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Anguillan Reggae Artist, Omari Banks to Perform at Artscape



Anguillan reggae artist Omari Banks will perform on the main stage at Artscape on Sunday, July 23, 2017. The New York Times noted that the Reggae singer sounds like “a cross between Bob Marley and Bob Dylan,” while Vibe Magazine said Banks has a voice as “calming as chamomile and charisma that bubbles like a champagne toast.” Banks is scheduled to perform for an hour beginning at 3:30 pm, (See article on page 10)

Courtesy Photo

Day of Unity addresses HIV disparities during 108th NAACP Convention

By Stacy M. Brown

In 2014, the number of Baltimore residents living with diagnosed HIV stood at 17,505, according to statistics provided by the Department of Health.

Sixty-five percent were men and 35 percent were women while 76 percent were African-Americans. Latinos made up four percent while 14 percent were white.

In part, due to these statistics, officials with an initiative started by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) called the Black Church & HIV are hosting a “Day of Unity” on Sunday, July 23, 2017 to bring together pastors to preach about HIV as a social justice issue in conjunction with the NAACP annual convention in Baltimore. The event will feature several faith leaders who promise to work to inspire action and stop what they call the social injustices that have led to the unequal impact of HIV on black America, which comprises 12 percent of the United States population, but 41 percent of all individuals living with HIV.

“HIV disproportionately affects the black community, and any time we see anything disproportionately affecting one group of people more than others, we must question if the root cause has to do with social injustices,” said Pastor William Francis, the lead servant at the Atlanta Faith in Action Center and ambassador of the Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative Initiative.

“For generations, the Black Church has been a leader for change in the black community on issues of social justice, the initiative is applying this tradition of social justice advocacy to the HIV epidemic,” Francis said. “The Day of Unity is impor-



(Left) Reverend William Francis, pastor at the Atlanta Faith in Action Center and ambassador of the Black Church & HIV: The Social Justice Imperative Initiative. (Right) Faith leaders and members of the community join arms in a prayer circle for HIV sufferers. Courtesy Photos/Day of Unity Organizers



tant because it unites faith leaders from across the country to preach about HIV as a social justice issue and really harnesses the power of the pulpit and black churches to fight this epidemic.”

“So often, people with HIV feel alienated from the church and the sense of community it can provide. Day of Unity reverses this and says we see you; we love you; let us pray for you; and let us help you. We are called by God to love all our brothers and sisters and the Day of Unity exemplifies this,” Francis said.

The initiative takes its mission from a famous quote from the African-American author James Baldwin, who said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

So, on the Day of Unity, organizers want to pass the message that they want everyone to face HIV together, and put

their faith into action.

The Day of Unity began in 2012 and more than 120 churches have signed up to participate in this year’s event—six are in the Greater Washington D.C. and Baltimore area.

Each year, more are recruited to participate and raise awareness about HIV, its disproportionate impact the black community and the role the Black Church can play in turning the tide, according to Francis.

The initiative works to overcome stigma and address HIV as an issue of social justice by conducting faith leader trainings across the 30 U.S. cities which bear the greatest burden of HIV; obtaining formal resolutions from mainline denominations to incorporate HIV messaging into church activities; and integrating HIV-related materials into required course curricula in predomi-

nantly black seminaries.

“The higher rates of HIV among African Americans in the U.S. point to the overwhelming injustices in the political, healthcare, economic and educational systems,” Francis said. “During the Day of Unity, I hope to raise awareness of the social injustices surrounding the HIV epidemic to as many people as possible.”

“We encourage participants to get involved in Day of Unity in at least one of three ways, which include, preaching about HIV as a social justice issue, sharing our social media posts and acting by downloading our new resources which start to answer questions as to how we can address HIV in Black America,” Francis said.

For more information about the Day of Unity, visit <https://theblackchurchand-hiv.org/day-of-unity/>.

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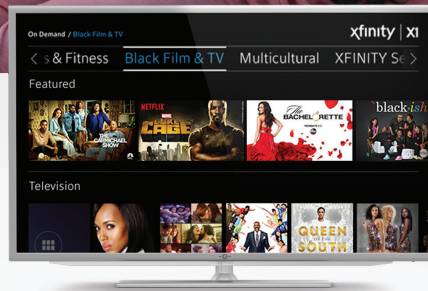
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Being Too Much!

