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The Baltimore Times' Joy Bramble Honored as Publisher of the Year at NNPA Convention



Joy Bramble, longtime publisher of The Baltimore Times, was named Publisher of the Year by the National Newspaper Publishers Association during the annual convention held in Baltimore, Maryland, June 19-22, 2024, at the Four Seasons Hotel. The convention was co-hosted by The AFRO and The Baltimore Times. Photo: (L-R): Bobby Henry, Sr., Chairman, National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and Publisher, Westside Gazette; Joy Bramble, Publisher Emeritus; and Karen Carter Richards, NNPA Fund Chairman and Publisher, Houston Forward Times (See article on page 2)

Photo Credit: Mark Mahoney, Dream In Color

The Baltimore Times' Joy Bramble Honored as Publisher of the Year at NNPA Convention

By Stacy Brown and Paris Brown

In 1986, Joy Bramble gathered all her resources and began publishing The Baltimore Times from her kitchen table on Madison Avenue. Nearly 39 years later, Bramble's peers honored her as Publisher of the Year during the 2024 National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) annual convention. The NNPA, a trade association comprising over 200 African American-owned newspapers and media companies, held its convention in Baltimore from June 19–22, 2024 at the Four Seasons Hotel and was co-hosted by The AFRO News and The Baltimore Times. In addition to being named Publisher of the Year, The Baltimore Times won three other National Newspaper Publishers Association industry awards, including 1st Place E. Washington Rhodes award for Original Advertising Campaign; 1st Place for the Don King Award for Sports; and W.A Scott II Award for Community Engagement.

Joceyln Cheryl Bramble, affectionately known as Joy, launched The Baltimore Times to fill a void she saw in positive news reporting about Black people. She believed there were enough positive stories to sustain a weekly publication. Initially, The Baltimore Times published five newspapers with a combined weekly circulation of 52,000, making it the largest circulation of African American newspapers on the Eastern Seaboard. Today, The Baltimore Times and The Annapolis Times continue to publish weekly without missing an issue, even during the pandemic.

The Baltimore Times' major pillars are positive news reporting on health, finance, and housing (aimed at closing the wealth gap) while highlighting

community contributions. Bramble's dedication to improving Baltimore residents' quality of life led to hosting the first-ever health screening expo in Baltimore City, where over 3,000 attendees participated. For over 30 years, The Baltimore Times has collaborated with entities like the Department of Health and Human Services, the Baltimore City Health Department, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), earning national recognition for its work in health reporting and addressing health inequities.

Her dedication to closing the wealth gap led to the founding of the Center for Lendistry, a strategic partner to Lendistry, which provides loans and financial products to underserved small business owners. Other programs offered by The Baltimore Times to help provide access to capital through partnerships include: PNC Bank's "Mind Your Business," Lendistry's "Access to Capital," and JPMorgan Chase's news reporting on such topics.

The newspaper's business reporting and personal storytelling inspire businesses to establish, develop, and grow. During Juneteenth of this year, The Baltimore Times, in partnership with Friends of the Movement (FotM), launched the Black Wall Street Ticker to promote awareness of Black spending in America and Baltimore's Black businesses.

Last year, the newspaper launched the inaugural Best of Black Baltimore Digital Campaign, celebrating over 316 businesses and achieving significant community engagement. This spring, The Baltimore Times embarked on Creatively Black Baltimore, a pop-up art initiative at Inner Harbor Light Street Pavilion, showcasing the richness of Baltimore's Black creative community.



Publisher of the Year, Joy Bramble and Paris M. Brown, Associate Publisher, who will succeed Bramble as publisher of The Baltimore Times.

Photo: Mark Mahoney, Dream In Color

Committed to excellence in journalism, The Baltimore Times avoids investigative or anonymous source reporting, earning its reputation as a trusted community news source. Joy Bramble's contributions to Baltimore City and Maryland have been widely recognized, including a Maryland State Capital session where she was honored by Adrienne Jones, the first Black Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates. Her wax figure was unveiled at the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, the first wax museum featuring prominent African Americans.

The Baltimore Times and Joy Bramble have received over one hundred citations and awards, including the City of Baltimore Presidential Citation, Kool Achiever Award, and numerous congressional,

gubernatorial, and mayoral citations. Joy Bramble currently sits on the University of Maryland School of Medicine board and has previously served on the boards of Goodwill Industries, the Greater Baltimore Urban League, NNPA, MDCC Press Association, and other local organizations.

As she transitions to Publisher Emeritus on June 28, 2024, this honor acknowledges Joy Bramble's service to the Baltimore community, her commitment to her team, and her dedication to the National Newspaper Publishers Association. Paris M. Brown, Associate Publisher, will succeed her as Publisher of The Baltimore Times.

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Emerging Singing Star, Daughter Shares Musical Bond with Her Father

By Andrea Blackstone

“Elyscia,” one of Baltimore’s rising singing stars, was born and raised in Randallstown, Maryland.

“I was 5 years old when I began singing,” she recalls.

The full-time artist, singer, and entertainer was a contestant on “The Voice” in Season 25 in March of 2024. The vocal competition show was filmed in Los Angeles, California at Universal Studios. Elyscia was chosen to participate on “Team Reba.”

