. 15, 2024. Certified MBE’s & WBE’s for: Excavation, Paving, Pipelaying, Pre-stressed Concrete, Plumbing, Electrical, Pipe, Mixers, Pumps, Aggregates, and Trucking. Prevailing Wage Rates Apply. Fax quotes to: 410-798-1709 or email: schummerinc@aol.com For more information call 410-956-8080.

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CITY OF BALTIMORE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposal for the TR-24008, ADA CURB RAMP AND SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION URGENT NEED EAST (JOC) will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204, City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until **JANUARY 24, 2024**, at 11:00 A.M. Board of Estimates employees will be stationed at the Security Unit Counter just inside the Holliday Street entrance to City Hall from 10:45 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. every Wednesday to receive Bids. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. The bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. As of **DECEMBER 22, 2023**, the Contract Documents may be examined, without charge by contacting Brenda Simmons at brenda.simmons@baltimorecity.gov or (443) 865-4423 to arrange for a copy of the bid book labeled **"NOT FOR BIDDING PURPOSES"** to be emailed to you. Anyone who desires to purchase a bid book to be used for bidding purposes must do so in person and by contacting Brenda Simmons at the email address or phone number above. The non-refundable cost is **SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$75.00)** to be paid at the Department of Transportation 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 made payable to the Director of Finance. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors' Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact the Committee at 4 S. Frederick Street, 4th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Categories required for bidding on this project are **D02620 CURBS, GUTTERS, SIDEWALKS**. Cost Qualification Range for this project will be from **\$5,000,000.00 to \$6,000,000.00**. A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted via Microsoft Teams on **JANUARY 10, 2024**, at 10:00 a.m. hosted by the Department of Transportation. All Bidders must email your contact information to include your name, company name, phone number and email address to receive an invite to the

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Microsoft Team (video conference meeting. Principle Items of work for this project are: **5" Concrete Sidewalk – 50,000 SF; SURVEY, EVALUATION, SKETCHES, AND STAKEOUT FOR CURB RAMPS – 300 EA; CONCRETE CURB, VARIABLE WIDTH AND WEIGHT - 4,500 LF; CONCRETE COMBINATION CURB AND GUTTER, VARIABLE WIDTH AND HEIGHT - 3,000 LF; and PORTLAND CEMENT CONCRETE PAVEMENT FOR SLOT BACKFILL, MODIFIED MIX NO. 6 - 7,500 LF.** The MBE Goal is **26%**; The WBE Goal is **10%**. APPROVED: Celeste Amato, Clerk, Board of Estimates

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CITY OF BALTIMORE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposal for the TR-24009, ADA CURB RAMP AND SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION URGENT NEED WEST (JOC) will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204, City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until **FEBRUARY 21, 2024**, at 11:00 A.M. Board of Estimates employees will be stationed at the Security Unit Counter just inside the Holliday Street entrance to City Hall from 10:45 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. every Wednesday to receive Bids. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. The bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. As of **DECEMBER 22, 2023**, the Contract Documents may be examined, without charge by contacting Brenda Simmons at brenda.simmons@baltimorecity.gov or (443) 865-4423 to arrange for a copy of the bid book labeled **"NOT FOR BIDDING PURPOSES"** to be emailed to you. Anyone who desires to purchase a bid book to be used for bidding purposes must do so in person and by contacting Brenda Simmons at the email address or phone number above. The non-refundable cost is **SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$75.00)** to be paid at the Department of Transportation 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 made payable to the Director of Finance. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Balti-

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more Contractors' Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact the Committee at 4 S. Frederick Street, 4th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Categories required for bidding on this project are **D02620 CURBS, GUTTERS, SIDEWALKS**. Cost Qualification Range for this project will be from **\$5,000,000.00 to \$6,000,000.00**. A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted via Microsoft Teams on **JANUARY 10, 2024**, at 10:00 a.m. hosted by the Department of Transportation. All Bidders must email your contact information to include your name, company name, phone number and email address to receive an invite to the Microsoft Team (video conference meeting. Principle Items of work for this project are: **5" Concrete Sidewalk – 50,000 SF; SURVEY, EVALUATION, SKETCHES, AND STAKEOUT FOR CURB RAMPS – 300 EA; CONCRETE CURB, VARIABLE WIDTH AND WEIGHT - 4,500 LF; CONCRETE COMBINATION CURB AND GUTTER, VARIABLE WIDTH AND HEIGHT - 3,000 LF; and PORTLAND CEMENT CONCRETE PAVEMENT FOR SLOT BACKFILL, MODIFIED MIX NO. 6 - 7,500 LF.** The MBE Goal is **26%**; The WBE Goal is **10%**. APPROVED: Celeste Amato, Clerk, Board of Estimates

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CITY OF BALTIMORE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NOTICE OF LETTING

Sealed Bids or Proposal for the F.A.P. NO. AC-TAP-000B (742) E, S.H.A. NO. AX352B54, CITY OF BALTIMORE CONTRACT NO. TR-18302, SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL, will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204, City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until **MARCH 6, 2024**, at 11:00 A.M. Board of Estimates employees will be stationed at the Security Unit Counter just inside the Holliday Street entrance to City Hall from 10:45 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. every Wednesday to receive Bids. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00

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A.M. The bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. As of **DECEMBER 22, 2023**, the Contract Documents may be examined, without charge by contacting Brenda Simmons at brenda.simmons@baltimorecity.gov or (443) 865-4423 to arrange for a copy of the bid book labeled **"NOT FOR BIDDING PURPOSES"** to be emailed to you. Anyone who desires to purchase a bid book to be used for bidding purposes must do so in person and by contacting Brenda Simmons at the email address or phone number above. The non-refundable cost is **SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$75.00)** at the Department of Transportation 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 made payable to the Director of Finance. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by the City of Baltimore Contractors' Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact the Committee at 4 S. Frederick Street, 4th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. **If a bid is submitted by a joint venture ("JV"), then in that event, the document that established the JV shall be submitted with the bid for verification purposes.** The Prequalification Categories required for bidding on this project are **A02601 PORTLAND CEMENT CONCRETE, D02620-CURBS, GUTTERS, and SIDEWALKS**. Cost Qualification Range for this project will be from **\$500,000.00 to \$1,500,000.00**. A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted via Microsoft Teams on **JANUARY 18, 2024**, at 10:00 a.m. hosted by the Department of Transportation. **By no later than JANUARY 17, 2024**, all Bidders must email your contact information to include your name, company name, phone number and email address to john.malinowski@baltimorecity.gov to receive an invite to the Microsoft Team (video conference meeting. Principle Items of work for this project are: **24 INCH WHITE PERMANENT PREFORMED PAVEMENT MARKINGS – 5,810 LF; 5 INCH CONCRETE SIDEWALK - 17,183 SF; and SPECIAL TYPE A COMBINATION CURB AND GUTTER 6 IN. HEIGHT X 12 IN GUTTER – 1,959 LF.** The DBE Goal is **15%**. APPROVED: Celeste Amato, Clerk, Board of Estimates

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