By Laura Finley

Some people are just too much, as the story goes or too “extra,” in the parlance of today’s youth. That is, they are more than the status quo can take. They challenge the norms, they are unapologetic, and instead of rejecting it, as is often expected, they remain fiercely committed to their difference. Instead of embracing this attitude, we ridicule and we reject people who are too much.

However, isn’t it precisely those over-the-top people, those creative innovators, those “unruly” people, who are most needed in our world today?

Instead, we minimize, dismiss and marginalize those who don’t fit nicely into our binary definitions of whatever the issue may be. Not skinny? You’re too fat. Too thin? You’re anorexic. Too optimistic? You’re naïve. Too somber? You must be clinically depressed. Ask for what you want? Too pushy. Don’t ask? Not assertive enough.

While this binary-thinking problem afflicts the United States as a whole, it is perhaps most acutely on display when we talk about gender. Women who embrace their sexuality are too slutty. Women who refuse to succumb to prescribed notions for post-40s dress are too old. Women who lead are bossy. During the 2016 presidential campaign—and through all of her previous campaigns—Hillary Clinton was repeatedly described as “shrill” whenever she got animated about a topic. Yet, male candidates often talk loudly (and, as Donald Trump demonstrated during the debates) and over female candidates, this pejorative is not used to describe them.

And, before I am accused of some radical man-hating agenda, I completely acknowledge that women are part of the problem. Writing in *Forbes* in April 2012, Jenna Goudreau noted how women also find others who are too much to be intimidating. Women who happen to be attractive and also have a successful career and personal life are often persona non grata with other women. Popular culture contributes to this notion that if women with children happen to be successful in any realm outside of motherhood, they are instantly less likeable unless they are that rare breed of super-palatable celebrity moms, like Reese Witherspoon and Jessica Alba. The message is clear: Tone it down, don’t push too much, don’t achieve too much...don’t be too much.

The problem goes beyond a simple narrowness of identity. Rather, this view that anyone who is more than me is to be disregarded or reviled limits much needed social change. As Anne Helen Peterson wrote in her book *Too fat, too slutty, too loud*, these unruly people are the ones who help chip away at antiquated notions of femininity and masculinity. They challenge stereotypes and shatter glass ceilings. It is not people who play it safe who will be our leaders but those who take risks and persevere through pushbacks.

So, what if instead of making fun of the unruly people who are too-this or too-that, we asked what it is about our culture that bothers us so much about someone who smashes the either/or categorizations? What if we taught our kids that not only are people different from one another in terms of looks, interests and abilities but that success looks differently for everyone? In fact, what if we encouraged—no, really, not just in half-hearted, “be all you can be” mantras—all people to go for it? To pursue with passion what excites them? To wear what pleases them? To use their bodies as they desire?

That’s the kind of world I’m up for.

Laura Finley, Ph.D., teaches in the Barry University Department of Sociology & Criminology and is syndicated by PeaceVoice.



Community Affairs

Paul Butler takes on police brutality in new book

By Lauren Victoria Burke
NNPA Newswire Contributor

Police brutality in the black community is as old as law enforcement itself. Former federal prosecutor Paul Butler speaks in depth on the issue in his new book, "Chokehold: Policing Black Men."

"Even as a prosecutor I was a still a black man," said Butler during an interview on MSNBC with Rev. Al Sharpton. "I was even arrested for a crime I didn't commit...I was acquitted in less than five minutes."

In his book, Butler points out that black people have never been in a situation of good faith in America with police.

"When we say that the system is targeting black men, that's true," Butler told Sharpton. Butler worked as a prosecutor at the Department of Justice and is now a professor at Georgetown Law School in Washington, D.C. Butler also had a

few recommendations for decreasing incidents of police brutality.

"Half of cops should be women," Butler suggested. "Women cops are much less likely to shoot people."

Butler continued, "Cops should have college degrees. Cops with college degrees are much less likely to shoot unarmed people."