“I felt so accomplished and satisfied to know that such an icon and innovator in the industry like Reba [McEntire] wanted me on her team.”

Elyscia added, “The competition is set up to see who gives the best dynamite performance. You then rely on your coaches to push and improve your performances, which will help you and them win at the end of the show. After ‘Battles’ and your first audition, you go to live shows where America votes for you and advances you up to the top five or winner!”

Elyscia did not make it past the second round of Battles. During the process, a coach chooses which of his or her artists will proceed to the next competition round.

“I didn’t want to go home yet and [I] wanted to keep singing and [I was] almost thinking it’s the end of the world until I realized this isn’t the end, just the beginning. It was a blessing and eye-opening experience to be there and to know I have what it takes to be on such an amazing team like Reba’s and get three chair turns! I didn’t know I had what it takes. Now I do, so it motivated me to keep going!” she stated.

The crooner who belts out R&B, pop, and pure soul with emotion learned to



Elyscia on stage while appearing on “The Voice.” Photo: “The Voice”

always believe in herself, trust herself, and to give her all to something that she’s good at doing.

“You never know where it can take you,” Elyscia added.

After Elyscia took a brave leap of faith on NBC’s popular show, other doors began to open. The vocalist has met new fans and opened up for R&B star Tank on his tour. She has begun to perform in local yet iconic musical spots, such as Keystone Korner Jazz Club in Baltimore, Maryland and many more. Away from the spotlights, Elyscia found coaching and support at home.

“My dad [Elliot Jefferson] was the first to realize [that] I had a singing talent,” she said. “We were riding in the car one day and I was singing along to the radio. I started harmonizing with



Elliot Jefferson, left, and his daughter, Elyscia. Courtesy photo

the song that was playing, singing the top harmony. My dad couldn’t believe that I could hear that note and sing it well, especially at my age.”

Jefferson had a home studio in their basement. His daughter recalls that the musician would play music around the house. Elyscia was taught to play the piano, engineer, and record music.

Elyscia further noted, “Ultimately seeing my dad’s passion for music and the singers’ emotions and passion in their performances with the music sparked something inside of me.”

Jefferson said that he started piano lessons at the tender age of six. He has worked with singers such as Lil’ Mo, Keith Washington, and the group Dru Hill. He also worked on network television shows, including “The Game.”

According to his bio, his formal musical training as a pianist, organist and keyboardist and his proficiency in cutting-edge production technology have positioned him as the “go-to guy” to his industry counterparts.

The music producer, songwriter and full-time musician who owns One Vision Music LLC, founded the company in 2003 with a group of friends.

“I became interested in the music industry in 2001 while attending college, just as I was about to become a first-time father. Knowing I had to do something different as I took on the responsibility of raising a child, I turned my focus to the music industry,” Jefferson said.

The independent artist who sells his music on Spotify and Apple Music loves controlling and owning the rights to his music.

A few things make him most proud, including opening a music studio to help others pursue and advance their musical careers.

“I’ve also had the incredible opportunity to travel the world and live in Africa for a time, using my talents. Additionally, I have had the joy of supporting my daughter in her dream of becoming a successful and accomplished singer,” Jefferson said.

Elyscia mentioned that new projects are on the horizon for her.

The determined singer added, “No matter how you feel, or if you’re discouraged and feel like it will never work out, keep going.”

Visit www.elysciasings.com and www.1visionmusic.com to find out more about the daughter and father duo.

America's Voices Against Apartheid

City Hall Hosts Marylanders Cry Freedom Exhibition

Celebrating 40 Years Since Maryland's Divestment, the Exhibition Highlights Marylanders' Contributions



(l-r) Katherine Van Hollen; Khephra Burns, exhibition writer; April Ryan, White House Correspondent for The Griot; Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott; Dr. Jean Bailey, President & CEO, Sister States of Maryland, Inc. and Project Director, Marylanders Cry Freedom/America's Voices Against Apartheid Exhibition; Nick Mosby, President, Baltimore City Council; Dr. Ben Chavis, President & CEO, National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA); Congressman Kweisi Mfume (D-7th); and Bobby Henry Sr., Chairman, NNPA. Photo: Baltimore City Mayor's Office

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By Maryland Sister States

On June 18, 2024 representatives of Maryland/KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa)/Sister States of Maryland joined Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott to unveil *Marylanders Cry Freedom: Civil Rights At Home and Abroad*, a companion exhibit to the internationally acclaimed "America's Voices Against Apartheid," a groundbreaking exhibition that sheds light on the global movement against apartheid. April Ryan served as mistress of ceremonies and speakers included Ismail Esau, Deputy Chief

of Mission, Embassy of the Republic of South Africa and Dr. Ben Chavis, President & CEO, National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA). Other members of the Black Press of America were in attendance. The exhibit will be on display at City Hall through August 31, 2024.

In 1984, Maryland, with its courageous decision to divest funds from the apartheid government, became a beacon of hope in the fight for civil rights. Today, as we commemorate the 40th anniversary of this historic event, this exhibition not only highlights Marylanders'

contributions to the global fight against discrimination and injustice but also serves as a timely reminder of the importance of our ongoing commitment to these values.

