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Literary Figure Andrea Blackstone Releases Her Newest Book: ‘The World We Left Behind’

Andrea Blackstone, Associate Editor of The Baltimore Times released her first historical fiction book titled “The World We Left Behind” on August 7, 2025. The first book in Blackstone’s new Black Water Cove series, “The World We Left Behind,” underlines the struggles of enslaved people, the intersecting lives of their enslavers and the courageous abolitionists who were despised for their moral uprightness.

(See article on page 7).

Photo: Tyler Stallings



Breast Cancer Awareness Month Event

First 'Walk This Way' REVOLT Against Breast Cancer Community Rally Comes to Baltimore

By Andrea Blackstone

Each October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month offers a designated time to increase awareness about breast cancer; promote early detection through screenings; share resources raise funds for research and support services; and educate the public about the need for treatment.

The CDC noted that “Overall, White women are more likely to get breast cancer than Black women, but Black women are more likely to die from the disease. Breast cancer is often diagnosed at later stages and is more aggressive in African American women than in White women.” (<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/health-equity/african-american.html>)

Ronda Brunson, a breast cancer surviveHER, LeadHER of the Tata Tuesdays nonprofit and entrepreneur, founded her nonprofit in 2023, the day after she underwent a double mastectomy. Through education, advocacy, and love, Tata Tuesdays supports women navigating breast cancer, especially those forgotten by the system. The nonprofit remains on a mission to ‘save Black women, one breastfriend at a time.’

Brunson is leading an upcoming, inaugural 2025 Walk This Way: REVOLT Against Breast Cancer Community Rally hosted by April Watts. THE EVENT will be held on Saturday, October 4, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Lake Montebello, in Baltimore, Maryland.

“In the past years, we’ve done a Breastfriend’s Ball in October, where we celebrate survivorship. God told me that it was time to get a little bit more serious about breast cancer. We can celebrate survivorship, but we’ve got to educate women. Everything I do now, I need women to leave the space feeling activated. I need them to consider that it could happen to them. I need them to know their health baselines and all of those

things,” said Brunson. “We will be walking around Montebello, but it’s definitely a rally.”

The community-powered day of healing, truth-telling, and action will feature a Fallen Soldier Memorial Garden honoring lives lost; wellness stations; HER Zones; food, music and sisterhood; tables hosted by local cancer groups and nonprofits; survivor tributes, award recognitions, and a collective call to action beyond wearing pink this month. Funds raised provide urgent co-pay assistance, fund transportation and childcare for WarriHERS, and help women understand their diagnosis and treatment. Additionally, small but mighty non-profits will be given the visibility they deserve. The walk supports local nonprofits, grassroots advocates, and underserved communities—not just research institutions, according to the press release.

“Local nonprofits need resources to help the women who call us,” said Brunson.

Brunson aims to create additional resources in the local community to support women throughout the process, particularly after diagnosis. The nonprofit leader mentioned that the walk incorporates a Harriet Tubman theme.

“We are trying to create an actual path to freedom. Number one, our goal is always to look for resources to end breast cancer, because if we end it, we don’t even have to worry about all the other stuff that comes with it. It wouldn’t exist,” Brunson stated, stressing care for women.

Brunson explained that teams participating in the walk will receive 20% of what they raise back, allowing them to reinvest funds in the community and support their chosen nonprofits. She feels that this structure makes the REVOLT Rally extremely

unique, in addition to other REVOLT incentives.

“I would say 95% of the teams created are actual breast cancer survivors or warriors— people living with breast cancer. They can sign people up and walk with them that day,” she stated.

Janet Hall, founder of The Janet Foundation, leads a breast cancer survivorship organization. Hall is a 42-year breast cancer survivor whose mission is to uplift women who are underserved with information, resources and events to help to ease the stress of being diagnosed with breast cancer. Hall is supporting the walk and participates in many community events. She has been helping to spread the word about the REVOLT Rally.

