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Meet Frederick D. Murphy: Filmmaker, Documentarian, Traveling Storyteller, Preserver of History

Andrea Blackstone (left) and her son, Tyler Stallings, visit the site of the former Forks of Cypress plantation, located in Florence, Alabama, on August 12, 2025. Tyler turned 14 years old on the day that he learned more about his maternal family members who had once been enslaved at the Forks. The main house at the Forks of Cypress burned down on June 6, 1966. Only the columns remain at the historic site that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Forks was popularized by the movie and book, "Queen," which was authored by Alex Haley and David Stevens. Queen Jackson Haley, Blackstone's great-grandmother, was enslaved at the plantation. A documentary entitled "Echoes of the Forks of Cypress," created by filmmaker Frederick D. Murphy, highlighted the Forks' descendants of the enslaved and the enslavers on August 12. The premiere was shown in Alabama to promote healing and understanding.

(See articles on pages 6 and 7)

Photo: Darrin Riddick-Davis

Maryland Cycling Classic Debuts Historic Course for Men's & Women's Races

New and Exciting Circuit for America's Top Professional Bike Race

BALTIMORE (July 23, 2025) – The 2025 Maryland Cycling Classic will make history on Saturday, September 6, 2025 as America's premier professional cycling race debuts both men's and women's competitions together for the first time on an exciting new 17.9-mile (28.8km) circuit course entirely in the City of Baltimore.

"We're excited to welcome the Maryland Cycling Classic back to our city this September. This year's event is going to be better than ever, not only because it features a new women's race, but because the entire course is officially within Baltimore City limits," Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott stated. "It's a special opportunity for folks here in Charm City to see free, world-class racing—and folks all around the world to see our beautiful city. I hope to see everybody out there cheering this fall!"

The technical circuit course will test every aspect of the world-class field, from bike-handling skills with 28 turns to 550 yards of centuries-old cobblestones to two explosive climbs to a flat, fast final 1000 yards.

"The old course was great, but we decided to move it into the city for a variety of reasons," said Jim Birrell, the event's race director, who manages the technical aspects of the race. "Baltimore is a city of great neighborhoods. We wanted to highlight Baltimore's famous and beautiful waterfront while telling the story of the city's rich history. It's blending the old and new of one of America's most diverse cities."

The women's race, which starts at 8:30 am (EDT), will consist of four laps, covering 71.6 miles (115.2



Photo courtesy of MD Cycling Classic

kilometers). The men's race, comprised of six laps and covering 107.4 miles (172.8 kilometers), will begin at 12:30 p.m. (EDT). Both races will start at the Harbor Point District's Central Plaza and finish on East Pratt along Baltimore's famous Inner Harbor, less than a mile apart.

"It's been a team effort working back with the mayor's office, Baltimore Police Department, Department of Transportation and Public Works to get to this level," said Terry Hasseltine, the president of the Sport & Entertainment Corporation of Maryland, the event's owners. "We couldn't be happier with the course and believe it will open up a unique level of engagement for new and existing fans while providing new hosting opportunities for our key

supporters."

The men's race will feature 5,682 feet (1,732 meters) of total climbing and 3,868 feet (1,179 meters) for the women. Points will be awarded for intermediate sprints after the first lap of each race as well as at the finish line. King/Queen of the Mountain points will be awarded up to the top of Northern Parkway on each lap.

The racecourse will feature various Fan Zones along the course (e.g., best places to watch), where some will include free cowbells and thunder sticks to cheer athletes on and live race coverage on Big Screen TVs. Fan Zones will be located at Harbor Point (at the start), Thames Street cobblestones, Patterson Park, Mt. Vernon, and the finish line stretch on East Pratt Street.

Course Highlights

Starting with a Bang: The race will begin at Harbor Point's Central Plaza, immediately adjacent to the Harbor East district. It's where historic maritime heritage meets modern waterfront development. Riders will face their first test of nerves and skill within the opening mile, when the peloton encounters Fells Point's 18th-century granite cobblestones – a 550-yard technical gauntlet that has the power to shatter race aspirations and create decisive gaps that could determine the day's outcome.

Racing through one of America's oldest urban parks: The course then sweeps through Canton neighborhood's fascinating blend of historic row houses and contemporary architecture before entering Patterson Park at mile 2. One of Baltimore's oldest parks, dating to the War of 1812, Patterson Park becomes a crucial tactical battleground with a deceiving uphill on East Baltimore Street, where teams will position for the challenges ahead.