"As the United States was grappling with civil rights and racial injustices, South Africa was contending with the pervasive and oppressive system of apartheid," said Mayor Brandon Scott. "However, a chosen few Marylanders refused to accept this as the reality of our future, whether home or abroad. This exhibition highlights their

See **FREEDOM**, page 13

Behind the Scenes of Art Sherrod Jr.'s Soulful Sax Journey

By Andrea Blackstone

When it comes to the demands of practicing and mastering musical skills, performing on stage for fans can make it all worthwhile. Art Sherrod Jr., a talented Marylander, stands among musicians who have made their mark on the music scene. While playing smooth jazz, gospel jazz, contemporary jazz and R&B, Sherrod has shared the stage with musical greats including Will Downing, Sheila E., and Norman Connors. He has opened up for Natalie Cole.

“Alto and tenor saxophone are the primary instruments that you will see me playing,” Sherrod said, explaining that he does play other instruments.

Sherrod has had a long history with the saxophone. His primary genre is now contemporary smooth jazz and gospel jazz.

“I’ve been playing since I was 13 years old,” Sherrod shared.

As a student, his middle school band director, James Shelton Sr. taught Sherrod to have a musical work ethic.

“He was an amazing mentor,” Sherrod added.

The musician reflected on growing up in Palestine, Texas, playing in Palestine High School’s Wildcat Band.

“By the time I graduated high school, I was an All-State alto, tenor and baritone saxophone player.”

Sherrod credited his mother as the first person who probably introduced him to music.

“During her daily ritual, she would go into the music room. She would sit there and play for hours and sing. I would go and sit on the organ bench with her, sing, just listen and watch her play,” Sherrod said, adding that his mother played hymns.

Sherrod Jr. said his father, Art Sherrod Sr., sang in the male chorus.

Art Sherrod Jr. spent a year in a preparatory school and four years in Annapolis while attending the United States Naval Academy. The late Congressman Charlie Wilson informed him that he was going to give his Congressional recommendation so that Art Sherrod Jr. could attend the United States Naval Academy. The rest is history.

“During that time for the most part, I didn’t have my horn with me because of the rigors of being at the prep school and being at the Academy,” Sherrod Jr. explained.

After a school break, he returned with his horn. His roommate at the Academy was the only person who knew that Art Jr. played saxophone. He inspired his friend to resume playing music again.

“We used to have this church service on Wednesdays, and it was called Worship in the Black Experience,” Sherrod Jr. explained. “My good friend Harold Simms was the organist for the Worship in the Black Experience service.

Simms encouraged him to bring his horn.

“He especially helped me to open up and build my ear training. So, I started



Professional musician and saxophonist, Art Sherrod Jr. resumed his passion for playing the saxophone while attending the United States Naval Academy.

Photos: Roy Cox Studio



Cover design: Fritz Photographics

when you’re playing in a band. You’re not only playing in a band, but you’re also playing, and you don’t have sheet music. So, you’re having to rely on your ear to learn your parts,” he said.

Art Jr.’s musical progression included recording his first EP (extended play musical recording) in 2003 at ADEK in Annapolis. He made his way to recording music in Baltimore. His first studio record “All 4 Love,” was released in 2005. A featured song, “Sara Smile” became his breakout tune.

Art Jr.’s sixth record, “Feels So Good” will launch on July 26, 2024.

“I think anyone who listens to this regardless of their age, race, background will be able to relate to it,” he said.

The passionate musician strives to release better music every time he adds a record to his catalog of work. Performing music is therapeutic for Art Jr. and other musicians.

“We might be having a bad or sad day, but we’re able to express our feelings,” he said. “It just makes you feel so good to get up there and just play from your heart, from your soul!” Visit <https://artsherrodjr.com/> to read more about Art Jr.’s updates.

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NNPA 2024 Convention in Baltimore Breaks New Ground

The 2024 convention began with the unveiling of the “Marylanders Cry Freedom, Civil Rights at Home and Abroad” exhibit at Baltimore City Hall, which celebrated the 40th anniversary of Maryland’s divestment from South Africa’s apartheid regime in 1984.

By **Stacy M. Brown**

NNPA Newswire Senior National
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The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) concluded its 2024 annual summer convention on Saturday, June 22, leaving its mark on Baltimore and making history as the first trade association with a presidential campaign as an event sponsor. The Biden-Harris campaign also announced a groundbreaking 7-figure advertising and sponsorship deal with the NNPA, which represents 250 Black-owned newspapers and media companies comprising the Black Press of America.

“In August of last year, our campaign announced the earliest and largest investment into Black media for any reelection campaign in history,” said Jasmine Harris, the director of national Black media for Biden-Harris 2024. “This partnership with the NNPA is a continuation of those efforts and will strengthen our work in meeting Black voters where they are, to underscore the stakes of this election for Black America. President Biden and Vice President Harris are responsible for creating millions of new jobs for Black workers and record low Black unemployment. Black America has far too much to lose this election.”

In a letter to publishers, Vice President Harris asserted that the NNPA has remained steadfast in its commitment to supporting Black publishers. “Your work helps



Damon T. Hewitt, President and Executive Director, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law opened the NNPA's 2024 Annual Convention with a keynote presentation: “What is at Stake for African Americans : the 2024 Vote.”
Photos: Mark Mahoney, Dream In Color



Bobby Henry, Sr., Chairman of the National Newspaper Publishers Association with Joy Bramble, Publisher Emeritus of The Baltimore Times and her successor Paris M. Brown, during the NNPA's Opening Reception.



