

The Annapolis Times

Vol. 25 No. 22 March 31 - April 6, 2017

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Photos: Courtesy/ Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts

March Productions brings play about Jesus' death to the stage

By Stacy M. Brown

When locals think of the March family dynasty, it's usually funeral processions and tombs that first come to mind.

Now, Erich March seeks to bring another meaning to tomb—one held most sacred by many—in the form of a stage play that he has produced through his March Productions company.

“Being in the funeral business, I tried to imagine what it would have been like to attend Jesus’ funeral, if he had had one,” said March, whose family has owned and operated the March Funeral Homes in Baltimore for more than a half-century. “Who would be there and why? What would be said about him publicly and whispered quietly?”

On April 7-8, March will bring his gospel musical, “In the Tomb: The Resurrection from the Inside Out,” to Harry and Jeannette Weinberg Auditorium on the campus of Mercy High School. Featuring actor and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity member Ken Alston Jr., and opera singer and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity member Robert L. Cooper, the three-act show has been billed as the first stage play of its kind to give a voice to Jesus’ closest followers and those who would be responsible for his death.

Written by March, directed by LaSonia King with musical director Bishop John Washington, “In the Tomb” takes audiences on a journey into the past to understand those closest to Jesus as they cope with his death and ultimately learn the power of God’s love.

“The play is true to the Bible, in that the characters are true to their roles in

the story of the death and resurrection. Each character has a story to tell and a song to sing,” he said.

They all gather in the tomb of Jesus, thus the title. Some are there to mourn his death, but some are there to make sure he’s dead, March noted.

A funeral director for 45 years, March says he has always been a writer and took creative writing in college. He wrote for and edited a community newsletter while in school and has written articles, which have been published in funeral industry journals and local newspapers.

“The gospel musical, ‘In the Tomb,’ I wrote the play and most of the lyrics. “I collaborated with a very talented composer by the name of Bishop John D. Washington to create a spirit-filled gospel,” said March of the play’s production numbers, to which he has written most of the lyrics.

“In my line of work and the emotions I encounter every day, I try to channel a lot of the human condition into my creative relief. My faith is a big influence,” he said, noting that it’s the second time the play will hit the stage in Baltimore. “I am committed to Baltimore, [and] we have a lot of talent here, especially talented young people that need to find support and encouragement,” March said.

The production is Broadway quality and the crew will take it on tour, according to March.

“In two sentences, ‘In the Tomb’ will make you cry, laugh and give God praise,” he said. “It will give you hope.”

For tickets and a schedule for “In the Tomb,” visit <http://www.inthetomb.com/>

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The Annapolis Times

(USPS 5840) is published every Friday by *The Baltimore Times/Times of Baltimore*, 2513 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. Subscriptions by mail \$60 per year. Standard bulk postage paid at Baltimore, MD 21233.

Postmaster send address changes to:

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Hidden ER Costs Undermine Health Markets

By Wayne Winegarden

Imagine you're traveling in a different state when, suddenly, you begin to feel severe abdominal pain. Being unfamiliar with the area and wanting to avoid hefty out-of-network bills, you call your insurance company to find an in-network hospital. After receiving some medication and a few routine tests in the emergency department, you leave feeling better.

A month later, you receive a bill from your insurance company: \$1,600 in out-of-network charges!

This actually happened to businessman Doug Moore. And it's happening to hundreds of thousands of others across the country, due to a flaw in health insurance markets. Fixing this shortcoming would save patients from unexpected, ruinous bills and enable consumers to make rational economic choices about their health.

The problem is that insurers contract with hospitals and emergency room doctors separately. So even if a hospital is in-network, the doctors in the ER might not be. Patients rarely realize this. And even if they did, there's little way for patients to check if the ER doctors are covered by their insurance plan.

The resulting out-of-network charges are stunningly expensive—and common. More than one in five patients who visited in-network ERs were treated by out-of-network physicians, according to a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Their average bill was over two and a half times higher than what they would have paid for an in-network physician. For some patients, surprise out-of-network ER bills can hit upwards of \$19,000 for a single visit to an in-network hospital.

These surprise costs would devastate most American families. Indeed, nearly half of Americans would not be able to afford an ER bill of just \$400 without borrowing money or selling some of their assets, according to the Federal Reserve.

According to the study, hundreds of thousands of families are facing ruinous out-of-network bills that they have no way of foreseeing or preventing. That's tragic. It's also bad policy.

To control healthcare spending, patients need to know which providers and treatments are in-network, so they can seek care accordingly. They can't do that if insurers keep them in the dark about which ER doctors are covered, and then hit them with surprise bills.

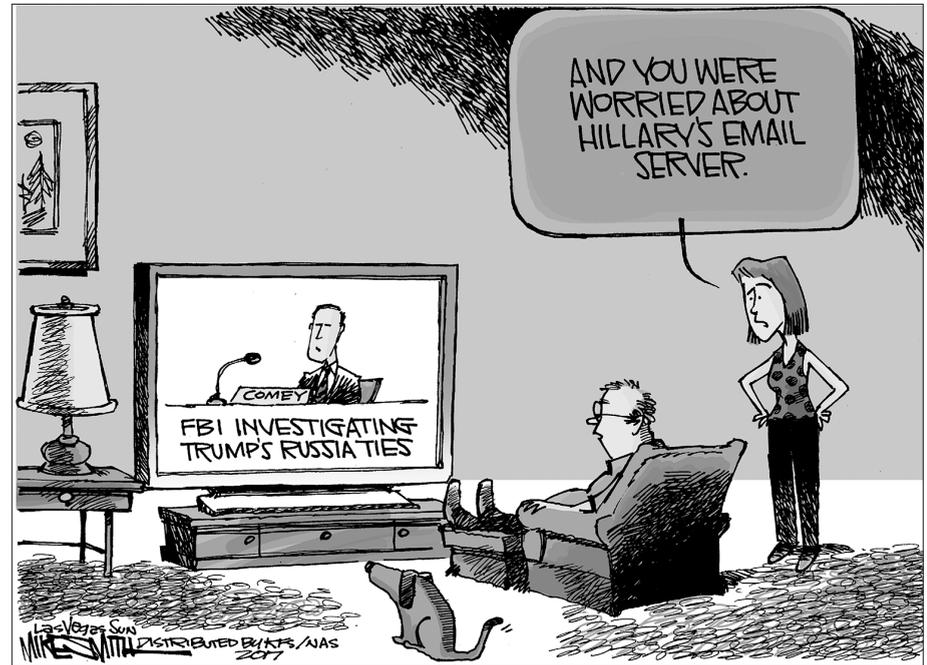
Insurers could fix this problem by negotiating with hospitals for a bundled reimbursement rate that includes ER services. Hospitals would then conduct their own pay negotiations with ER doctors. As a result, hospitals would compete with one another to employ the best doctors and offer insurers favorable rates.

And insurers would compete for consumers' business based on premiums and the breadth of hospitals—and thus ER departments—that are covered by the plan.

Patients could easily see which hospitals are covered by which plans, and make their own decisions about where to seek care.

That would put an end to billing practices that shock consumers with hefty tabs and it would improve consumer choice, putting downward pressure on rising healthcare costs.

Wayne Winegarden is a senior fellow in business and economics at the Pacific Research Institute.



Community Affairs

MARC trains offer affordable, hassle-free ride to the National Cherry Blossom Festival

Baltimore— The Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) urges Baltimore-area residents planning a visit to the nation's capital during this year's National Cherry Blossom Festival to avoid the traffic and parking hassles and use MARC Train's Penn Line.

Tens of thousands are expected to attend one of several events related to the month-long National Cherry Blossom Festival, which runs until April 15 following the Southwest Waterfront Fireworks Festival.