“I believe in getting the word out for awareness and early detection,” said Hall, mentioning that more support is needed for women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. “Women in the state of Maryland, or any state, really need support



(L-r): Pastor Jewel Allen of Liberty Outreach Center, Tata Tuesdays nonprofit board member and two-time breast cancer surviveHER; Ronda Brunson, leadHER Tata Tuesdays; and Erika Buffaloe, VP of Tata Tuesdays and two-time breast cancer warriHER. Brunson is leading an upcoming, inaugural 2025 Walk This Way: REVOLT Against Breast Cancer Community Rally hosted by April Watts on Saturday, October 4, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Lake Montebello, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Photo: VS Davis Photography

and whatever is necessary to help them through this stressful time.”

Team registration has ended. However, same-day registration will be available at the Rally. The registration fee is \$25. Visit <https://breastfriendsunite.com> for more information about TaTa Tuesday’s 2025 Walk This Way: REVOLT Against Breast Cancer Community Rally.

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Large Language Models: The Engine Behind Artificial Intelligence (AI)

By Karen Clay

Clay Technology and Multimedia, L.L.C.

Many of us Baby Boomers remember those old, beloved science fiction shows where people were interacting with computers. The few that come to mind are the Jetsons, Star Trek, and Lost in Space. In each of these shows, a computer played a prominent role in the series. George Jetson relied on his handy Referential Universal Digital Indexer; a computer called RUDI. The Star Trek crew on the U.S.S. Enterprise frequently used the ship's computer by giving it voice commands. The Lost in Space folk relied on a walking, talking computer simply called Robot. At that time most of us saw this strictly as science fiction; something made up in the minds of the script writers. We never realized that behind the script of these shows, there actually were government, research and other institutions working on the precursors of what we now call Artificial Intelligence or AI.

The origins of AI began with much simpler systems. In the 1950s and 60s, researchers created basic programs that could manipulate language, but they were rigid and limited in their abilities to learn from data. The 1980s and 90s saw improvements with systems that could learn from data, but they still struggled with the complexity of human language. These early computer programs could only respond in limited, scripted ways, so were limited in their level of interactivity. Examples include those early, clunky chatbots of the 1990s that gave short, canned answers to pre-programmed scenarios.

The real breakthrough came in the late 2010s with the invention of the transformer, a new type of computer model developed by researchers at Google. Transformers allowed machines to read and understand language far



The LLMs behind AI models can process thousands of words at one time.

Graphic Design by Karen Clay

more effectively than older systems. This new approach enabled computers to process language by allowing them to pay attention to all parts of a sentence simultaneously, much like how we understand context when reading. It then became possible to train computers on vast amounts of text from books, articles, and the Internet, giving them the ability to “predict” words in a way that made their responses sound more natural and thoughtful.

With these advancements, OpenAI released GPT-1 in 2018, followed by increasingly powerful iterations. When GPT-2 was released in 2019, it was so impressive that, fearing misuse, OpenAI initially hesitated to release it publicly. The advent of the release of GPT-3 in 2020 marked a turning point in that suddenly, AI could write coherently about almost any topic.

The “engines” behind these advancements are widely known as **Large Language Models (LLMs.)** At their core, LLMs are pattern-recognition machines. They don’t “think” like us, but they are extremely good at spotting relationships in language. If you type a sentence into one of these systems, it

uses what it has learned from millions (billions?) of examples to generate the most likely and relevant response. Because they’ve been trained on so much information, LLMs can summarize reports, explain scientific ideas, translate languages, or generate creative content.

What makes them exciting is that they allow us to interact with technology using everyday language instead of computer code. What makes them risky is that we can develop an over-reliance on the information they produce. These LLMs have been known to “hallucinate” which is a way to describe the occasional output that is purely made up! Additionally, they require enormous amounts of computing power, which leads to high energy consumption and environmental impact, such as the huge amount of water required to keep them cool. There are also worries about job displacement as AI becomes capable of handling more human tasks.