Passing by History: At mile 5, cyclists navigate past the towering Washington Monument (completed in 1829) and through Mount Vernon's tree-lined streets adorned with elegant 19th-century architecture. The route then powers through Hampden at mile 8, an eclectic neighborhood with blue-collar roots dating to 1802 as a millworker settlement, now transformed into one of Baltimore's most vibrant and artsy neighborhoods.

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Plan for Financial Success: Improve Your Relationship with Money Today to Safeguard Tomorrow

Part II of a Two-Part Series

By Andrea Blackstone

Black Business Month is a time to acknowledge the need to support Black-owned businesses, but it also offers a chance to give business owners food for thought. When a person makes strides in an industry or profession, triumph is not enough to safeguard life's achievements. Not all successful people have healthy relationships with money. Additionally, success does not cancel out the need for discipline, boundaries, and emotional mastery, according to Marcella Mollon-Williams, co-founder of Legacy Builder Group, a full-service financial education firm. Mollon-Williams, BFA®, a behavioral financial advisor, further explains how behavioral finance is defined.

"Behavioral finance is a combination of traditional finance, psychology and neuroscience. Using these areas of study, I help people manage their savings and investment behavior, thereby developing the behavior to build their legacy," she stated.

Along with her brother, Mark Mollon, Mollon-Williams specializes in helping clients to build wealth with purpose.

"By blending financial strategy with mindset mastery, we help clients build habits and behaviors that align their money with their mission, so they don't just accumulate wealth, but actually feel confident, connected, and clear about what it's for," Mollon-Williams added.

Self-development Ahead of Success

"Success magnifies what already exists. If you don't build self-awareness, boundaries, and a strong sense of purpose now, wealth will simply amplify your internal chaos," Mollon stated.

Mollon, a Chartered Federal

Employee Benefits Consultant (ChFEBCSM) and investment advisor representative, suggested proactive measures people can take to invest in their self-development ahead of financial success.

- Get coached, not just mentored. Mentors show you what they have done. Coaches help you uncover why you do what you do.
- Create a decision-making process.
- Audit your circle. Surround yourself with people who challenge your thinking and hold you accountable to your future, not your past.

The Emotional Price of Success

Mollon asserted that the emotional toll of being a first-generation high-income earner is often overlooked.

"People don't talk enough about isolation, identity conflict, or the silent pressure that comes with being the first. You're expected to lead your family forward while still healing from your past. You may feel guilty for having more or anxious about losing it all," the financial expert explained.

He added that without space to process these emotions, many first-generation high-income earners either shrink to stay "relatable" or overextend themselves trying to rescue everyone around them.

"Your mindset will either protect or pollute your legacy," Mollon said.

Stay Away from Legal Trouble

Mollon-Williams mentioned that legal issues do not just drain your bank account. They also drain your reputation capital.

"In today's digital world, public perception is currency. When your image is tarnished, opportunities dry



Marcella Mollon-Williams and her brother, Mark Mollon. Mollon-Williams co-founded Legacy Builder Group, a full-service financial education firm.

Photo: Rodgers Polk Photography

up, partnerships dissolve, and even your family's security can be compromised."

She noted that unresolved legal or behavioral issues can fracture trust within your inner circle, including your own household.

"It's not just about money; it's about the emotional and relational cost that comes with being perceived as unstable or untrustworthy," Mollon-Williams added.

Protect Your Generational Legacy and Wealth

Aspire to achieve your financial goals with confidence. If you believe that what is possible can manifest in your life, educate yourself to protect your legacy and wealth.

"Legacy planning is the intentional process of deciding how you want others to experience your existence, during your lifetime and after. It goes beyond state planning and wealth. It's about your beliefs, behaviors, and blueprints



Through Legacy Builder Group, Mark Mollon assists individuals with the development of sound retirement strategies and rational decisions.

Photo: Sadrea Muhammad

being passed on in a way that sustains your impact across generations," Mollon stated.