The AFRO News co-hosted the NNPA 2024 Convention with The Baltimore Times. Pictured is Dr. Toni “Frances” Draper, Publisher and President & CEO, The AFRO News.

ensure that communities gain critical knowledge and have access to accurate information on the pertinent issues impacting our country,” Harris asserted. “As you know, the freedom of the press is essential to our democracy. I commend the efforts of the NNPA as you continue to be trusted voices of your communities and tell stories that too often go untold.”

NNPA Chairman Bobby R. Henry Sr., emphasized that “it is extremely important to show support of the business side of the Black Press owned by Black business leaders. Verbal support is good, but financial support is better.”

The 2024 convention began with

the unveiling of the “Marylanders Cry Freedom, Civil Rights at Home and Abroad” at Baltimore City Hall, which celebrated the 40th anniversary of Maryland’s divestment from South Africa’s apartheid regime in 1984.

The unveiling featured remarks from Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott, Democratic Maryland Rep. Kweisi Mfume, Dr. Chavis, Henry, AFRO Publisher Dr. Toni Draper, and other dignitaries. Distinguished guests included U.S. Black Chambers President Ron Busby and Dr. Camille Rabin of Fox Chase Cancer Center.

The convention offered a series of insightful panels and discussions. A GenZ panel on voter issues featured Journalist Ashleigh Fields;

University of Maryland Student Journalist Savannah Grooms; North Carolina A&T Student Journalist Melvin Harris Jr.; Huffington Post Journalist Phillip Lewis; Community Organizer Brielle Morton; and Elijah Pittman, an anti-colonial Afro-diasporic-centered journalist from Howard University. Additional panels, hosted by Wells Fargo, Google News Initiative, General Motors, Pfizer, and Reynolds, aligned with the convention’s theme, “Empowering the Black Press, Communities, Families, and Voter Turnout.”

During the NNPA Fund’s Merit Awards, Baltimore Times Publisher Joy Bramble was honored as Publisher of the Year. The St. Louis American



Philadelphia Tribune Publisher Robert Bogle receives the NNPA's Let It Be Known Future Goes Viral Award at the 2024 NNPA Summer Convention. Photos: Mark Mahoney, Dream In Color

led with twelve awards, including first place in the Armstrong Ellington Entertainment category and the Robert L. Vann Layout & Design Award. Real Times Media publications, the Michigan Chronicle, and the New Pittsburgh Courier collectively garnered eight awards. The Michigan Chronicle won five awards, while the New Pittsburgh Courier and The Baltimore Times earned three.

The Atlanta Voice received six awards for journalistic excellence, including the Emory O. Jackson Award for health coverage and the Ada S. Franklin Award for fashion. The Sacramento Observer, whose publisher Larry Lee won the 2023 Publisher of the Year award, also secured six awards. Other recognized publications included The Washington Informer, Texas Metro News, Houston Forward Times, Houston Defender, Insight News, Minneapolis Spokesman-Recorder, Los Angeles Sentinel, New York Amsterdam News, and Seattle Medium.

The NNPA's daily digital show, "Let It Be Known," was celebrated with the Black Press of America's "Black Excellence in Media" award. The NNPA National Legacy Awards, always among the convention highlights, honored Maryland



The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) publishers received a guided tour from Dr. Joanne Martin, Founder of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum during the NNPA convention. Pictured here, holding slave shackles is (l-r) Dr. Joanne Martin, National Great Blacks in Wax Museum; Dr. Ben Chavis, President/CEO, NNPA; Bobby Henry Sr., Chairman, NNPA and Publisher, Westside Gazette; Mark Thompson, NNPA Global Digital Transformation Director; and Terry Jones, Louisiana Data

Democratic U.S. Rep. Kweisi Mfume. Erica P. Loewe, a White House Office of Public Engagement assistant to the president and chief of staff, and photographer Mel D. Cole received the inaugural "Future Goes Viral" award from Let It Be Known under the direction of Greer Marshall for their bravery and unwavering resolve during and after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Philadelphia Tribune Publisher Robert Bogle, and Defender Network CEO Sonny Messiah Jiles were also presented with the "Future Goes Viral," award for their tireless advocacy as publishers of Black-owned newspapers and media companies.



NNPA Chair Bobby Henry, NNPA Fund Chair Karen Carter Richards, and NNPA President & CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. present the St. Louis American with one of 12 awards the newspaper captured at the 2024 NNPAF Messenger Awards.

In a League of Her Own: Maysa Follows Her Destined Path

By Andrea Blackstone

During Music Appreciation Month, a fun fact to tuck into your knowledge bank is the health benefits of listening to music.

“There are few things that stimulate the brain the way music does. If you want to keep your brain engaged throughout the aging process, listening to or playing music is a great tool. It provides a total brain workout,” according to Johns Hopkins Medicine.

“You may not be aware of it, but your brain has to do a lot of computing to make sense of it,” Johns Hopkins Medicine also noted.