Privacy and security present additional challenges. Since these systems learn from vast amounts of internet data, they may inadvertently reflect the biases or misinformation present in that data. Ensuring AI systems remain



Karen Clay,
Clay Technology and Multimedia

Photo: Courtesy, Karen Clay

helpful rather than harmful requires constant vigilance and improvement. The advancement in the generation of images, audio, and video also provides opportunities for “bad actors” to misuse these capabilities to produce intentionally misleading information.

As a result, researchers and companies are working hard to make them more accurate, transparent, and efficient. At the same time, we are grappling with larger questions such as how should AI be regulated? How do we ensure it’s used responsibly? What role should it play in workplaces, schools, and everyday life?

Efforts are underway to make these systems more efficient, requiring less computing power while becoming more capable. There’s also growing focus on making AI systems more reliable and truthful, addressing current limitations around accuracy and consistency. Ultimately, we could envision future versions tailored for specific fields such as medicine, law, education, etc. all while becoming more energy-efficient, affordable and integrated into our daily lives.

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Junior Reporter

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Mailing Address

The Baltimore Times
2530 N. Charles Street, Suite 201
Baltimore, MD 21218
Phone: 410-366-3900
<https://baltimoretimes-online.com/>



Commentary

When Presidents Can't Take a Joke, Democracy Suffers

By Ben Jealous

A Midwestern schoolteacher once told her class that a sense of humor is a sign of intelligence. “Look around the classroom,” she said. “The smartest kids always get the joke right away. The others might struggle.”

I’ve never confirmed that theory with a doctor. But I believe it. Humor takes quick thinking. It takes perspective. It takes freedom.

That’s why it matters when our presidents can laugh at themselves. For generations, they have. Reagan turned questions about his age into a punchline. Obama roasted himself at the Correspondents’ Dinner. Even George W. Bush, the butt of endless late-night jokes, learned to grin and roll with it.

That humility has always set us apart from the monarchy we broke away from. Kings demand silence. Presidents in a free nation are supposed to be able to laugh along with the people.

Donald Trump doesn’t get that. He can’t take a joke—and worse, he tries to punish the people who make them. First Stephen Colbert. Now Jimmy Kimmel. Using the power of the presidency to go after comedians isn’t just petty. It’s dangerous.

Authoritarians hate humor because humor exposes them. Stalin, Mussolini—every strongman fears the comic more than the critic. A joke spreads fast. A sharp one can cut through a wall of propaganda. That’s why free countries protect comedians. They keep leaders honest by refusing to let them take themselves too seriously.

We forget: America was born on satire. Franklin drew cartoons mocking the British crown. Revolutionaries cracked jokes as easily as they fired muskets. Laughter was proof that no king could control the American spirit.

But when presidents can’t laugh at themselves, citizens stop laughing too. And when citizens stop laughing, they stop questioning. That silence is the first step toward submission.

This isn’t about whether you watch Jimmy Kimmel or Stephen Colbert. It’s about whether you want to live in a country where the president decides which jokes are allowed. Today it’s late-night hosts. Tomorrow it could be a cartoonist, a college kid, or you for what you post online.

The strength of America isn’t that our leaders are above mockery. It’s that they can survive it. A president who can’t take a joke can’t take criticism. And a president who can’t take criticism can’t be trusted with freedom.

That Midwestern schoolteacher was right: humor is a sign of intelligence. But more than that, it’s a sign of liberty. And if we want to keep our democracy strong, we better insist on leaders who can laugh—even, and especially, at themselves.

Ben Jealous is a professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania and the former head of the NAACP. He is a direct descendant of the youngest combatant at the Battle of Lexington and Concord.



Ben Jealous
Courtesy photo

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Baltimore's Future on Display at GBC's 70th Annual Meeting



Gov Wes Moore at GBC's 70th Annual Meeting.