He recommends five steps that successful individuals can take to protect their legacy and wealth:

- **Create a values-based financial plan.** Don't just focus on returns; focus on alignment. Ask yourself if your spending, giving, and investing reflect what matters most to you.
- **Establish legal protection.** Fund your trust and get estate documents in place.
- **Practice emotional discipline.** Learn to pause before making high-impact decisions. Money moves should not be emotionally charged.
- **Build a legacy team that consists of more than a CPA or advisor.** You need people who understand your long-term vision and who can also guide your family.
- **Communicate your legacy.** Talk to your family about what wealth means, what is expected, and how to carry the mission forward.

Visit Legacy Builder Group online via www.legacybuildergroup.com.

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Greater Baltimore Leadership Association Celebrates a Year of Impact at 2025 Awards Ceremony

By Harold Booker Jr.

The Greater Baltimore Leadership Association (GBLA), the young professionals chapter of the Greater Baltimore Urban League, honored a year of growth, service, and community leadership at its 2025 GBLA Awards Ceremony.

President Coby Smith opened the evening by reflecting on GBLA's achievements in 2024, which included hosting 61 events, growing the leadership team from 8 to 20 members, and engaging over 70 active members in service. The chapter raised more than \$20,000, awarded \$10,000 to Black entrepreneurs, and hosted a 275-person business summit that blended innovation, culture, and empowerment.

Award Highlights

- Longevity Awards honored members with over five years of service, including Harold Booker, Jennifer Wicks, Charles Jackson, Dr. Nicolette Louissaint Coursey, and Sydnee Logan.
- Distinguished YP Member Awards recognized Tiffany Young, Melissa Brent, and Elena Huang for outstanding volunteerism, leadership, and advocacy.
- The YP Honors Award went to Balu “Lu” Bangura, an equity strategist and community changemaker known for launching Maryland's first free grocery store and creating the nation's first library equity dashboard.
- The President's Legacy Award celebrated Nicole Campbell for her leadership in signature GBLA fundraisers and Charell Elliott for her award-winning professional development programming.



GBLA's Executive Leadership Team: Daniel Gardew, Elena Huang, Charell Elliott, Coby Smith, Nicole Campbell, Harold Booker Jr. Photos: Steve Hopkins

- GBLA President Coby Smith received the President's Distinguished YP Recognition for revitalizing the chapter and deepening community partnerships.

National Recognition

GBLA's work earned multiple national honors from the National Urban League Young Professionals:

- National Day of Empowerment Award for hosting an entrepreneurship-focused event at Creatively Black Baltimore that awarded \$10,000 in prizes to local businesses.
 - National Chapter of Excellence Award for exceptional leadership development, community impact, membership growth, and fundraising.
- Looking ahead, GBLA announced its 2025–2027 Executive Leadership Team and invited the community to its upcoming fundraiser, #Summer4Life: A Tropical Affair, on August 16 at Pleasant Yacht Club.



President of Buffalo Urban League Young Professional Mark Overall, Former President of GBLA Charles Jackson and President of GBLA Coby Smith

In closing, President Smith reminded attendees, “Let’s honor the excellence that drives our movement forward.”

For more information on GBLA's programs and events, visit www.gbul.org.

Meet Frederick D. Murphy: Filmmaker, Documentarian, Traveling Storyteller, Preserver of History

By Andrea Blackstone

Frederick D. Murphy spends considerable bandwidth pausing to put lesser-known stories on the map one mission at a time. The documentarian and collector of history shares unheralded history through social media and documentaries with passion, purpose and determination. His company, History Before Us, was founded in 2016. Murphy's work is provided under this entity while recounting history.

"I have always been deeply engaged in history. I've been around history, because I've been around my great uncles, great grandmother, great aunties. So, I've always been connected to history in some way, shape or form. I was around people who were discussing things that transpired in the past. And I grew up in a Black church, and that's kind of what shaped it," said Murphy.

The storyteller and Tennessee State University and Bethune-Cookman University alum utilizes various components to elevate history.

"I can't think of anything else I would rather do, to be honest with you," Murphy affirmed. "I go a little here, there and everywhere."

Murphy integrates videos, pictures, social media reels, and audio to share history on various platforms that range from YouTube to Facebook. He strives to bring heroes and sheroes in communities to light who deserve just as much acknowledgement and recognition as widely known historical figures. While Murphy acknowledges more prominent figures, he strives to ensure that living and deceased unheralded heroes receive attention.

"Their lives do matter, and their lived experiences matter," said Murphy. "My target audience is the



Frederick D. Murphy, filmmaker and founder of History Before Us at the screening of his film, "Echoes of the Forks of Cypress."