Butler takes a “no-holds-barred” approach to writing about police brutality.

In his book, he also points out that white men commit the majority of violent crime in the United States and that a white woman is ten times more likely to be raped by a white male acquaintance than becoming a victim of a violent crime perpetrated by a black man.

Butler also speaks forcefully about the unwarranted fear whites have of blacks, and how that perception ends up impacting American policing.

Lauren Victoria Burke is a speaker, writer and political analyst. Lauren is also a frequent contributor to the NNPA Newswire and BlackPressUSA.com. Connect with Lauren by email at LBurke007@gmail.com and on Twitter at @LVBurke.

New Harvard study finds steep declines in black homeownership in major cities

By Charlene Crowell
NNPA Newswire Columnist

For the 12th consecutive year, America's national homeownership rate has declined, according to Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS)' annual report, "State of the Nation's Housing 2017." This year's report also found these declines vary by race and ethnicity.

As some might expect, the steepest homeownership decline occurred in black communities, where the percentage of homeowners dropped to 42.2 percent. Among the nation's largest metro areas, black homeownership declined the greatest in Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas and Detroit. By contrast, Latino-American homeownership is higher at 46 percent, but both communities of color severely lag behind the nearly 72 percent rate of White homeownership.

"The ability of most U.S. households to become homeowners," states the report, "depends on the availability and affordability of financing."

And therein lies the crux of the problem: access and affordability.

The lack of access to mortgage financing in black America has a long history rooted in outright discrimination by private actors such as banks, and supported by inequitable federal housing policies that favored white communities, while intentionally disadvantaging Black communities. This discrimination hindered generations of black families from entering and remaining among America's middle class. These practices also resulted in lower levels of both black wealth and homeownership.

Today, applying for a mortgage means a visit to a bank where high incomes, low debt and high credit scores are among the most favored measures for loan application success. Since the foreclosure crisis, according to the JCHS report, the median credit score for an owner-occupied home purchase origination increased from about 700 in 2005 to 732 in 2016.

Just as communities of color were wrongly targeted for predatory and high-cost mortgages that pushed them into foreclosure, these same communities are the most likely to have suffered credit score declines from foreclosures, unemployment or delinquent debt—or a combination of all three.

According to a 2017 CFED report, "A Downpayment on the Divide," the mortgage denial rate for blacks is more than 25 percent, near 20 percent for Latinos, but just over 10 percent for white applicants.

The issue of housing affordability is just as challenging. CFED also found that whites are three times more likely than Blacks to receive financial assistance from families to pay for down payments and other up front costs that accompany a mortgage. The racial disparity is due to America's history of whites being able to accumulate wealth through homeownership opportunity while blacks were denied. As a result, black households typ-

ically delay homeownership eight years longer than whites, resulting in a comparable delay in building home equity.

JCHS also found that nearly 39 million American families are financially challenged with their cost of housing.

So, is the American Dream of homeownership realistic for communities of color?

A June 29, 2017, public hearing before the U.S. Senate Banking Committee focused on how mortgage finance reform and government-sponsored enterprises, also known as GSEs, must live up to its "duty to serve" all communities.

"Homeownership is the primary way that most middle-class families build wealth and achieve economic stability," testified Mike Calhoun, President of the Center for Responsible Lending. "Wide access to credit is critical for building family wealth, closing the racial wealth gap and for the housing market overall."

In the throes of the 1930s Great Depression, Congress created the GSEs to provide stability to capital markets and to increase the availability of mortgage credit throughout the nation. They were also given a mandate: Serve all credit markets all times, ensuring access and availability across the country.

From 2003 to 2006, the years leading up to the housing crisis, the GSEs followed an unfortunate private mortgage market trend. By loosening underwriting guidelines, particularly for Alt-A no documentation loans, millions of foreclosures occurred and GSE credit losses led to conservatorship under the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, also known as HERA. HERA also enacted a number of reforms that have made today's market stronger.

Now, with far fewer foreclosures nationwide, Congress is deliberating over the future of the GSEs and \$6.17 trillion

in mortgages they now hold along with Federal Housing Administration issued mortgages.