Photos: Greater Baltimore Committee



Mayor Brandon Scott and GBC President Mark Anthony Thomas at Greater Baltimore Committee's 70th Anniversary meeting.

Baltimore, MD—Baltimore is the city where America's anthem of strength was born, and where commerce and endurance helped lay the foundation for the very institutions that govern us. That spirit was alive and well at the Greater Baltimore Committee's (GBC) 70th Annual Meeting, where business, civic, and government leaders came together to celebrate a legacy of leadership while charting a bold path forward for the region.

For seven decades, the GBC has been a central force in Baltimore's economic and civic life. Formed in 1955 by a coalition of business leaders, the organization has played a decisive role in shaping the region's direction—whether advancing major infrastructure projects, strengthening anchor institutions, or advocating for policies to spur growth. The Annual Meeting provided a rare chance not only to reflect on this legacy but to underscore what GBC means today: a convener of more than 300 partners unified around strengthening Baltimore's future.

"For 70 years, the Greater Baltimore Committee has been a catalyst for progress, convening leaders to tackle the region's most pressing challenges and championing solutions that drive growth," said Mark Anthony Thomas, GBC President and CEO. "We are proud to mark this milestone by celebrating our history while looking ahead to the opportunities before us."

The evening highlighted progress made in areas that have long defined the city's narrative. Violent crime is down, vacant housing is being addressed with renewed urgency, and cultural institutions like the Orioles and the Preakness Stakes remain firmly rooted in Baltimore's identity. Governor Wes Moore underscored this shift in tone, urging attendees to focus on the region's momentum. "The thing that I would say to Baltimore at this moment is: Do not spend any more time on those who will distract," Moore said, pointing to record-low violent crime rates and renewed stability in Baltimore's major institutions as signs of progress.

The release of GBC's new **Impact Report** added weight to these reflections. The report captures the work of the past two years, highlighting a nearly 70 percent surge in tax revenues from 2023 to 2024, driven by growth in transportation, utilities, real estate, manufacturing, and healthcare. Development projects and large-scale investments have gained momentum, while manufacturing—a sector too often written off—has re-emerged as a driver of jobs and infrastructure. Meanwhile, the city's innovation economy continues to grow: more than 480 active startups, \$664 million raised in venture funding, and momentum in life sciences, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing.

What stood out throughout the program was the sense that Baltimore's future is not simply something to wait for—it is being built in real time, through deliberate choices and partnerships. The GBC has positioned itself as a bridge between the public and private sectors, a platform where

bold ideas become actionable policy, and a network that channels collective energy into measurable outcomes.

There is no shortage of challenges ahead. Early-stage entrepreneurs still face funding gaps. Some neighborhoods remain untouched by the city's economic momentum. Public safety and housing stability require ongoing attention. Yet by bringing together leaders across industries and government, GBC is betting on Baltimore's ability to not only overcome these obstacles but to transform them into opportunities for innovation.

As attendees left the Annual Meeting with copies of the Impact Report in hand, the message was clear: Baltimore's anthem is still one of strength. The GBC is working to ensure that anthem continues—resonating not as nostalgia, but as a promise that the city's best chapters are still ahead.

Literary Figure Andrea Blackstone Releases Her Newest Book: 'The World We Left Behind'

By Demetrius Dillard

In the world of literature and journalism, there isn't much Andrea Blackstone hasn't accomplished. From newspaper reporting to authoring numerous fictional novels, to producing dazzling artistic renditions – Blackstone is a multifaceted author, historian, award-winning journalist and storyteller. And her latest literary work is nothing short of inspirational.

"The World We Left Behind," Blackstone's first historical fiction book, was officially released August 7, 2025. Also, her first project after a long hiatus from writing books, Blackstone's great-grandmother – Queen Jackson Haley – inspired her to write what she calls a reimagined story about slavery and the children of the plantation.

"To me, it's a story about resilience and remembering people who endured a lot," said Blackstone, a Virginia resident originally from Long Island, N.Y.