"MARC Train is a convenient, cost-effective way to travel to D.C. whether connecting to jobs, retail, healthcare and entertainment, or the annual National Cherry Blossom Festival," said Erich Kolig, MTA's director of MARC Train and Commuter Bus Services. "An additional benefit of traveling on a weekend

is all MARC Penn Line trains have a designated bike-car, providing an added level of convenience and ease of travel for our bike-riding customers."

To manage this year's crowd, additional rail cars have been added to MARC's Penn Line service starting this weekend. All weekend MARC trains will continue to operate with the bike car, which can hold 28 full-sized bicycles and can be accessed on a first-come, first-served basis.

MARC Train's Penn Line weekend service offers nine round-trips between Baltimore's Penn Station and Union Station in Washington, D.C., on Saturdays and six round-trips on Sundays for the same \$8 one-way fare offered on weekdays—with monthly and 7-day weekly passes honored.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival commemorates the 1912 gift of 3,000 cherry trees from Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo to the District of Columbia. The gift and annual celebration honor the lasting friendship between the United States and Japan.

The complete schedule for the MARC train service available online at <https://mta.maryland.gov/marc-train>.

How to end construction union racism— start a black union!

By Harry C. Alford

It has been 45 years since my mentor, Dr. Arthur A. Fletcher, implemented the Philadelphia Plan, a federal program used to integrate unions. From the beginning, the construction trades resisted with violence and Jim Crow style segregation. Take the pipe fitters' union halls in Chicago, they have been successfully sued various times but still will not integrate their halls. It is this way across our nation. Therefore, the National Black Chamber of Commerce will not support pro-union Project Labor Agreements.

Then, why do most civil rights organizations and local black elected officials support such instruments of racism? That is simple. They accept donations from the very construction locals who discriminate against us. Sometimes they will claim that they will start an Apprenticeship Training Program that will result in black youth starting careers in productive union jobs. Many have gone through these programs; graduate and sign onto a union hall; and wait forever. There will be no jobs and there will be

no career. It is a sham. This is a national disgrace. If they do it all the time in Washington, D.C., the Capital of our nation, it is happening everywhere. Forty-five years and there is no progress. Construction unions were "skipped" during the Civil Rights Victories. Now the unions will allow general laborers and cement workers to integrate which provides cover for the higher paying trades.

It is like a subdivision. Two story homes housing 3,400 residents. It is clean, quiet with all the residents speaking to one another. Unique would be an understatement.

Section 3 of the HUD Act (24 CFR part 135) was enacted in 1968, right after the first Watts Riot in Los Angeles. It was updated after the Rodney King Riot in 1992. Unlike the 95 percent of HUD facilities, which ignore Section 3,

with this black union. They have a working calendar which keeps everyone busy improving their lives. It is more like a happy town.

This progress reminded me of a classic James Brown hit, "I don't want nobody to give me nothing! Just open up the door and I'll get it myself. Do you hear me?!!"

The union has big plans of spreading their "gold medal" process. They contract with a large public housing unit; complete the project and run apprentice programs at the same time utilizing Section 3. Keep in mind a journeyman dry-wall installer makes \$80.00 per hour in the Chicago area. Before long the residents of public housing will be saying "Bye, Bye" to poverty, drug trafficking and despair.

These guys knew about the Section 3 classes we were producing across the country 25 years ago, that is why they wanted to meet the NBCC. Their plan is to spread this model across the country city by city. Chicago is their second city. They got their start in New York City.

Well, the NBCC will collaborate with them. They will make a formal presentation at our annual conference in July. Our chapters located in urban areas can bring the prototype of this program back to their communities.

In conclusion, I will quote a more melodic singer: "God bless the child who has his own,"— Billie Holiday.

Harry Alford is the co-founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce ®. For more information, visit: www.nationalbcc.org and to contact Harry Alford, email: halford@nationalbcc.org

"This meeting took place at the historic Altgeld Gardens, a public housing neighborhood under the management of the Chicago Housing Authority.

I have been into hundreds of public housing facilities but this one was quite different. It is like a subdivision.

Two story homes housing 3,400 residents. It is clean, quiet with all the residents speaking to one another.

Unique would be an understatement."

Last week at the request of the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, I visited something I never envisioned. I sat in a meeting with a group who introduced themselves as an international construction union. The U. S. Department of Labor accepts them. Their members are black and they have active apprentice training programs. The key to this is that they are "International" and are not affiliated with the Jim Crow unions. I said to myself, "Finally Lord, we have found the way."

This meeting took place at the historic Altgeld Gardens, a public housing neighborhood under the management of the Chicago Housing Authority. I have been into hundreds of public housing facilities but this one was quite different.

Altgeld is compliant with Section 3. Section 3 provides on the job training for all projects that have "some" HUD funding. That HUD funding could be in a shopping center, hotel, football stadium, etc. Those projects are to contract 10 percent of that funding to Section 3 companies. A Section 3 company is one that hires at least 30 percent Section 3 workers (people that live in public housing or Section 8 rentals.) Altgeld should be a national model.

So here we are— a black union running apprenticeship programs through Section 3 construction contracts and using Section 3 workers. Keep in mind that Altgeld is the largest public housing facility in greater Chicago. Their tenants' association works hand in hand

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Honoring Trailblazing Women in Labor and Business

By Brenda Bowe Johnson

Women have successfully challenged the role they play in both business and the paid labor force. Women have proven that they can be successful in every field.

Women have always worked but often their work has been undervalued, underpaid or unpaid. As labor, business leaders and innovators, women defied the social norms of our times by demonstrating their ability to create organizations and establish their own businesses that paved the way for better working conditions and wages for themselves and future generations of women.

This year's theme for National Women's History Month, "Honoring trailblazing Women in Labor and Business," recognizes women's contributions to the workforce. The five women highlighted in this article are examples of trailblazers who have accepted opportunities and overcome obstacles to become successful in their chosen career paths. In addition, they are passionate about their role in mentoring and encouraging young people, especially girls to excel.

The honorees are: Dr. Denise Beach Davis, podiatrist and surgeon; Elizabeth S. Glenn, retired Baltimore County administrator; Dr. Jocelyn Gainers, entrepreneur and addictions counselor; Karen Gibbs, founder of the Gibbs Perspective and business TV anchor; and Donna Stevenson Robinson, president and CEO of Early Morning Software.

With the encouragement of her mentor, Dr. Denise Beach Davis, chose to consider podiatry.

"I was happy to [enter] a profession that was Jewish male dominated for so many years. Today, we have many minorities in the profession. I am glad to have considered this career path," said Beach Davis, explaining that as a woman in podiatry, she had to prove that she added value to most patient circumstances, especially in the operating room.

Beach Davis believes in the importance of mentoring young women to help them to develop the confidence, self worth and determination that will enable them to become whatever they choose. She encourages youth to excel beyond their



Dr. Denise Beach Davis
Courtesy Photo



Elizabeth Glenn
Courtesy Photo



Dr. Jocelyn Gainers
Courtesy Photo

comfort zone in order to maximize their potential.

Another trailblazer, is gifted artist and fashion designer Elizabeth S. Glenn who retired from the Baltimore County government as deputy director of planning. Glenn worked with the County administration to increase funding and programming for the homeless. She administered community planning and development programs such as sustainable development and affordable, accessible housing units, both rental and homeownership. These efforts helped hundreds of people to obtain permanent housing upon exiting Baltimore County shelters.

Described as a high-energy trainer and consultant for human service programs, Dr. Jocelyn Gainers is the CEO of the Family Recovery Program, Inc. located in Baltimore City. The program aims to reach substance abusing parents who have children ages 0-10 years entering foster care for the first time, with the intention of engaging parents in substance use treatment, reunifying families, and avoiding subsequent mal-treatment.