Photo: Tyler Stallings

world. When we talk about some of the greatest individuals to walk this Earth..., we've touched every inch on the globe and so the greatness of our history can never be untold. I don't care where you're at."

Murphy's work is not easy, but he wants to see it through. The majority of the time, his passion projects are self-funded. He has even used his credit card to keep pursuing his passion to tell and share stories that matter.

"I'm a mental health therapist by trade, and so this kind of just flows for me," he stated.

Murphy added that pursuing work for hire through History Before Us helps him to create a sense of balance, push and receive a boost of fuel. Commissioned documentaries sometimes allow him to generate funds since he must cover everything for his projects, including hotel expenses and paying his camera guy and editor. In other instances, donors help to fund his historic adventures. Murphy has even turned to Cash App as a donation source.

However, the Alabama Humanities Alliance's Healing History initiative partially funded Murphy's



Descendants of the Forks of Cypress and historians participated in a panel discussion at Florence-Lauderdale Public Library on August 12, 2025. An attendee who was moved by the film, "Echoes of the Forks of Cypress," placed an open umbrella on stage to collect donations for the filmmaker.

Photo: Andrea Blackstone

documentary, "Echoes of the Forks of Cypress." (https://alabamahumanities.org/newsroom_p/echoes-of-the-forks-of-cypress). Murphy featured Black and white plantation descendants whose ancestors had ties to the iconic plantation, Forks of Cypress plantation located in Florence, Alabama (<https://www.facebook.com/reel/>). More than 120 people attended the premiere of the documentary on August 12, 2025, at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library. One attendee was so moved by Murphy's film that she popped open her umbrella and placed it on stage to raise donations.

Murphy gave a gift to Alabama, as well as to descendants on both sides of the coin, by fostering a conversation that intersects with slavery's painful conversation, to cultivate needed healing and

understanding. The trailblazing project that deeply examines the institution of enslavement, as well as the descendants of the Forks of Cypress who are living today, took six months to complete. Ahead of the documentary, Murphy created a Facebook group for African American Forks of Cypress descendants to connect. Ancestry.com was another tool that he used. Murphy is a descendant of Ferdinand Jackson, a man who was formerly enslaved at the Forks. Murphy typically stays behind the camera, but he felt that this story needed to be told about a place that was the "Darling of the South." "The truth needed to be told," Murphy stated.

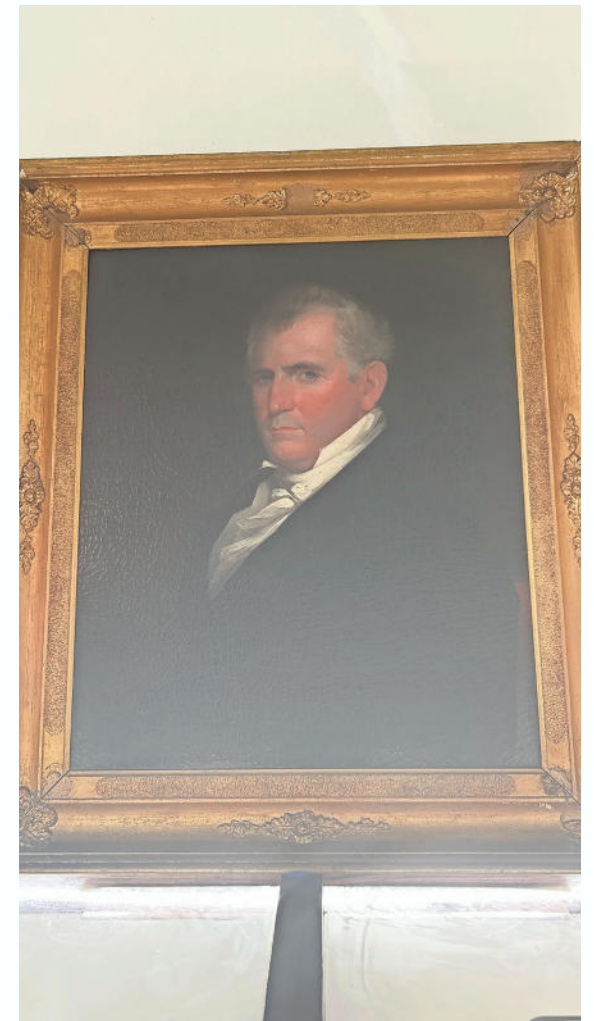
The Forks of Cypress burned down on June 6, 1966, after it was struck by lightning. Only the columns remain at the plantation site. Descendants had an opportunity to visit the Forks



The Forks of Cypress plantation house burned down on June 6, 1966. Remains from the plantation, including this photo of the aftermath and furniture, are located in Pope's Tavern Museum in Alabama.