The first book in Blackstone's new Black Water Cove series, "The World We Left Behind," as Blackstone frames it, underlines the struggles of enslaved people, the intersecting lives of their enslavers and the courageous abolitionists who were despised for their moral uprightness.

The book follows this summarized plot line:

At Rutherford Rocks Plantation, deep wounds grow under the rule of rich Alabama landowners. After John Brower secretly fathers a child with Hazel, an enslaved woman, his wife Catherine's rage leads her down a brutal and bitter path. She gains a dark reputation as one of the cruelest slaveholders — until an unexpected love shakes her world.

Meanwhile, Catherine's sister, Sarah Ann, turns against her upbringing to become an abolitionist, changing the

lives of Aunt Sarah, a former cook, and her children. This historical novel kicks off The Black Water Cove series — a saga about betrayal, survival, hope, and the tangled legacies of a plantation haunted by its past.

Between August 7 and August 13, 2025, Blackstone released a few other projects, including journals, artwork and a workbook, to honor various people in her mother's family with birthdays around that time.

"For Such A Time As This" is a self-development workbook for creatives. Encouraging messages are spread throughout the workbook; from affirmations to carefully selected Bible verses, "For Such A Time As This" promotes emotional healing, spiritual growth and intentional self-care.

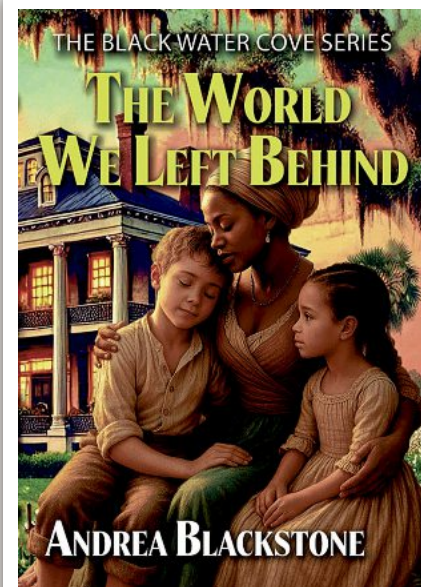
Similarly, the "Flower Power," "Royalty," and "Daughter of Royalty" journals blend original art and quotes while celebrating femininity and paying homage to women who endured slavery.

"All of those things were rolled out after I launched my website because I wanted to celebrate the written word in a variety of formats and have a place to house them," Blackstone said.

"The World We Left Behind" was born out of Blackstone's healing journey in recovering from her mother's passing, coupled with the enlightenment of learning more about her family history.

As aforesaid, Blackstone's great-grandmother was Queen Jackson Haley; Simon Alexander Haley was her maternal grandfather and renowned author Alex Haley's father (author of "Roots"); her mother, the late Lois Ann Haley Blackstone (Butts) was Simon's daughter and Alex Haley's lesser-known half-sister, according to Blackstone, who said writing the book took quite a while, taking her on an immersive, emotional journey.

"It was something I really wanted to



do – especially now, where history is in a different place, and I don't want to forget people who've endured sacrifices and come out of these situations, and produced greatness," Blackstone told The Baltimore Times.

The 244-page historical fiction also uplifts Black men, portraying those particular characters in an honorable manner, Blackstone added.

"It was a very liberating experience to write the story," she said. "It was something that moved me to tears sometimes, that made me angry, but I felt peace in doing it for my family."

Blackstone, a graduate of Morgan State University, said the book took more than two years to complete. She earned a master's degree from St. John's College (Annapolis), has contributed to several publications in the region, including serving as an assistant editor for The Baltimore Times.

With the release of her latest series of books, Blackstone has authored at least 10 published literary works.

Through pure ingenuity, inquisitiveness



Andrea Blackstone visits the ruins of the Forks of Cypress Plantation in Alabama. Queen Jackson Haley and her mother, Esther (Easter) were formerly enslaved there.