As a certified addictions counselor with expertise in working with adolescents, adults and couples in both group and individual settings, Dr. Gainers said, "The work of the Family Recovery Program exists for parents in times of challenge and controversy and as an organization, it chooses to be motivated by the desire to create good outcomes for the families that they serve.

Karen Gibbs is president and founder of The Gibbs Perspective, a company



Karen Gibbs
Courtesy Photo



Donna Stevenson Robinson
Courtesy Photo

concerned with financial literacy/capability and investor education. She is a veteran business television anchor and correspondent. A noted speaker and moderator, Gibbs is now the financial expert for the Maryland Public Television's Smart Thinking for Your Money campaign. Most recently she was a contributor to PBS' Nightly Business Report and a host for the Moneyshow.com Video Network.

"Once money took over as the world's largest commodity, I rode the wave of financial futures from treasuries and mortgages, foreign currencies, stock index futures and options," said Gibbs, who believes it's imperative to nurture and encourage anyone who wants to further their education, work in corporate America or start their own business.

Donna Stevenson Robinson is President and co-founder of Early Morning

Software, Inc., a software manufacturer of the flagship Contract Compliance and Supplier Diversity Management solution, PRISMCompliance.com.

Stevenson's introduction to the possibility of a career in Information Technology (IT) was spawned at a college career fair and later job fair where she met personnel from her first employer, IBM. Stevenson learned and developed as an IT/Project Management professional, which prepared her for entrepreneurship. The biggest challenge has been accessing funding and earning the respect as a national software manufacturer.

"Today, I seek champions, rather than mentors for our business vision and creating economic development outcomes that are derived by having procurement and compliance practices managed by the PRISMCompliance.com system," Stevenson said.

NAACP applauds women as leaders

By Stacy M. Brown

Women's contribution to the NAACP has been underscored by the dedicated service of historic figures like Mildred Bond Roxborough, Doris Adelaide Derby, Ruby Nell Sales, and many others.

The more than 100-year-old civil rights organization has witnessed women who have served integral roles in its history. Today, they still do.

During Women's History Month, the NAACP began a national initiative to highlight some of its female executives in a campaign titled, "She Leads ... I'll Follow," celebrating women leadership both past and present.

Among those in the spotlight are Jackie Patterson, who works in the environmental justice and climate change department. Lately, she's been busy with a report that presents the findings of many African Americans who've fallen victim to high-cost utility bills from private companies.

Dr. Marjorie Innocent, whose health department has been instrumental in assisting in the Flint, Michigan water crisis, also won praise from the NAACP and, Andrea Brown Gee, the vice president of strategic partnerships and planning for the civil rights organization who said she strongly believes the work of the NAACP remains timely and necessary.

"The NAACP continues to mobilize its membership in this millennium to combat racial disparities and inequities through direct action, legislation and other tactics as evidenced in the recent opposition of Attorney General Jeff Sessions," Gee said. "The NAACP is taking full advantage of activism through the use of digital strategies like Twitter,



Jackie Patterson
Environmental Justice, NAACP



Dr. Marjorie Innocent
Health, NAACP



Ngozi Ndulue
Criminal Justice, NAACP

Facebook, and Instagram which makes our work progressive and appealing to a broad range of activists."

Patterson says she sees her primary roles with the NAACP primarily as catalyst, pollinator and facilitator.

"We work with communities who are in deeply challenging circumstances with contaminated air, water, and land whose access to basic needs are severely compromised," Patterson said. "My role as facilitator is to work with communities to strategize for change and then I'm blessed to bring those lessons to other communities in distress to pollinate with technical resources and act as a catalyst and facilitator of change."

Ngozi Ndulue, the senior director of criminal justice programs and another woman of the NAACP, said her department works to ensure that the legal system remains fair for all.

"We want to make sure that people who do not need to be involved in the system aren't involved so we're working for police reform, to make sure that policing is not harming communities of

color," Ndulue said. "We also want to make sure that people who have been involved in the system have the opportunity to rebuild their lives, so we're working for fair chance hiring to make sure that people with a criminal record have opportunities for employment."

The story of the NAACP began on February 12, 1909, with a woman, according to its archives. A white journalist and woman's suffragist named Mary White Ovington joined with two other activists to call for a national conference on the civil and political rights of African-Americans.

The ensuing conference was called the National Negro Committee, and it was soon renamed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP.

Ovington served as the third chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors from 1919-1934, the highest position in the NAACP. She also served twice as executive secretary, then the highest position on the NAACP staff.

It is clear that from Ovington and up



Paula Browne Edme
Field Operations, NAACP

to today, women have and will continue to play a vital role in the organization.

"I felt it was necessary to highlight the talents and gifts of NAACP women who lead critical components of our work day in and day out during this Women's History Month," Gee said. "To showcase their work and the value of the NAACP during this time in history is paramount."

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There is a new Carr in the Ravens garage

By Turron Davenport

The Baltimore Ravens want to improve their pass defense even though the team was ranked ninth in the NFL, giving up 232.8 passing yards per game. The team released Sharece Wright and has signed veteran cornerback Brandon Carr to pair up with Jimmy Smith and Tavon Young for the top three corner spots.

Carr, a former member of the Dallas Cowboys and Kansas City Chiefs has not missed a game in his nine-year career. He signed a four-year contract worth \$23.5 million with the Ravens. It includes a \$4 million signing bonus, \$4 million guaranteed, and an average annual salary of \$5.87 million.

This was Carr's second time as a free agent after signing with the Cowboys in 2012. He was one of the top players on the market give years ago after intercepting a career high four passes with the Chiefs. However, things were a bit different this time around.

"It has been a process—this free agency, the second time around. Patience took over; I just knew a good situation was going to come, and I am blessed," Carr said at his first press conference as a Raven on Monday, March 20, 2017. "To be able to enter year 10 [with] a different organization, an organization that emphasizes the importance of defense, an organization that also em-



Former Cowboys cornerback Brandon Carr celebrates after an incomplete pass against the Redskins during the 2016 season. Carr just signed a four-year \$23.5 million contract with the Baltimore Ravens. Courtesy Photo/NFL.com

phasizes the importance of being in the community. Those are two things that really played a key factor into me making the decision to come to Baltimore."

Carr has always admired what the Ravens have stood for over the years. He is excited to be able to now join the organization.

"The Baltimore Ravens quickly became a team that, as a defender, you took note of and you would wish someday, you would get closer to the organization," Carr explained. "I could not really sleep last night. I was just trying to get ready for this day. I didn't know what to expect. I just wanted to get in the building just to finally feel like I am a Raven.

"I look forward to the future here. I look forward to the season, the next few months, especially, just learning the guys, learning the staff, the city, but just playing some football."

Baltimore has had its share of injured defensive backs recently. Smith is their best defensive back but has dealt with multiple foot injuries in his career. Adding a player like Carr who has never missed a game in his career gives the Ravens a reliable starter that can help their secondary.

Even though the Ravens have three solid starting corners, a team can never have too many, so don't be surprised if the Ravens add a cornerback in the 2017 NFL Draft.

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Ruben Studdard digs deep for Sam Cooke Classic

By Stacy M. Brown

If anyone has been wondering what- ever happened to Ruben Studdard, they probably haven't been paying too much attention.

In the 13 years since he brightened the world of pop music with his romantic balladry on American Idol, Studdard has warmed the hearts of his huge fan base with five albums and has toured with the varied likes of Peabo Bryson, Melissa Manchester, CeCe Winans and David Foster.