"Home equity accounts for only 30 percent of the net worth for wealthier households," continued Calhoun, "but constitutes 67 percent for middle-to-low income households. Home equity accounts for 53 percent of African-American wealth as compared to 39 percent for whites."

Homebuyers of the future will be more racially and ethnically diverse than those of the past. The JCHS reported that non-whites accounted for 60 percent of household growth from 1995-2015. By 2035, it predicts that half of millennial households will be non-white.

When communities of all sizes, colors, and economies succeed, so does America. While much of our nation has financially recovered from the foreclosure crisis that brought the loss of homes, jobs, businesses, and wealth, recovery has been uneven and left many communities behind.

Those entrusted with leadership roles in the public and private sectors must agree that it is in our national interest to ensure that the recovery is inclusive and sustainable long-term. Broad access to mortgage credit still helps families and the national economy.

"The goal must be to ensure that the full universe of creditworthy borrowers—regardless of where they live, including in rural areas, or who they are—have access to the credit they need to be able to secure a mortgage so that they can build their American dreams," Calhoun concluded.

Charlene Crowell is the communications deputy director for the Center for Responsible Lending. She can be reached at Charlene.crowell@responsiblelending.org.

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Morehouse student follows his passion, finds the Black Press



National Newspaper Publishers Association's "Discover the Unexpected" Journalism Fellow Darrell Williams is a drama major with a minor in cinematography at Morehouse College with dreams of being a creative director, one day.

Photo Credit: Freddie Allen/AMG/NNPA

By Tiana Hunt
NNPA/DTU Journalism Fellow

Darrell Williams is a rising senior at Morehouse College, who has big dreams of being a creative director, one day.

Williams, 24, is currently a student scholar with the National Newspaper Publishers Association's "Discover The Unexpected" Journalism Fellowship program.

At Morehouse, Williams is a drama major with a minor in cinematography.

Williams was born and raised in Landover, Md., and is the oldest of his siblings; his younger sister, T'Keyah, is 22-years-old and his younger brother, Rashad, is 12-years-old.

"I was the first in my family to pursue a career in business administration, but my life changed after I received mentoring," said Williams. "I was inspired to pursue my passion in acting, dancing

and creative directing."

Williams' didn't take a straight and narrow path to Morehouse.

"I went to Towson University in Baltimore for one year, then I transferred to Prince George's Community College in Largo, Md.; then I transferred to Morehouse College. I wanted to go to Morehouse, because of the brotherhood and to learn how to interact with other men in a positive manner; I wanted to join a network of successful men."

Williams is now a man of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated and he is more determined to help others and pursue his passion.

"I pledged to Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, because I believe in the organization's values. The mission, values and morals that the Kappa's live by are impeccable," said Williams. "Being a part of Kappa Alpha Psi, I learned that man

must know thyself and, no matter what, you have to keep moving forward and that you can't make any excuses."

Williams also learned that he has to stand strong in who he is. Networking opportunities are another benefit of becoming a Kappa.

The Maryland native said that two of his biggest accomplishments, so far, have been getting a scholarship to attend Morehouse and joining Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.

Williams said that he is optimistic about his future and appreciative of all of the opportunities that come his way.

Before the NNPA/DTU Journalism Fellowship, Williams said that he didn't know much about the Black Press, but he looks forward to learning more. Williams is excited for his future and about the chance to enrich his journalism skills this summer at The Louisiana Weekly.

"I hope to learn all that I could possible learn about the Black Press and the NNPA, this summer," said Williams. "I desire to become a stronger writer and storyteller. I know that I need improvements in some areas, but I am open to constructive criticism and I am eager to learn more."

Williams continued: "I know that the NNPA fellowship can help me with my journalism skills. The opportunity to intern with The Louisiana Weekly was a needed experience. I do not take NNPA/DTU fellowship lightly."

Tiana Hunt is a 2017 NNPA "Discover The Unexpected" Journalism Fellow and a recent graduate of Clark Atlanta University. This summer, Tiana is writing for The Louisiana Weekly, a member newspaper of the NNPA. Follow Tiana on Twitter @TianaTaughtYa.