Photo: Darrin Riddick-Davis

and passion, Blackstone's quest to tell *untold* stories has been a massive success thus far.

"I hope people take away something positive from the book," she said.

"In the African American community, I hope people who read it will see that we need to uplift our men. And the men who are in great need to continue being great and realize that there are people who want to recognize their hard work and contributions. We need to continue to encourage working together and bonding as a family."

Learn more about Blackstone and her projects by visiting <https://andreablackstone.com/books/>.

Practical Ways to Support a Loved One in Recovery

Part II of a Two-Part Series

By **Andrea Blackstone**

Although the chronic disease of addiction can grip people in different ways despite age, educational background or race, recovery is possible. Getting needed treatment, establishing a support system, maintaining hope, embracing resilience, and staying determined TO grow are five important components of recovery. Mental health experts, Najamah Davis, owner of Najamah Davis Counseling Services, and Casondra Burkley, owner of Conquering the Obstacles of Painful Experiences, provide professional insight into recovery in a second part of a National Recovery Month series.

About Recovery

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reported (<https://www.samhsa.gov/substance-use/recovery>) that 50.2 million American adults considered themselves to be in recovery from their substance use and/or mental health problems. Additionally, this includes 2 in 3 adults who ever had a mental health problem and 7 in 10 adults who ever had a substance use problem.

What is a lesser-known fact about recovery?

Davis, MSW, LCSW, and LCADC notes that recovery is not only about stopping substance use—it is also about rebuilding a sense of connection, purpose, and identity.

“For many, healing relationships and learning healthier coping strategies are just as important as sobriety itself,” she said.

Recovery is a process, not a finish line.

The length of recovery depends on several factors, including the type of substance, how long it was used, and how deeply it became a coping mechanism, Burkley, LCSW-S, M.Div, LSSGB, ADS-CEO, explained.

She added, “For some, recovery involves weeks or months of treatment. For others, it becomes a lifelong journey of learning to live beyond the pain and trauma that fueled the addiction in the first place. Even if someone stops using, the impact can remain, like liver damage from alcohol use or the ongoing emotional triggers tied to trauma. Recovery is about progress, not perfection. It is a commitment to healing, one day at a time.”

Families and friends can support loved ones who struggle with addiction.

Burkley stated that families and friends play a critical role in a person’s recovery. The best support is rooted in compassion, not judgment.

“Avoid ultimatums or shaming, which can deepen isolation. Instead, focus on being a steady presence that reminds your loved one they are not alone,” she advised.

Show up willing to help your loved one with love and by adhering to boundaries.

Burkley advised that one way to remember how to show up is through the acronym H.E.L.P.

- **H** – Hold space with compassion

“Sometimes just being present, without pressure or judgment, speaks louder than words. Compassion allows your loved one to feel seen and valued, even in their struggle,” Burkley noted.

- **E** – Establish boundaries with love

“Support does not mean enabling harmful behavior. Healthy boundaries communicate, ‘I love you, and I want you to heal, but I cannot excuse the behaviors that block your healing.’ Boundaries protect both you and your loved one,” Burkley explained.

- **L** – Learn about trauma and recovery

Burkley stated that addiction rarely happens in a vacuum.

“It is often connected to unhealed trauma. The more families educate themselves about trauma, substance use, and healing



Casondra Burkley, mental health expert and owner of Conquering the Obstacles of Painful Experiences.

Photo: Nicole Warner



Najamah Davis, mental health expert and owner of Najamah Davis Counseling Services.

Photo: Eyes On YOU Photography

practices, the better they can understand what their loved one is facing. Knowledge transforms frustration into empathy.”

- **P** – Promote healing through treatment and resources

Burkley suggested that supporters of people who are recovering from addictions can encourage them to pursue therapy, participate in recovery groups, and seek faith-based support, or holistic practices that help to regulate the body and mind.

“Even when your loved one resists, your encouragement plants seeds of hope and reminds them that healing is possible. Healing becomes more possible when families stand as allies, not adversaries while always remembering that you do not have to agree with someone to support them.”