That is just a tidbit offered on his personal webpage. He has done a whole lot more, including the just completed a powerful new version of Sam Cooke's classic, "A Change is Gonna Come."

"The initial reason toward singing the song was an event we were having in honor of Civil Rights in Birmingham," said Studdard, now 38. "It was a big event and Dr. Henry Panion III was producing and conducting the orchestra and it was a live event that turned into a PBS special during Black History Month."



Rueben Studdard has just completed a powerful new version of Sam Cooke's classic, "A Change is Gonna Come." The single is currently available on iTunes and GooglePlay. Courtesy Photo

Studdard added that Panion, who he considered his mentor, asked if he would sing and the former Idol champ didn't hesitate.

"I've always been a fan of that song and the importance of the material inclined me to do it," he said.

Panion has been lauded for his work with a who's who in music, including Stevie Wonder, Kirk Franklin, Chaka Khan, the Winans, Aretha Franklin, Tramaine Hawkins, and American Idol Winners Carrie Underwood and Studdard.

"Ruben really does shine and I think it's a great joy working with him," said Panion, whose works are programmed throughout the United States by many of the country's major orchestras, including the Atlanta Symphony, Cincinnati Pops, Cleveland Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Houston Symphony, and the National Symphony.

"He really does love music I work in

classical and, in jazz and pop, so many when they become popular it has little to do with their musicianship but how many times we turn on national show and you wonder, where in the world did they find this person?

"We can find 20 people here in Birmingham (Studdard's hometown)," Panion said.

Studdard has always been a student of music and there is talk of him doing a Christmas album of Luther Vandross songs, according to Panion.

Studdard also continues to work on producing a children's show called, "Uncle Ruben's House," that he hopes will debut in the fall.

"It's a labor of love just having to learn the techniques and how to communicate with kids from two to eight, it's really phenomenal," Studdard said. "My mom is an educator, she was like a child whisperer and that market has been silent for years. So, we'll make songs specifically to teach children manners, math, and science and the guy I'm working with is really big on STEM education and trying to incorporate that into our music to help children in different way."

Another album also should debut soon, Studdard said.

For now though, he is promoting the release of "A Change is Gonna Come," which came on the heels of former President Barack Obama's final days in office where he designated Birmingham Civil Rights District as a national monument.

"Sam Cooke's original became an anthem of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s," Panion said. "We believe that Ruben's new version is right on time. Everybody could use a little soul and inspiration."

The single is currently available on iTunes and GooglePlay.

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Hosanna School celebrates 150th anniversary

By Stacy M. Brown

It was nearly 40 years ago when Christine Tolbert was approached by the president of the Harford County Historical Society for information regarding the history of the Hosanna School, a historic institution for African-Americans in Darlington, Md.

"I met with the Society to discuss the little I knew and after that meeting I began to question my maternal grandmother and other relatives and learned that it was the first public school built for the black community in 1867," said Tolbert, a board member of the Hosanna School.

After interviewing some of the neighborhood elders about the school, Tolbert said she was encouraged to explore the possibility of restoring the building, which was in great distress after being destroyed by Hurricane Hazel.

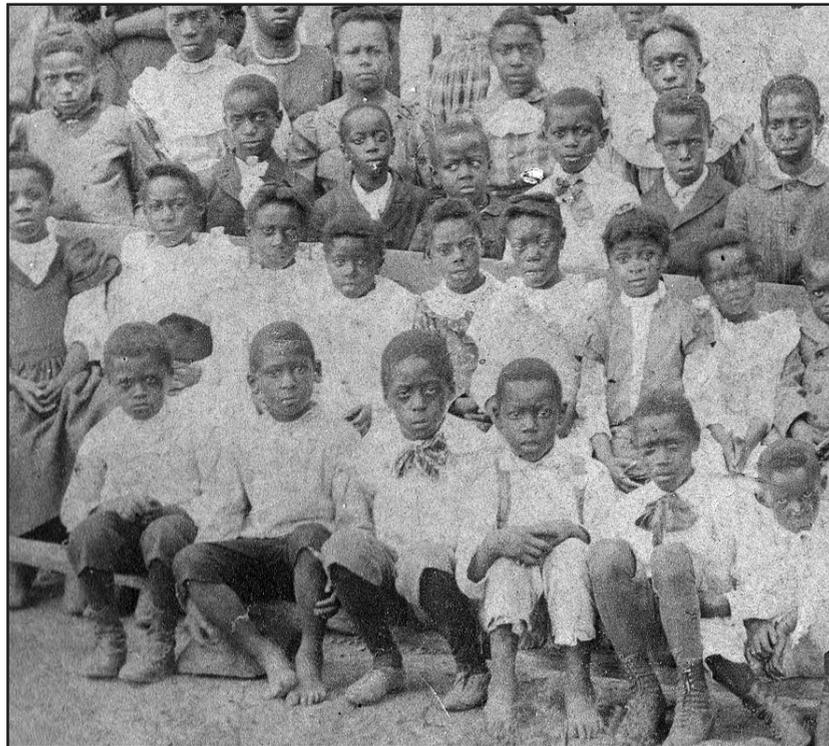
By 1983, with the help of Maryland Delegate Barbara Kreamer, the restoration received its first bond bill of \$50,000.

For Tolbert, who attended what is now known as the Hosanna School Museum as a child from first through fifth grade and would later serve as its executive director, the joy of restoring the historic building will forever be remembered as officials prepare to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Hosanna on Friday, April 7, 2017.

"What I find compelling is the opportunity for younger people to experience a living history. They're able to hear the stories, see, and touch and feel what schools in rural America looked like; to learn about the times when black people were denied an education equal to their white counterparts," Tolbert said.

The first Freedmen's Bureau school in Harford County, Hosanna will celebrate its anniversary with a banquet and a keynote address by Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, president of UMBC.

Hosanna is a living schoolhouse museum, which attracts visitors from all over the country. Housed inside the two-story building with two rooms on each floor, the museum hosts various events including living history presentations in the schoolroom.



Hosanna School was built in 1867 on land owned by James Paca, the son of Cupid Paca, a free African-American who bought 50 acres of land from Berkley to Darlington, areas in Harford County. (Left) Students at Hosanna School in 1894 gather for a photo. (Right) A simple sign marks the location of Hosanna School Museum in Darlington. Hosanna is now a living schoolhouse museum, which attracts visitors from all over the country. Courtesy Photos/Hosanna School Museum

Also, known as the Berkley School, Hosanna was built in 1867 on land owned by James Paca, the son of Cupid Paca, a free African-American who bought 50 acres of land from Berkley to Darlington.

It was used as a school, community, meeting place and church and remained active as a schoolhouse for African-American children until 1945.

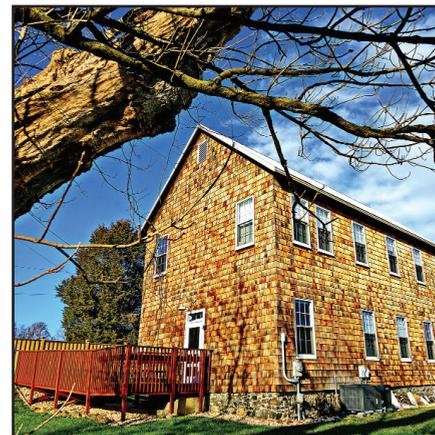
Significant restoration of the building began in 1983, and the second floor was added in 2005, returning it to its original two-story structure.

"African-Americans from or associated with Harford County were involved in significant events that had national impact. But these stories are not well known," said Iris Leigh Barnes, the school's current executive director.

"One of my personal missions is to seek out these stories and ensure that they are included in the national narrative," Barnes said, noting the Supreme Court Case of Prigg v. Pennsylvania, the Christiana Resistance, and the desegregation of restaurants and public accom-

modations along Route 40 in Maryland.