This medical benefit of music is yet another reason to treasure gifted musicmakers and singers. While some people play music to lighten or lift their mood, others turn to melodic expressions to relax or conjure memorable times from yesterday.

Maysa, a Baltimore-based singer, writer and music producer sings soul-stirring music that effortlessly tugs at the heart. She works to polish her craft, diligently and methodically. Her professional growth has included owning her own record label called Blue Velvet Soul Records.

The veteran songstress reflected on childhood memories that intermingled with her destined path to build a musical career. She recalls hearing R&B, jazz, soul, and funk at home day and night.

“My parents played music from the time I can remember,” said Maysa.

Maysa shared that she was destined to be in the music industry at just six years old. She also explained that both of her parents were a great support to her.

“My mother took me to see the play ‘Purlie.’ Melba Moore walked out on stage and started singing and I knew at that point that I wanted to be a singer for the rest of my life,” the determined artist added.

Maysa participated in talent shows during junior high and high school. She ultimately enrolled at Morgan State University and became a classical vocal performance major. The late Dr. Nathan Carter was the choir director. At that time, Maysa learned about exhibiting discipline with singing and being on tour, before working in the music industry.

“He taught us about being on tour way before I got into the music industry because the choir traveled a lot,” Maysa said, recalling her days as a choir member. She blossomed and developed her own sound after listening to singers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Patti LaBelle and others, including instrumentalists.

“I call it jazz, funk and scat and that’s what I do,” Maysa said confidently.

She signed with GRP Records under Universal in 1995. She later began working for independent labels until her 14th solo album “Music For Your Soul” was released under her own label last year.

Maysa added, “A year later, I put out a remix for ‘For Your Soul’ album. The remix is by professional remix producers that showcase songs from the original sister album. That’s doing very well, too.”

The dedicated artist said that she will work on a straight-ahead jazz album and other projects.



Grammy-nominated singer, and Morgan State University alumna, Maysa. Photo: Roy Cox

“The love of music, the love of people, and the support I’ve been getting for the last 33 years I’ve been in the industry” keeps her going.

Maysa is currently on tour all summer. She sings with the band Incognito and recently returned from working in London with them.

Maysa’s diligence, solid work ethic, talent and soothing voice have taken her far. She knows the value of being in the right place at the right time.

A year before graduating from Morgan State University, she successfully auditioned to be in Stevie Wonder’s Wonderlove group. Maysa asked Wonder if she could finish college because her parents sacrificed to send her.

Wonder later worked on the “Jungle Fever” soundtrack with Spike Lee.



*Music For Your Soul Album cover
Photo: Blue Velvet Soul Records*

Maysa’s first professional gig was singing background on the “These Three Words” album.

When Maysa needed to find work later, a British band, Incognito wanted an American lead singer. Maysa was selected after an audition. She lived in London for four and a half years and recorded the albums “Tribes, Vibes and Scribes” and “Positivity” with Incognito. Maysa’s signature song “Deep Waters” was recorded with them. Her solo career with GRP began afterward.

Maysa is in a league of her own. The inspirational Morganite who decided to finish college is a credit to her family, alma mater, and Charm City as a whole.

“It’s been an amazing journey, just a lot of magical moments in my life where God has set things up for me to just walk in it with faith.”

Keep up with Maysa and find out her future tour dates via www.maysa.com. Follow her on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MAYSAOFFICIALLIKEPAGE/>.



By Rosa Pryor

Hello everyone,
I sure hope you are enjoying this hot weather. I know I am. This is my time of the year, hot weather and all. I know many of you who are reading this right now do not agree with me. I am sorry about that. As far as I am concerned, I could enjoy a two-season year— spring and summer.

Now, look my friends, I am really excited about the Caribbean Festival. I was at the first one 43 years ago which started on Park Heights Avenue. I am so proud of Dr. Elaine Simon. It has been expanded to Washington, DC, now called the Baltimore/ Washington Caribbean Festival.

The Caribbean Festival weekend will be held July 12-14, 2024 at the Historic Druid Hill Park, located at 900 Druid Park Lake Dr. This three-day event will start with a day party, on Saturday, July 12 and a parade will start at noon at the intersection of Park Circle and Reisterstown Road and go all the way to Druid Hill Park where the festival begins. The costumes, music and dancing will blow your mind! Expect lots of food, crafts and live entertainment that doesn't stop until 10 p.m. It starts all over again on Sunday, July 14 from noon until 9 p.m. Ladies and gentlemen, if you have never been to this festival, make it your business to go this time. There is nothing like it. The masquerade parade is all Caribbean style with handmade costumes, music and singing. They will have you dancing in the street with them. There will be spectators standing on both sides of the street

The 43rd Annual Caribbean Festival Comes to Druid Hill Park



Dr. Elaine Simon, who founded the Baltimore Caribbean Festival 43 years ago, now known as the Baltimore/Washington Caribbean Festival Parade, will start at noon at the intersection of Park Circle and Reisterstown Road.

all the way down Park Heights to Druid Hill Park. This Caribbean Festival is one of a kind and the most spectacular thing to see. Last year there were over 25,000 spectators. Go and enjoy.