Recovery Resources to Note

Burkley mentioned that recovery resources can be beneficial to people in recovery, and their friends and families who support them. She named three specific sources, including:

- **SAMHSA’s National Helpline:** A free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders. Visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/helplines/national-helpline> online.

- **NAATP:** National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers helps people to find trusted, licensed, and accredited treatment providers. NAATP offers education on treatment types, quality metrics, and ethical care. Find out more via <https://www.naatp.org>.

- **The Salvation Army Recovery Programs** offer structured recovery services including residential programs, counseling, and support for individuals seeking healing from addiction. Please refer to <https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/recovery/> for details.

Learn more about Najamah Davis Counseling Services via www.nd-counselingservices.com, and Conquering the Obstacles of Painful Experiences by visiting www.morethancope.com.



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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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Charm City's Music, Food, and Culture Shine at War Memorial Plaza

Charm City Live 2025 Closes Summer with Music, Food, and Community

BALTIMORE—Thousands filled War Memorial Plaza on Saturday, September 20, 2025, to celebrate the fourth annual *Charm City Live*, Baltimore's signature free, one-day end-of-summer festival. From noon to 9 p.m., downtown transformed into a lively hub of music, family fun, food, and community connections.

Mayor Brandon M. Scott welcomed attendees, emphasizing the city's commitment to closing the festival season with a joyful, inclusive celebration. "Charm City Live is about bringing people together. This free event once again showed the best of Baltimore's charm," said Scott.

The festival stage lit up with dynamic national performances from R&B star Lucky Daye, hitmaker The-Dream, legendary vocalist Jeffrey Osborne, and soulful favorite Vivian Green. Their high-energy sets kept the crowds dancing late into the evening, showcasing Baltimore's thriving music culture.

Families enjoyed a wide variety of engaging activities throughout the Plaza. Highlights included: a basketball pop-up court sponsored by DTLR; a smoothie bike challenge powered by Baltimore City Recreation and Parks; the ever-popular Kids Zone featuring animal ambassadors from the Carrie Murray Nature Center, face painting, inflatable games, STEM activities, and oversized interactive games; and a virtual reality avatar kiosk presented by The Peale, which gave festivalgoers a unique digital keepsake experience.

Charm City Live also provided meaningful opportunities for residents to connect with city services. The Baltimore City Department of Human Resources hosted a career pathway showcase, where job seekers networked with agency leaders, explored employment options, and accessed application resources through digital QR codes.



Dozens of local food vendors and merchandise stands lined the Plaza, offering authentic Baltimore bites alongside diverse flavors from across the region. Festivalgoers sampled a variety of dishes, from classic crab cakes to global street food, while browsing local artisanal goods.

Now in its fourth year, Charm City Live has solidified its role as a beloved Baltimore tradition. Drawing families, young professionals, and visitors alike, the festival reflects the city's spirit while highlighting Baltimore's vibrant music, food, and cultural scene.

As the sun set over War Memorial Plaza, the festival capped off Baltimore's



Photos: Denzel Photography

summer in true Charm City style—free, family-friendly, and filled with energy

from the heart of the city.

Black Arts in Baltimore: October 2025 Highlights

By Harold Booker

for Baltimore Black Art in collaboration with The Baltimore Times

October ushers in a powerful month for Black arts in Baltimore. From Broadway-tested theater to Grammy-winning music and homegrown comedy talent, the city's cultural calendar is bursting with performances that celebrate both legacy and innovation.

This season, Baltimoreans can witness history on stage. At Center Stage "The Peculiar Patriot" brings Liza Jessie Peterson's searing critique of mass incarceration to life. Meanwhile, Theatre Morgan presents "Ain't No Mo," a biting satire by Jordan E. Cooper, the youngest Black playwright to premiere a production on Broadway and the creative force behind BET's Emmy-nominated "The Ms. Pat Show." UMBC honors the poetry of Langston Hughes with "Shakespeare in Harlem," weaving Harlem Renaissance brilliance into modern performance.