It is believed that Sarah Moore Jackson, wife of James Jackson, used her family connections to help manage the Forks. She was listed as head of household after her husband died in 1860. During that time, 1,900 acres and 80 enslaved people who lived in 14 houses were at the Forks of Cypress.



A photo of Irish immigrant James Jackson, a founding father of Florence, Alabama and co-owner of the Forks of Cypress plantation.

Photos by Andrea Blackstone. Artworks courtesy of Florence Arts & Museums - Pope's Tavern Museum (City of Florence, Alabama).

together before the film was shown. This writer has ties to the Forks of Cypress. "My great-grandmother, Queen Jackson Haley, and her biracial mother, Easter (Esther Jackson), were enslaved there." Queen was allegedly fathered by James Jackson Jr., a Confederate Colonel whose family had deep ties to slavery, politics, and imported racehorses.

"With 600 cultivated acres and 81 enslaved people by 1860, the Forks may not have been the largest plantation in Lauderdale County. That distinction goes to John Peters' plantation... which by 1860 had 5,760

cultivated acres and 313 enslaved people. But because of the late author Alex Haley, who wrote about his grandmother, Queen Jackson Haley, an enslaved woman from the Forks, the Forks is probably the most famous plantation of Lauderdale County, even among people who live here, but definitely people who are not from here," said Lee Freeman, the library's public historian.

Freeman appeared in the film, and he provided historical documentation regarding enslaved people and James Jackson Sr. for Murphy's film. The Forks of Cypress was owned by

Jackson Sr. and his wife, Sarah Moore Jackson.

Curtis Flowers, a Jackson descendant, stated in Murphy's film that the Forks was where Flowers' ancestors held Murphy's people.

"I also want to say that with this film, even though it's centered in Alabama, this is a descendant story across the globe, wherever enslavement was. This is Jamaica. This is Grenada. This is Alabama. This is New York. This is Delaware. This is Mississippi. This is about the institution of enslavement and the importance for descendants to gather,

to put themselves in a position to advocate and keep the history alive of the individuals who shaped and molded who they are today, whether they are conscious of it or unconscious of how those individuals have shaped and molded their existence. That is very much a universal story," Murphy concluded.

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/HistoryBeforeUs> to learn more about his work and where it will be screened in the future. Connect with Murphy by emailing historybeforeus@gmail.com.

Why I Spent My Fourteenth Birthday in Florence, Alabama

By Tyler Stallings

The Baltimore Times Junior Reporter

My birthday was spent touring the Forks of Cypress plantation on August 12, 2025. In addition, I saw the ruins of the former Forks of Cypress plantation house, graves of the enslaved and the enslavers, and later in the day, I went to the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library, all of which were located in Florence, Alabama. I was able to meet other descendants of the Forks like myself, interview the filmmaker of the documentary named “Echoes of the Forks of Cypress,” as well as view it, and I got to sit in on the Q&A.

As a brand new 14-year-old, I find it heartbreaking that many people do not know their family history or even about their ancestors. Everyone, regardless of age or race, should know some of their family history. It is never too early or too late to find your family’s lore! I have always been taught about my maternal family, ancestors, and relatives. I believe that being taught had a massive impact on my feelings about this trip. It was an enormous privilege to walk where my ancestors walked and see where they worked.

I found it shocking how hot it was at the plantation ruins. The ruins are all that are left after the home burned on June 6, 1966, when it was struck by lightning. The foundation of the house and columns are all that currently remain. I could hardly fathom standing at the former plantation site ruins for longer than 20 minutes, let alone working in that climate.

The filmmaker, Fredrick Murphy presented his film, “Echoes of the Forks of Cypress,” at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library later that evening after our tour. Murphy, director of the documentary, informed



Filmmaker Frederick Murphy speaks about his documentary at the Florence-Lauderdale Public Library.
Photo: Tyler Stallings

us that he was a descendant of one of the many enslaved individuals who were at the former Forks of Cypress plantation in Florence, Alabama.