If you are a classmate or a friend of Cheryl Young Johnson, who was my friend and classmate from Edmondson High, please keep her family in prayer. Her memorial service is on Monday, July 2, 2024. The wake will be held at 10 a.m., and the memorial service at 11 a.m. at City Temple of Baltimore, located 317 Dolphin Street and Eutaw Pl.

The BMA (Baltimore Museum of Art) has the great honor of co-organizing and presenting a major retrospective of the work of Joyce J. Scott, a Baltimore-based living legend and MacArthur fellow who has been speaking truth to power with her art for over five decades. Titled; “Joyce J. Scott: Walk a Mile in My Dreams,” the exhibition features nearly 140 works from the 1970s to the present; including sculpture, jewelry, textiles, art wear garments,



Dr. Phill Butts' Sunset Band will be performing at the Avenue Bakery, Pennsylvania Ave. and Baker Street on Saturday, July 6, 2024 from 4-7 p.m. Rambling Rose is the Mistress of Ceremony.



Joyce J. Scott



Style

Songbird will light up the stage with Crosswind and Style on Wednesday, July 3, 2024 from 6-10 p.m. at City View, located 6700 Security Blvd. in honor of Ms. Maybelle. Tee-Shirt Brian will get things going the first Wednesdays, inside and outside under the tent for his Day Party Summer Series.



Songbird

performance compilations, prints, mixed-media installations, and a new large-scale commission. The virtuosity, ingenuity, beauty, and humor in Joyce's work through the years is incredible and her innate ability to move across medium and genre, leveraging her materials to speak fearlessly to subjects of deep personal and communal meaning make her one of the most significant artists of our time. Joyce is 75 and still going strong. She made several new works for this exhibition, and she created a new music video. You must check this out. The exhibition

closes on Sunday, July 14, 2024. The exhibition travels to Seattle next.

Well, my dear friends, I have to go now. I hope to see you somewhere around. If you are having a festival or event, don't forget to invite me personally. I would love to come and cover it. In the meantime, try to stay cool.

If you need me, call me at 410-833-9474, you can email me at rosapryor@aol.com, or you can send me correspondence to 214 Conewood Avenue, Reisterstown, Maryland, 21136. **UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.**

Is Homeownership Achievable for People with Debts, Poor Credit?

By Andrea Blackstone

One American dream is often owning a home. Treya L. Cook, an Owings Mills, Maryland-based realtor and business coach reminds us that there are numerous benefits of owning a home, such as building equity, receiving tax benefits, appreciation of the property over time, being able to pass down property to loved ones, and using equity to buy more properties to create generational wealth.

During National Homeownership Month, the challenges of first-time homebuyers who have imperfect credit because of life's circumstances that range from high student loan debt, credit card debt, medical bills and other financial barriers should be openly discussed. Every American who wants to work to achieve homeownership should have the chance.

Treya L. Cook, along with her husband, John T. Cook, a credit repair expert and financial literacy coach, provides insight about realistically approaching homeownership through challenges.

"There is hope for anyone in any credit situation to start repairing their credit. The goal is to start," John confirmed. "There are many who have credit challenges that wait until they need credit to then rush to fix their credit, but that's not the way it works. Repairing credit and financial challenges takes time, but it's worth it."

John also said, "I would advise a client to visit AnnualFreeCreditReport.com and retrieve their free credit report. Knowing what's on your report and how it's impacting your scores is the first step to fixing imperfect credit."

He further explained that the length of time it takes to repair credit varies. It depends on the severity of the

negative accounts that are reported on the client's profile.

"I have clients who have seen results in less than 30 days, and I've also seen clients who have seen results in six months. Each client should see some type of results within 30 days of being in our program because by law, any credit reporting agency must respond to us within 30 days."

He added that his Premier Credit Builder clients benefit from having inaccuracies aggressively disputed using the power of the Fair Reporting Act.

John further noted that according to FICO, a poor credit score is below 580; a fair one is 580-669; a good credit score is 670-739; very good is 740-799; and excellent credit is 800 and greater.

Treya stated that the ideal credit score to buy a home is 620 and above. However, she highly recommends working to build your credit scores to put yourself in the best situation to obtain the best interest rate. She also shared that some people are simply not educated enough on the process of homeownership.

Lenders consider debt to credit ratio, payment history, and credit scores to determine a borrower's ability to pay back the loan.

"High credit card usage and too much debt can impact your eligibility and loan terms," Treya said.

Her clients can begin raising credit scores by paying off credit card balances and maintaining on-time payments.

"These two factors are key to seeing drastic increases in scores. As a business coach, I notice that some of my clients who are entrepreneurs have high credit card balances because they're using their personal credit to pay for their business needs. I teach courses on building business credit.



Treya L. Cook,
realtor and business coach

Photos: eAndrew Murray of
eAndrewMurray Photography LLC



John T. Cook, credit repair expert
and financial literacy coach

Many people don't know that when you build business credit, you can then transfer balances from your personal credit cards onto business credit cards thus lowering your DTI [debt-to-income ratio] and increasing scores. Business credit does not report to your personal credit."

Treya mentioned that the higher a down payment is when buying a home, the quicker a home buyer may be able to pay off the loan term.

"You can also lower interest as less principal to accrue interest over time," she added.