"What is important to me is that the public learns about the history of the school, and by extension life in Harford County in the context of emancipation, reconstruction and Jim Crow and how regardless of the social and political obstacles faced by the students that attended the school—the families that



supported them—and the church that sustained them—they persevered," added Board Member Sharoll Love.

"Too little is taught in our schools about

history in general and African-American History, in particular," Love said.

The anniversary event will take place at the APG Federal Credit Union Arena at Harford Community College, 7 p.m.

In addition, the banquet will feature a sit-down dinner, live entertainment and a book signing by Hrabowski.

"We are honored to have Dr. Hrabowski as the keynote speaker. His speaking is significant because in the same way the first teachers of Hosanna School were committed to providing education and changing lives in untold ways for African-Americans—committed sometimes to the point of putting their lives on the line—Dr. Hrabowski is equally committed to providing educational opportunities for today's black youth, particularly males through STEM programs," Barnes said.

Banquet tickets are \$60 and are available online at: www.hosannaschoolmuseum.org. Proceeds are earmarked for the continued preservation of Hosanna School Museum and to support interpretative and educational programming.





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Light City Returns to the Inner Harbor March 31-April 8

BOPA Says Festival Will be Even More Electrifying

By Ursula V. Battle

You are at Baltimore's Inner Harbor, and see large goldfish swimming inside a car. You walk along a little further and now see lighted figures along the grass and amidst the water. You continue along your trek, and now see a huge illuminated cocoon emblazoned with colorful flowers. You are not seeing things. You are at Light City, the nation's first large-scale light, music and innovation festival.

Presented by The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA), the electrifying festival returns for its second consecutive year, and runs Friday, March 31, 2017 through Saturday, April 8, 2017. Light City transforms Baltimore into an interactive playground of light art installations. The family-friendly event also includes concerts and performances.

Last year, the inaugural festival drew more than 400,000 visitors and generated \$33.8 million in economic impact to Baltimore. Building on last year's success, organizers promise that Light City 2017 will be even bigger, bolder and brighter with brand new installations and experiences.

"If you liked last year, you will love this year," said Kathy Hornig, festival director for the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts. "We have worked hard over the past 12 months to ensure that this year's event is even bigger and brighter than last year's event. We thought we would come out this year in an even more newer, brighter, and bolder way. This includes running the festival for nine nights, which will give people more time to enjoy the displays. One of the biggest things people requested was that the event be open more nights."

The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, which serves as Baltimore City's arts council, events agency, and film office. By producing large-scale events such as Light City, Artscape and the Baltimore Book Festival, and pro-

viding funding and support to artists, arts programs and organizations across the city, BOPA's goal is to make Baltimore a more vibrant and creative city.

"Last year, the event also provided a big boost to the Inner Harbor from the huge crowds of tourists and citizens," said Hornig. "Many of them had not visited the Inner Harbor in a while. Once again, the heart of the festival will be the BGE Light Art Walk. We will also be bringing back last year's favorite exhibits."

The BGE Light Art Walk, is a 1.5-mile trail along Baltimore's Inner Harbor featuring illuminated artworks, performances, music, locally sourced food concepts, a children's area and maker tents. Of the 23 light installations on display, 21 are brand new to Light City with ten brand new commissions making their debut at the event.

The two "crowd favorites" that are returning for 2017 are The Peacock by Tim Scofield and Kyle Miller and The Pool [Reflect] by Jen Lewin. This year's Light City also includes a new line-up of performances and concerts, and nightly themed kick-offs called "Nightly Moments."

Festivities include fireworks on the final night, parades, a themed food and beverage program, and Neighborhood Lights, an immersive community artist-in-residence program that will feature light installations in eight Baltimore City neighborhoods, which includes Coldstream Homestead Montebello, Greater Mondawmin, and Sandtown-Winchester.

"There is so much talk about what divides us, but Light City is a great way to celebrate what connects us, and what we all have in common," said Hornig. "Last year, folks met new friends and shared with others. They loved the art, and the concerts, but they really loved the vibe and positivity that was at the Inner Harbor."

She added, "I am so excited. I can't wait for everyone to see what we have put together. It's like Christmas for me."

For more information on Light City, call 410-752-8632. You can also visit www.lightcity.org for a listing of the events and other details, and to download the Light City Baltimore App.



Aquarium Car by Stéphane Masson (France)

In this contemplative video installation, a car transforms into a virtual aquarium by filling progressively with water where giant goldfish are swimming until the water disappears. Photo by Stéphane Masson



House of Cards by OGE Group (Israel)

House of Cards is made of 128 light boxes in the form of playing cards, which in turn appear according to a choreography as a rhythmic play of light and shadows; virtually building up and breaking down; a vivid energetic play of light.

(Photo: House of Cards by OGE Group at the Light in Jerusalem Festival 2014, photo by Perry Mandelboym)

MoonGARDEN by Lucion (Canada)

MoonGARDEN features a series of inflated vinyl bubbles, ranging from 6' to 30' in diameter that tell a poetic story of the Baltimore spirit through Shadow Theater, the oldest imaging technique in the world.

(Photo: Cocoons by Lucion, photo Bernard Duguay)



Baltimore's own LABBODIES will Shine at Light City

By Ursula V. Battle

LABBODIES is a performance art laboratory based in Baltimore, Maryland, that provides a format for artists working in the arena of performance art to exhibit their work. LABBODIES will be among the artists whose light art installations will 'shine' during this year's Light City festival, which returns to Baltimore's Inner Harbor Friday, March 31, 2017 through Saturday, April 8, 2017.

Light City is sponsored by The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA), and is a free public festival that redefines what is possible in the public realm by transforming Baltimore into an interactive playground of light art installations and entertainment.

LABBODIES will present Light Happenings II, a site-specific installation and performance program by lead artists Hoesy Corona and Ada Pinkston, who are also LABBODIES founding co-directors. The project examines devastating moments in history and their relationship to contemporary acts of violence in the United States.

"Large-scale art projects often solicit proposals from individuals or teams that already have a history of working in similar capacities," said Corona. "We are elated, in our short careers, to have the opportunity to carry out such an ambitious commission. It is the most significant one for us so far, and we hope to create a path toward the sustainable production of future large-scale projects."

According to Corona and Pinkston, Light Happenings II takes into account the complex history and public art found on and around the installation site. Particularly considering the Civil War trail and the 9/11 World Trade Center Memorial, as well as acknowledging the role that the Inner Harbor port served in the transatlantic slave trade—where "between 1815 and 1860, traders in Baltimore made the port one of the leading disembarkation points for ships carrying slaves to New Orleans and other ports in the deep South".

"In the face of such earthly horrors, we ask the question: What Gives You Light?" said Corona and Pinkston.



LABBODIES' Light City installation examines devastating moments in history and their relationship to contemporary acts of violence in the United States. The installation consists of structures comprised of steel, Plexiglas, paint, vinyl, LED lights, projections and video. Courtesy Photo

The installation consists of three structures using steel, Plexiglas, paint, vinyl, LED lights, projections and video. The interactive installation will include audience participation and live performances by regional and national performance artists. Both Pinkston and Hoesy will be among the performance artists, which will also include Alexander D'Agostino (Baltimore), Nicoletta De La Brown (Baltimore), Ayana Evans (New York), Bobby English Jr. (California), and Tse-daye MaKonnen (Washington, DC).