I asked Murphy about his thoughts on the descendants’ opportunity to take a trip to the former plantation site.

“This project and being here today with your mother [Andrea Blackstone] and everyone else that’s here who are descendants of the enslaved as well as the enslavers, is something very important because what it does is it speaks to one progress and the unification of individuals that are coming together and saying ‘hey, we can share information which can provide a comprehensive history for both sides because there are some things that we didn’t have that we were able to provide and vice versa,’” Murphy said.

During the Q&A at the library, Curtis Flowers, a Jackson family descendant on the enslaver side, was asked how someone could find records of the enslaved.

“The official government records for African Americans did not exist before 1870,” Flowers said.

There may just have been an age and gender listed in official documents.



Forks of Cypress descendants and guests visit the ruins of the plantation house in Florence, Alabama. Photo: Tyler Stallings

Enslaved people were counted without names in family records of families like the Flowers.

“Like a lot of other people in this room, [they were included in] wills, in inventories, where property is listed, and a dollar figure attached to a name. Those records are in our families, and they’re in the courthouse too, but you may have copies of them. You can go to the courthouse. You can write to the courthouse, or call the courthouse, or go online, if you don’t live close enough to go yourself, and you can find these records. There are just thousands and thousands of them out there that have never been tapped,” Flowers stated.

The trip was an eye-opening and life-changing experience. I learned how brutal life was for many of our ancestors. A call to action for you is to delve into your own family history and share what you find with young people in your home or family. It can help others understand their roots and it can have a positive impact on their lives. So, go home, share your family history with each other, and research to learn about your ancestors!

If you would like to follow or reach



Tyler Stallings places flowers near unmarked graves in memory of his ancestor, Easter (Esther Jackson), who was the mother of Queen Jackson Haley.

Photo: Andrea Blackstone

out to Murphy, you can find him on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/HistoryBeforeUs> and Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/historybeforeus> at History Before Us.



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² Tori Finch, MS, M Cabell Jonas, PhD, Kevin Rubenstein, Eric Watson, BA, Sundeep Basra, MPH, Jose Martinez, BS, & Michael Horberg, MD, MAS, FACP (2021). Life Expectancy Trends Among Integrated Health Care System Enrollees, 2014-2017. *The Permanente Journal*, 25(4), 10-17. thepermanentejournal.org/doi/10.7812/TPP/20.286.

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The Decisive Moment: St. Mary's Seminary hosts the King/Queen of the Mountain stage, where America's first Catholic seminary (established 1791) becomes the backdrop for the race's most crucial climb. This challenging 1000 yards (900 meters) ascent will most likely separate the strongest riders from the field, crowning the day's King or Queen of the Mountain. The climb may be a location where the race winner attacks, noting it's the high point before descending back down to the waterfront.

Waterfront Finale: The race will conclude with a long, flat and fast drag down East Pratt Street in Baltimore's famous Inner Harbor, the site of the finish line in 2022 and 2023, which saw crowds grow to around 20,000 for the finale.

For more information, visit: MarylandCyclingClassic.us.



Photos/graphics courtesy of MD Cycling Classic

2025 Maryland Cycling Classic Race Week Schedule

All times listed are EDT

Saturday, September 6 | Maryland Cycling Classic (Free & Open To The Public)

Women's Race Start | 8:30 a.m. | Harbor Point, Central Plaza
 Women's Race Finish | est. 11:20 – 11:40 a.m. | E. Pratt & Market Place
 Awards Ceremony: 12:45 pm, Harbor Point, Central Plaza

Men's Race Start | 12:30 pm | Harbor Point Central Plaza
 Men's Race Finish | est. 4:20 – 4:40 p.m. | East Pratt Street
 Awards Ceremony: Immediately after men's race, Finish Line, E. Pratt Street & Market Place

Exhibitor's at both Start & Finish Lines, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday, September 6 | Community Bike Jam Presented By Kaiser Permanente

(Free & Open To The Public)
 Time: 12:00 - 4:00 p.m. | Patterson Park

Friday, September 5 | Opening Celebration, Official Team Introductions, Public Concert

(Free & Open To The Public)
 Time: 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. | Harbor Point, Central Plaza

Thursday, September 4 | Welcome Reception/Forum (By Invite Only) Time: 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. | Site TBD

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gp² Black & African American Connections to Parkinson's Disease Study

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