Alternative credit models consider factors including rent, utility payments, and banking history. Self-employed individuals or those without pay stubs can prove their income using tax returns, bank statements, and profit and loss statements. Another

alternative route to getting a loan is going to a hard money lender.

"They don't look at credit or pay stubs. They typically consider bank statements and the home's value, etcetera," Treya explained.

According to Treya, the best time to buy a home is during the spring and summer months since many homeowners wait until close to the end of the school year to relocate.

"If you're an investor or simply looking for a bargain, the best time to buy is during the fall and winter," she added.

Visit <https://treyacook.exp Realty.com> to learn more about Treya and <https://www.premiercreditbuilders.com> to find out more about John's services.

Freedom

Continued from page 5

contributions to Maryland's Divestment from apartheid in South Africa 40 years ago and our state's ongoing and unwavering commitment to justice, equality, and human rights on a global scale."

Marylanders Cry Freedom: Civil Rights At Home and Abroad profiles a diverse landscape of American political activists and organizations that challenged not only the South African apartheid regime but the United States government's complicit "constructive engagement" with the South African government, rallying against apartheid, oppression, and anti-democratic policies. For decades, they challenged the South African government to create a new, free, and democratic South Africa while also strengthening democracy in the United States.

The exhibition shines a light on the early American social justice pioneers from the late 1800s and early 1900s who laid the foundation for the anti-apartheid activism of the 1980s and 1990s. It also links global anti-apartheid activism to contemporary social justice movements in the United States, South Africa, and the African diaspora by exploring the lessons, tactics, and strategies from the past to inform, inspire, and unite 21st-century activists.

"Marylanders Cry Freedom serves as a profound tribute to this pivotal moment in our state's history, celebrating the unwavering determination of the people of Maryland to fight discrimination and injustice," said Dr. Jean Bailey, project director and Chair of the Maryland/KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) Sister State Committee. "It truly is a testament to the long-standing legacy of Marylanders as advocates for civil rights and social change."

Marylanders Cry Freedom: Civil Rights At Home and Abroad is a collaborative effort, made possible



South African soprano singer Nkeba, sings the South African National Anthem.
Photo: Baltimore City Mayor's Office

through the generous support and contributions of the National African American Drug Policy Coalition, the Apartheid Museum, and the Maryland/KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) Sister State Committee. Their dedication and partnership have been instrumental in bringing this exhibition to life.

America's Voices Against Apartheid, which debuted in May 2023 at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa, is a testament to the remarkable contributions made by U.S. citizens to the international movement that dismantled the apartheid system in South Africa, which persisted from 1948 to the early 1990s. The exhibition spotlights well-known celebrity

activists such as Harry Belafonte, Arthur Ashe, Steven Van Zandt, and Debbie Allen, and its impact and influence serve as the inspiration and foundation for *Marylanders Cry Freedom: Civil Rights At Home and Abroad*.

About the Maryland/KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) Sister State Committee
The Maryland/KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) Sister State Committee was established in 2015 by Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley. Programs include cultural programs such as the *America's Voices Against Apartheid* exhibition and other business, educational, social, and cultural exchanges. For more information, visit <https://www.marylandsisterstates.org/about/>.

About the Maryland Sister States Program

Established in 1980, the Maryland Sister States Program is a conduit for the state's 20 official sister state relationships in China, Liberia, Korea, Mexico, Japan, Russia, Vietnam, Estonia, Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa, Turkey, Ireland, and Israel. The Sister States Program oversees an array of international exchanges, promoting a balance of business, educational, and cultural interests between Maryland and international Sister States. For more information, visit <https://www.marylandsisterstates.org/>.

AMERICA'S VOICES AGAINST APARTHEID

*Confronting Injustice at
Home and Abroad*

**MARYLANDERS
CRY FREEDOM**

An exhibition at the
**Baltimore
City Hall**

Baltimore, Maryland

**May—August
2024**

PRD



Legal Notice

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND
CONSTRUCTION
NOTICE OF LETTING**

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **WATER CONTRACT NO. 1448-Urgent Need Water Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Improvements Phase 1-FY25** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M. on **July 24, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates and can be watched live on CharmTV's cable channel 125 / 1085 HD ; charmtvbaltimore.com/watch-live or listen in at (443) 984-1696 (ACCESS CODE: 0842939) from City Hall at Noon. The Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at Contract Administration 4 South Frederick Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202 on the 3rd floor (410) 396-4041 as of **June 28, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **100.00**. **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 OBC at 4 S Frederick St., 4th Floor, Baltimore, MD 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 Category required for bidding on this project is **B02551 Water Mains**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$10,000,000.01 to \$15,000,000.00**.

A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted via Microsoft Teams. Vendor can call 443-984-1696 Passcode: 4174591# on **July 12, 2024 at 10:00 AM.**

To purchase a bid book, please make an electronic request at: https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/dpw-construction-projects-notice-letting-and_dpwidopportunities@baltimorecity.gov. For further inquiries about purchasing bid documents, please contact the assigned Contract Administrator Latonia.Walston@baltimorecity.gov

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Principal items of work for this contract include, but are not limited to:

Urgent need water main repairs and replacement as necessary, including, but not limited to, replacement/installation of various size new ductile iron pipe, valves, fittings, and appurtenances replacement/installation of fire hydrants, small (residential) meter settings and meter vaults, renew and replacement of existing water services, sidewalk restoration, curb and gutter, roadway paving, sedimentation and erosion control measures and maintenance of traffic, as required.