"Baltimore has a very rich cultural history and contemporary art scene," said Corona. "It combines affordable studio spaces with the very hard work of local arts organizers, many of whom are also artists. They take on roles missing from the creative ecosystem, often as curators, directors, gallerists, publicists, journal-

ists and other generalists. We are particularly interested in the dynamic work being produced by artists and organizers of color, as well as women artists". Pinkston added, "Baltimore's cultural scene is incredibly unique and vibrant. Even though there are silos, extreme segregation, and gentrification, the city and the artistic community are resilient and refuse to be ignored."

Corona and Hoesy founded LABBODIES in January 2014 and have since produced more than 29 original events, ranging from public commission, solo/group gallery shows to museum performance events. Ashley Dehoyos recently joined the team as a program manager.

In 2015 they launched the annual Labbodies Performance Art Review (Borders Boundaries and Barricades) to highlight the growing regional perform-

ance art community.

LABBODIES has also been commissioned by The Walters Art Museum, Station North Arts and Entertainment District, Art in Odd Places located in Orlando, FL and several others.

"Large scale events such as Light City and Artscape give many local artists in the city opportunities to work on temporary public art commissions," said Pinkston. "Through Light Happenings Part II, we have been able to hire and collaborate with many artists outside of our network. Light City also positions Baltimore's artists in an international conversation around contemporary art and technology."

For more information about LABBODIES visit www.labbodies.com

So Much to Do, See, Experience!

NIGHTLY MOMENTS

Dates: March 31- April 8, 2017

Hours: Beginning at 8pm nightly

Admission: Free

Location: Starting at the Maryland Science Center and ending at Harbor East

Description: Festivities kick off on opening night with a Light City Opening Night Parade by Creative Alliance followed by themed celebrations at 8pm each night including illuminated public workouts, bike parties and more. On the last two nights of Light City, Pittsburgh's critically acclaimed Squonk Opera will create a pageant of double-decker human powered stages to create post-industrial performances with original music, design and stages.

Schedule

Friday, March 31, 2017

The 2nd Annual Light City Opening Night Creative Alliance Parade

The 2nd Annual Light City Opening Night Creative Alliance Parade kicks off Light City. The Creative Alliance magically transforms the BGE Light Art Walk with lighted floats, marching units, and costumed performers.

Saturday, April 1, 2017

Light City Parade of Fools

On the evening of April Fool's Day, be a part of the Light City Parade of Fools featuring Baltimore's largest kazoo band and the April Fools Hats Brigade.

Sunday, April 2, 2017

Light It Up BLUE Parade

Wear blue and step to the beat as Light City shows its support for World Autism Awareness Day.

Monday, April 3, 2017

Star-Spangled Baltimore

Prepare for a night full of patriotic symbolism. Join as the Inner Harbor is painted Red, White and Blue, paying homage to Baltimore as the birthplace of the national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Dancing On the Water

Watch in awe as the light show briefly moves to the marina, featuring lighted boats and a water performance.



Light City Opening Night Parade by Creative Alliance

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

Illuminated Fitness Walk

Join some of Baltimore's most active fitness groups as Light City warms up to a flood of colors, lights and energy. Presented by Kaiser Permanente.

Thursday, April 6, 2017

College Night Out

Colleges and universities from the Baltimore show their school spirit by bringing students and bands to the Inner Harbor to kick off Light City.

Friday, April 7, 2017

Kinetic Procession & Bike Glow Rally

Light up your bike! And join a walking parade of city cyclists and pedal powered contraptions making their way around the harbor. Pittsburgh's critically acclaimed Squonk Opera will create a pageant of double-decker human powered stages to create post-industrial performances with original music, design and stages. Following the parade, cyclists are invited to participate in a glowing-group ride to visit some of the Neighborhood Lights locations.



On the evening of April Fool's Day, be a part of the Light City Parade of Fools featuring Baltimore's largest kazoo band and the April Fool's Hats Brigade.

Saturday, April 8, 2017

Light City Finale Fireworks by Grucci

Look up at midnight on Light City's final night to enjoy a colorful performance of fireworks that dance across the

Inner Harbor skyline. Presented by Fireworks by Grucci.

**Photos Courtesy of
Baltimore Office of Promotion
& The Arts**

Author and activist donates 500 books to city schools

Baltimore— Baltimore author, activist and filmmaker Kevin Shird has donated, and personally delivered, 500 copies of his latest book, “Uprising in the City,” to five Baltimore City public schools.

The books were evenly distributed in classrooms at Frederick Douglas High School, Renaissance Academy High School, Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women, Achievement Academy at Harbor City High School, and Baltimore City College. The books will be used for various purposes, including classroom study, reading assignments and other ongoing initiatives.

“Uprising in the City,” which was released in August of 2016, takes a scholarly look at the various factors that contributed to the unrest that hit Baltimore’s streets in 2015 shortly after the death of Freddie Gray, who died as a result of injuries sustained while in the custody of Baltimore City Police. The donation comes shortly before the anniversary of the riots next month.

Shird says he donated the books because he feels it’s important for Baltimore City students to understand the various historical and social factors that contributed to the demonstrations and riots.

“When I wrote this book, I approached it as a student of history,” said the self-published author. “The death of Freddie Gray was an unnecessary tragedy but that was more of a catalyst than a cause for the outpouring

of frustration and anger that we saw two years ago. There are issues in this city going back over 30 years that are far more responsible, and I think it’s important for students to understand that, because eventually it’s going to be on them to address those problems and try and make it better.”

Shird’s previous book Lessons of Redemption has reached o acclaim as an international best seller.

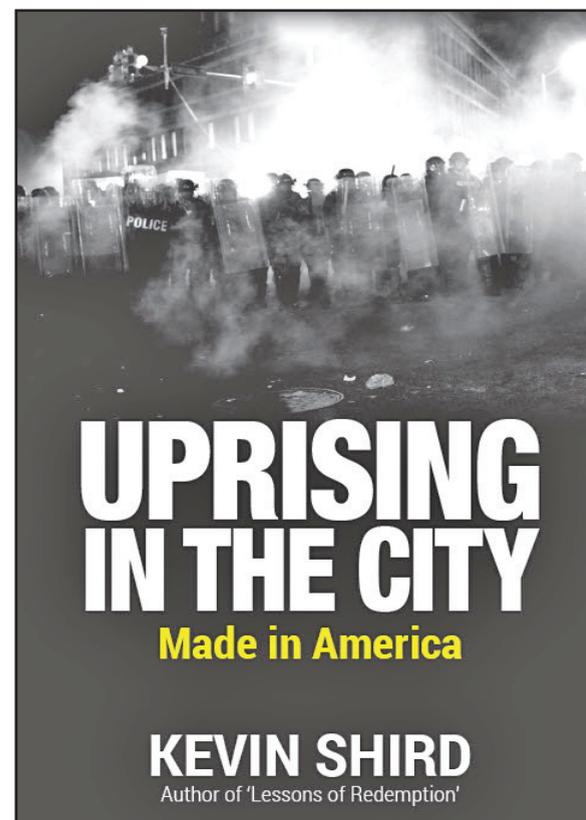
He has long been an outspoken advocate for education and Baltimore’s youth. Although he spends a considerable amount of time conducting speaking engagements at colleges and universities around the country, students in Baltimore are near and dear to him.

As part of his donation, Shird is also personally sponsoring an essay contest with a prize of \$500. Details of the contest will be announced soon, and the winner will be chosen and announced later this year.

For more information about Kevin Shird, visit: www.kevinshird.com.



Kevin Shird
Courtesy Photos



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Local Nurse among 'greatest' in nationwide competition

By Stacy M. Brown

Kristy Gorman tirelessly advocates for children, and her colleagues at Essex Elementary School say she has had a strong and positive effect in just the one year she has been a nurse there.