Dance lovers can immerse themselves in the 5th Annual Black Choreographers Festival at Creative Alliance, a showcase of movement and storytelling that amplifies Black voices in the world of dance.

On the music front, hip hop fans will pack CFG Bank Arena for NBA YoungBoy's "MASA Tour." October also features a landmark evening of music that speaks directly to Baltimore's community spirit. This concert will be headlined by Grammy Award-winning artist Common; Billboard Music Award-winning artist CeCe Peniston; Central Maryland's own "The Voice" star Elyscia Jefferson; Baltimore rock band Whiskey Feathers; and the Baltimore City College Choir. Far more than a concert, this program serves as a testament to United Way of Central Maryland's unwavering commitment to strengthening lives and neighborhoods



Leah Hawkins

Photo courtesy of Morgan State University

across Greater Baltimore by promoting equity and increasing access to basic needs. A portion of the proceeds will go to United Way of Central Maryland's community initiatives and strategic priorities for the next 100 years. Please note that the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra does not appear on this program.

Classical music audiences will savor the soaring voice of soprano Leah Hawkins, a Metropolitan Opera alumna, in a special evening at Morgan State's Murphy Fine Arts Center on October 2.

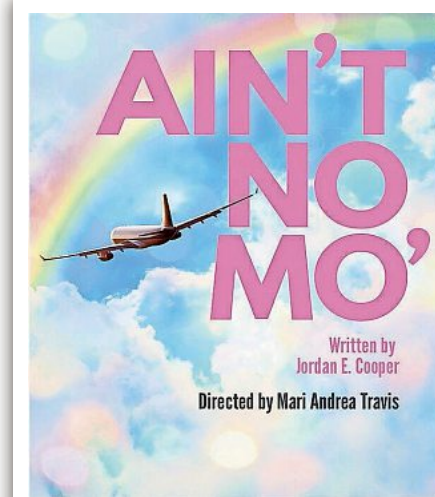
Comedy also takes center stage this month with a string of headliners at the Baltimore Comedy Factory. From viral sensation Benji Brown and hometown favorite Omar Terrell to DeRay Davis, George Willborn, and Lil Duval audiences can expect nights filled with laughter, cultural commentary, and unfiltered fun.

Together, these performances remind us that Baltimore continues to stand tall as a hub of Black creativity. Whether you are drawn to theater, dance, music, or comedy October offers a chance to witness artistry that is bold, relevant, and deeply rooted in the Black experience. For more updates on arts events across the city follow @BaltimoreBlackArt on social media.

EVENT LISTINGS

Theater

- *The Peculiar Patriot* — Baltimore Center Stage Oct. 5–Nov. 9
- *Ain't No Mo'* — Theatre Morgan Murphy Fine Arts Center Oct. 23–25



- *Shakespeare in Harlem* — UMBC Proscenium Theatre Oct. 30–Nov. 9

Dance

- 5th Annual Black Choreographers Festival — Creative Alliance Oct. 8–11

Music — Hip Hop

- NBA YoungBoy "MASA Tour" — CFG Bank Arena Oct. 4
- *An Evening with Common* — Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Oct. 11

Music — Classical / Symphonic

- *An Evening with Leah Hawkins, Soprano* — Murphy Fine Arts Center Oct. 2

Comedy

- Benji Brown — Baltimore Comedy Factory Oct. 3–5
- Omar Terrell — Baltimore Comedy Factory Oct. 9
- DeRay Davis — Baltimore Comedy Factory Oct. 10–12

- George Willborn — Baltimore Comedy Factory Oct. 17–19
- Lil Duval — Baltimore Comedy Factory Oct. 24–26

Employment

Actalent Services, LLC. has the following opportunities in Hanover, MD(& various unanticipated locations throughout US) Telecommuting Permitted:

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