The MBE goal is **8%**
The WBE goal is **5%**

APPROVED:
Clerk, Board of Estimates

APPROVED:
Khalil Zaied
Acting Director
Department of Public Works

Legal Notice

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION
AND PARKS
NOTICE OF LETTING**

Sealed Bids or Proposals, in duplicate addressed to the Board of Estimates of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore and marked for **BALTIMORE CITY NO. RP23891 Greater Model Pools** will be received at the Office of the Comptroller, Room 204 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland until 11:00 A.M. **August 7, 2024**. Positively no bids will be received after 11:00 A.M. Bids will be publicly opened by the Board of Estimates in Room 215, City Hall at Noon. The proposed Contract Documents may be examined, without charge, at the Dept. of Rec & Parks at 2600 Madison Ave, Baltimore, Md. 21217 by appointment only on Mondays - Fridays, 8:30am – 4:00pm by emailing benitaj.randolph@baltimorecity.gov as of **June 28, 2024** and copies may be purchased for a non-refundable cost of **\$100.00**. A SharePoint link to a PDF of the Construction Drawings will be provided to all prospective bidders. **Conditions and requirements of the Bid are found in the bid package.** All contractors bidding on this Contract must first be prequalified by

Legal Notice

the City of Baltimore Contractors Qualification Committee. Interested parties should call (410) 396-6883 or contact the Committee at 4 South 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 Category required for bidding on this project is **G90073 Swimming Pool Construction and Repair or E13001 Three Story and Under**. Cost Qualification Range for this work shall be **\$7,200,000.00 to \$8,200,000.00**. A "Pre-Bidding Information" session will be conducted **via Microsoft Teams at 11:30am EST on July 11, 2024**. Email your contact information to kbrower@baltimorecity.gov to receive an invite to the Microsoft Team (video conference meeting) no later than **3:00pm EST, July 10, 2024**.

Principle Items of work for this project are Removal of Site Improvements and Structures, Demolition of One-Story Buildings, Earthwork, Underground Utilities, Storm Water facilities, New One-Story Buildings, New Swimming Pools, New Misters, New Site Amenities including Fencing, Landscaping, Hardscaping, Paving (including new sidewalk) and Curbs. The MBE goal is **10%** and WBE goal is **9%**. **APPROVED: M. Celeste Amato,**

To place
Legal Notices,
call: 410-366-3900
email:
legals@btimes.com

Rhythm & Hues: A Banneker-Douglass Museum Summer Block Party

Who: The Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture and the Banneker-Douglass Museum welcome the media and public to attend "Rhythm & Hues: The Banneker-Douglass Museum Summer Block Party" on June 29, 2024.

What: Rhythm & Hues: The Banneker Douglass Museum Summer Block Party is our joyous gathering, celebrating Black Music Appreciation Month, blending history, heritage, music, art, wellness, and community engagement. The event will have a yoga session, a sip and paint session, history and art content, vendors, and live performances by local talented artists including the headliner Black Alley (DC's "Trap + Rock + Go-Go" band), Lauren White, KaribFIT and Karib Dance and Cultural Arts Studio, DJ Kevin Coombe.

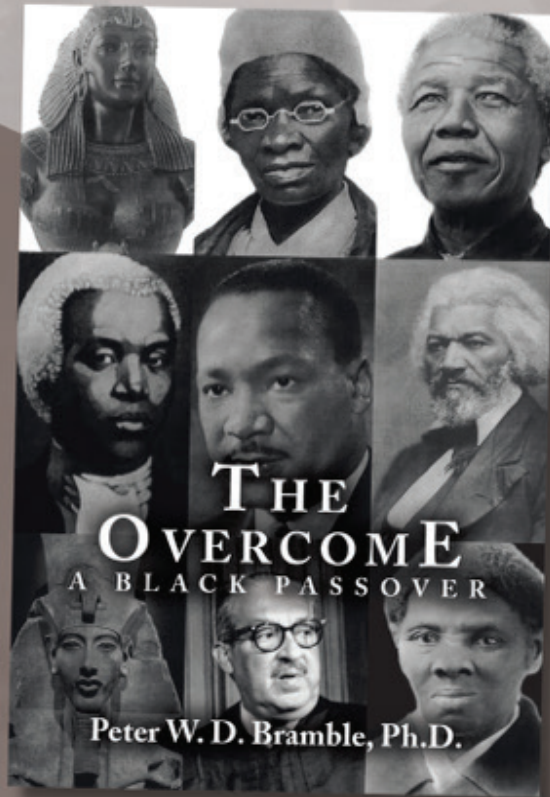
The event is free and open to the public.

When: Saturday, June 29, 2024,
10 AM - 4 PM

Where: Banneker-Douglass Museum, 84 Franklin St, Annapolis, MD 21401

(Franklin Street, between Church Circle and Cathedral Street)

Visit: <http://bdmuseum.maryland.gov> to learn more about the Banneker-Douglass Museum and <https://africanamerican.maryland.gov> to obtain details about the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture.



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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