In addition to normal nursing duties like bandaging scraped knees, measuring sugar levels of diabetic students and tube feeding those with more severe medical needs, Gorman works with state social service agencies to provide needed food, clothing and mental health services for children and families. She also has the staff at Essex participating in a healthy eating contest.

Lauded for her diligence inside the school and throughout Baltimore County's school district, Gorman is now receiving notice from the outside as well. She is the state finalist in the Children's Advil, Children's Robitussin and Children's Dimetapp nationwide contest, which seeks to find "America's Greatest School Nurse."

"It's an honor to be a finalist for Maryland and to represent school health in a national contest," she said.

Officials began to accept nominations earlier this year. One school nurse from each state will be selected as a finalist and receive \$500 and a chance to win a summer vacation.

The public is invited to vote for the finalists until April 16, and the winner will be announced on May 5.

"I was completely surprised when I got the call. I wasn't aware that my school administrators even nominated me for this contest," Gorman said. "It was a



Kristy Gorman is the nurse at Essex Elementary School in Baltimore County. She is the state finalist in the Children's Advil, Children's Robitussin and Children's Dimetapp nationwide "America's Greatest School Nurse" contest. The public is invited to vote for the finalists until April 16, 2017 and the winner will be announced on May 5, 2017.

Courtesy Photo

pleasant surprise. I am humbled by the nomination and it reinforces that I work for wonderful people who go above and beyond to recognize their staff."

Gorman has been a nurse for 12 years and says she loves her profession.

Her decision to become a nurse

occurred after she visited the mother of a close friend who had been hospitalized. Gorman was intrigued by the complex needs of her friend's mother's care and how the family needed the clinical and

emotional support of the medical staff. "This feeling did not go away. My family encouraged me to apply to nursing school and even helped pave my career path after graduation," she said. "I went on to get my graduate degree in leadership and management in the healthcare profession and obtained my teaching certification. Every step of my career has involved developing close relationships with patients and their families."

Gorman obtained her BSN and MS from the University of Maryland School of Nursing and in addition to her job at Essex Elementary, she also works as an oncology infusion nurse at a local hospital.

"If you have compassion and a desire to help those in their most vulnerable moments, this is the career for you. It is a privilege to work with patients and families who need not only clinical care but emotional support," she said. "Sometimes all a patient or family member needs is someone to listen and to know that they have been heard."

As voting for Greatest School Nurse heats up, Gorman offered a thought on why voters should select her.

"I truly love what I do. I work in a great state, in a great county and for an outstanding school with wonderful staff," she said. "We are a team at BCPS and Essex Elementary. Voting for me would be voting for us."

To cast a vote for Gorman or for more information about the contest, visit: www.americasgreatestschoolnurse.com

Fifth Harmony Songstress partners with American Cancer Society

Atlanta— Normani Kordei, of the internationally acclaimed pop group Fifth Harmony, has partnered with the American Cancer Society as a global ambassador to increase awareness around the importance of breast cancer screening and HPV vaccination. The fight against cancer hits close to home, as Kordei's mother, Andrea, is a breast cancer survivor having been diagnosed when Normani was just five years old.

"I remember seeing my father shaving my mother's head in the bathroom after her chemo treatments; It was so traumatizing," Kordei said.

The heartbreaking memory of her mother, who she calls her role model and inspiration, made the decision to partner with American Cancer Society in helping to fight this horrible disease a no brainer.

"My mom is my hero, and I wouldn't be the woman I am today without her," said Kordei. "I am so committed to this fight. I love the work the American Cancer Society does, and being a global ambassador provides me an amazing

platform to share my experience and story while growing up, support my grandfather who is currently undergoing treatment for prostate cancer, and honor the legacy of my Uncle Norman, to whom I am named after and never met, having passed from lung cancer at the age of 33."

The American Cancer Society is the nation's largest private, not-for-profit investor in cancer research and offers patient programs and services including free transportation to treatment, no-cost lodging at more than 30 Hope Lodge facilities in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, as well as education and prevention initiatives around the world.

"Cancer has touched my life and the lives of those I love, and now I'm ready to help all that I can in the fight," Kordei said.

"We are honored to have such a strong voice in Normani to help us save more lives from cancer," said Sharon Byers, chief development and marketing officer for the American Cancer Society. "Her passion and commitment at such a



Normani Kordei, of the internationally acclaimed pop group Fifth Harmony, has partnered with the American Cancer Society as a global ambassador to increase awareness about the importance of breast cancer screening and HPV vaccination. Courtesy Photo/PRNewswire

young age is remarkable. In November, Normani visited a hospital with us, and watching her interact with patients young and old was special. She has the ability to put smiles on the patients who need happiness most."

"Being only 20, it was especially tough to watch kids who were struggling," Kordei said. "But it was truly memorable and inspiring to see their parents provide support. It was really emotional yet rewarding when a few of the parents came up to me with tears in their eyes saying that it has been a long time since

they saw their kids smile. That experience set the course and the desire to do more."

The American Cancer Society is the largest voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem, and it's because of her mother's breast cancer diagnosis that Normani is especially committed to increasing awareness about the importance of mammography among women in underserved communities. And as a young woman who has taken a step toward the prevention of cervical and other cancers through HPV vaccination, she is the perfect ambassador to share the message to make HPV vaccination a national and global public health priority.

"Vaccines are among the few medical interventions capable of achieving almost complete eradication of a disease," Byers said. "We have a cancer prevention vaccine that has been available for 10 years. They're safe and they work, yet in this country only about half of girls and boys who are vaccinated with the other vaccines recommended for pre-teens are getting vaccinated to protect them from cancer.

"It's not often there's an opportunity to prevent cancer, or in this case multiple cancers, with a single tool. Concerted efforts are needed so that the opportunity is not lost. Having a widely known and well-connected spokesperson like Normani, who has a pulse on the younger generation and a passion for working with kids, will help to educate today's parents and youth."

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Morgan State University Graduate Returns Home for Book Signing

American journalist April Ryan who serves a White House Correspondent and Washington Bureau Chief for American Urban Radio (<http://aurm.com/>) will be signing her new book, "At Mama's Knee" on Tuesday, April 11, 2017 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Ivy Bookshop located at 6080 Falls Road in Baltimore. In her book, Ryan examines race and race relations in the context of lessons passed from mothers to their children.



Inconaclash brings creative unity and new artistic platform to Annapolis

By Andrea Blackstone

Approximately a year and half ago, two Annapolitans discovered they had artistic commonalities during a conversation at a hip-hop open mic night at The Metropolitan Kitchen & Lounge. The chance meeting at the restaurant and live music venue on West Street led Christian Smooth, 26, and Jason Liggett, 34, to join forces to bring a new creative platform to Annapolis through their new business called Inconaclash.

Smooth, who is also the owner of Smooth House Productions, is a Morgan State University graduate and independent filmmaker. He can often be found documenting life, photographing subjects, creating new projects, or filming around Annapolis and Baltimore. Liggett describes himself as a multidisciplinary artist who paints, makes music, movies, and utilizes other creative tools like spray paints to make murals.

As progressive artists, Smooth and Liggett are progressive artists came up with a way to bring creative people together by creating their own opportunity to make it happen. Smooth and Liggett's inaugural Inconaclash Cinema Review screened 26 films from local and international and filmmakers. The event was held on March 11 at the Peerless Rens Club, located at 406 Chester Ave. in Annapolis, Md. Ration Day—a short film written by Smooth and produced by Liggett—also made its debut at Inconaclash.

"After 'Ration Day' was wrapped up, we decided to go ahead and show it at our own film festival to get better exposure and... move forward in that direction," Liggett said, mentioning that he produced the short film.

Smooth explained that he filmed Ration Day in Annapolis and Baltimore, over a period of four months.

"I premiered Ration Day (at Inconaclash). It's a dystopian film about brothers who steal food from the rich and give it to the poor while inner cities are placed under martial law, and harmful food is being rationed out by the government," Smooth said.

Although Liggett said that people who came out to Inconaclash to see Ration



Day, responded with standing ovations, he added that the one-day new media film festival was not exclusively created for screening films.

"Inconaclash is just not for films, but it's an event that is meant to get other creative people together and network. We try to bring the local, creative groups together in ways that they normally haven't been. Many of the people that came last night might not have ever seen a French subtitled film. We try to use [this as] some sort of an eye-opening experience," Liggett said, mentioning the desire to unite local artists who may be segregated in groups, like jewelry makers and fine art painters. "We're a project-by-project company, and we're highly creative, and we're looking to do new things that bring the artistic community together and establish bonds for people and connections."

The creators of the grassroots cinema review, expected to be back again, say that everyone from jewelry makers and fine art painters to guitarists to filmmakers had an opportunity to establish bonds and connections. Liggett also noted that he did not know what to expect from filmmakers who submitted films, but when conducting research he was floored by the quality of the films he discovered through a website called FilmFreeway. The platform connects filmmakers who want to submit their films to be shown at film festivals.



(Top left) Co-founder of Inconaclash, Jason Liggett, stands in front of the Inconaclash step and repeat banner. (Top right) Co-founder of Inconaclash Cinema Review, Christian Smooth cuts the Inconaclash cake (Above) Anthony Lavoranga demonstrates his process of melting crayons as an artistic medium, during Inconaclash Cinema Review.

Courtesy Photos

"I'd say 80 percent of the work submitted was top-notch," Liggett said.

Smooth said that he and Liggett received over 70 submissions for the event. No film was longer than 30 minutes. Liggett estimated that up to 50 people attended the first event.

"As far as the way it was received by the community... it was a total success. It was amazing to see the people who actually came, because we are a small startup group, and usually in the beginning you might get a couple of people, but... the auditorium was pretty darn full," Liggett said. "We accomplished all the goals we set out to do, and it was a profitable experience."

Sandy Smolnicky of Annapolis,

Smooth's friend, said she found out about the Inconaclash event through Facebook. The supporter of the arts says that she met new people and saw good friends at the event. She noted Smooth does not give up, when it comes to local artists having opportunities to promote their art. Smolnicky described Smooth's promotion of a grassroots art project as amazing, forward thinking and uniting. "Those of us who were there [at Inconaclash], what a riot. We were so amazed how forward-thinking the artists are in this community," Smolnicky said.

To learn more about Inconaclash and the company's upcoming events, visit: www.inconaclash.com.

16th Annual University Park Azalea Classic



The annual Azalea Classic raises funds that benefits the kids at University Park Elementary School. The public elementary school promotes healthy living and anchors the neighborhood of University Park. This year's Azalea Classic will be held on Friday, April 8, 2017. For more information about the event or to register, visit: www.azaleaclassic.com.

Photo Credit: Sara Nelkin

University Park, Md.— The 16th Annual University Park Azalea Classic 5K/1 Mile/1K run/walk, a popular community event that supports the kids at University Park Elementary School (UPES), will be held April 8, 2017.

“The University Park Azalea Classic is a lot of fun. Smaller kids love to be outside with their families and classmates just running around. Older kids and adults enjoy the friendly competition of a local race and having a great time with their neighbors while getting some exercise in the fresh air,” said Race Director Sara Nelkin. “It’s a fan-

tastic event which sends so many positive messages: have fun, get to know your neighbors, support your community, get moving, and enjoy the outdoors.”

The Northwestern High School Marching Band will play at the start of the race to set the tone of excitement and celebration.

Proceeds from the race will benefit the students at UPES, the local public elementary school that anchors the neighborhood of University Park. Funds will help them gain opportunities they would not otherwise have, through much

needed support for classrooms supplies, teachers, and the school library.

The Azalea Classic also provides kids with an example of a fun, healthy activity; profiling a constructive hobby that kids, teens and adults can continue in other places and throughout their lifetimes. The event promotes ties in and around the University Park neighborhood, drawing in people from the immediate area as well as the DC metro region, including Virginia. The Town of University Park and many local businesses sponsor the event.

The Azalea Classic includes three

races: The 1 Mile Challenge Run at 8:30 a.m.; the 1K “Val Creighton Memorial” Family Fun Run at 8:45 a.m.; and the 5K Run/Walk (at 9:05 a.m. The 5K is a USATF certified course.

The race finishes with a DJ, raffle and prizes at the post-race party. The entrance fee is \$30 for the 5K and \$15 for the 1M and 1K.

For more information about the event or to register, visit: www.azaleaclassic.com.

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Wells Fargo commits to increase African American homeownership

Goal to advance responsible homeownership includes \$60 billion in lending to create a projected 250,000 homeowners in 10 years

Atlanta— Wells Fargo & Company, the leading U.S. home loan lender, announced a \$60 billion lending commitment to create at least 250,000 African American homeowners by 2027.

The company's commitment is a direct action to help address the lower homeownership rates in the African American community and follows Wells Fargo's announcement to address Hispanic homeownership rates in 2015.

Wells Fargo's commitment seeks to:

- Lend \$60 billion to qualified African American consumers for home purchases by 2027,

- Increase the diversity of the Wells Fargo Home Lending sales team, and
- Support the effort with \$15 million to support a variety of initiatives that promote financial education and counseling over the next ten years.

"Wells Fargo's \$60 billion lending goal can contribute to economic growth by making responsible homeownership possible for more African Americans in communities across the country," said Brad Blackwell, executive vice president and head of housing policy and homeownership growth strategies for Wells Fargo. "We are proud to be the first mortgage lender to make a public commitment to help increase African American homeownership. And, we are

grateful for the support of key housing and civil rights organizations, who work alongside us to increase economic prosperity in our communities."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by the year 2024, 75 percent of the expected 14 million new households (renters and owners) in the U.S. will be diverse. African Americans are projected to represent 17 percent, or the third largest segment, of the new households. Joining Wells Fargo in the effort are the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (composed of African American real estate professionals), which has also set a homeownership goal, and two of the nation's most influential civil rights organizations, the NAACP and the National Urban League. The National Urban League provides homebuyer education and counseling through its network of affiliate offices across the country.

"NAREB applauds Wells Fargo's \$60 billion loan commitment. The bank is the first financial institution to acknowledge publicly black Americans' wealth-building potential which could be greatly improved through homeownership," said Ron Cooper, president, National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB). "NAREB welcomes their entry into the struggle to close the ever-widening wealth gap for black Americans, and looks forward to having Wells Fargo as a partner in NAREB's '2 Million New Black Homeowners in 5 Years' program. Let us all work together and grow this initiative which represents



a solid and meaningful start for more Black Americans to become homeowners and wealth-builders."

The African American lending commitment is the second initiative from the company's Housing Policy and Homeownership Growth Strategies group, a Wells Fargo Home Lending team advancing homeownership for minorities, first-time homebuyers and low- to moderate-income customers. In 2015, the team announced an agreement with the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals to support their Hispanic Wealth Project.

"Homeownership has become an indispensable part of being a full participant in American society," National Urban

League President and CEO Marc H. Morial said. "An erosion of homeownership rates among African Americans represents not only a devastating financial loss but a barrier to full participation in the American dream."

Despite these factors, Wells Fargo has learned through a series of consumer surveys with Ipsos Public Affairs that African Americans view homeownership positively. According to the 2016 survey, 90 percent of African Americans say homeownership is a "dream come true," 79 percent say it's essential for building families and 51 percent are considering buying a home in the next two years.

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