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2017 DTU Fellows: Noni Marshall (Howard University), Alexa Spencer (Howard University), Darrell Williams (Morehouse College), Tiana Hunt (Clark Atlanta University), Ayrton Lewallen (Morehouse College), Taylor Burris (Spelman College), Jordan Fisher (Clark Atlanta University), Kelsey Jones (Spelman College)

Our DTU Fellows are busy connecting and collecting amazing stories from the African American community! This year, Discover the Unexpected presented by the all-new 2018 Chevrolet Equinox in partnership with the National Newspaper Publishers Association includes students from Howard University, Spelman College, Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University. Check out the inspirational stories and exciting videos from our 8 DTU Fellows from Atlanta, Washington D.C., Raleigh and New Orleans.

#discovertheunexpected

DISCOVER MORE OF THEIR STORY AT NNPA.ORG/DTU

Ravens have a full stable of running backs

By *Turron Davenport*

The Baltimore Ravens have been trying to find a way to repeat the success they enjoyed running the ball in 2014 with Gary Kubiak as their offensive coordinator. They averaged 126.2 yards per game and ended up with 2,019 yards rushing in the season.

Justin Forsett led the team with 1,266 rushing yards and was fifth in the NFL. Forsett is long gone, and now Baltimore is employing a committee approach to their running back situation.

Ravens head coach John Harbaugh had high praise for his group of backs supplemented by the addition of free agent Danny Woodhead.

"Terrance West has done really well. He has looked good in practice. I also think that Kenneth Dixon has looked really good. Danny Woodhead has looked good at practice," Harbaugh explained after a minicamp practice. "Lorenzo [Taliaferro] has done a good job. So, I feel really good. [Javorius] 'Buck' [Allen] has done a really good job. 'Buck' has been very quick and explosive, so I feel good about all of those guys. But definitely, Terrance, I think he worked really hard in the off-season, and he has improved."

Terrance West will likely get the bulk of the carries. He came back in really good shape, which was noted by Harbaugh. The former Towson running back gained 774 yards last season and scored five touchdowns.

Second-year running back Kenneth Dixon is also an intriguing option. He is capable of running the ball inside, and has the speed to get outside and turn the corner.

Woodhead gives Baltimore a player who can gain chunks of yards in a hurry. He presents a serious matchup problem for opposing defenses. The Ravens can line him up in the backfield and motion him to the slot or outside to force linebackers to walk out and have to cover him.

That is a mismatch that quarterback Joe Flacco will be able to take advantage of. Woodhead is also a dangerous player in the screen passing game.

At 5-foot-8, 200 pounds, Woodhead is the lightning component to go along with the power running style from West,



Baltimore Ravens running back Terrance West came back to camp in really good shape this year, which was noted by Head Coach John Harbaugh after a mini camp practice. Last season, the former Towson running back gained 774 yards and scored five touchdowns.

Courtesy Photo/NFL.com

a 5-foot-11, 225-pound back. He'll be an effective change of pace for Baltimore.

Then there is Javorius 'Buck' Allen, a slashing running back that has the vision

to see a cutback lane and get there to gain extra yards. He has been relatively underused over the last season after seeing plenty of action in 2015.

Allen was frustrated about being inactive often last season. He checked into OTAs hoping to get a fresh start. How his role is defined remains to be seen. Nevertheless, he is a talented back that can catch the ball out of the backfield as well as handle a heavy workload in the rushing attack.

Having lost fullback Kyle Juszczyk to the San Francisco 49ers via free agency, the Ravens now have to find his replacement. Juszczyk's departure turned out to be perfect timing for Lorenzo Taliaferro.

At 6-foot-0, 225 pounds, Taliaferro is smaller than Juszczyk (6-foot-1 and 240 pounds), but he has inherited the fullback role for Baltimore. It will take some time to get acclimated to being the lead blocker and doing the things that a fullback is asked to do, but Taliaferro is up for the task if it means staying on the Ravens roster.

The objective is to pound the football and work the play action passing game to take advantage of Flacco's throwing power. If they can do so, Baltimore will once again be a threat to make the playoffs.

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FOCUS FEATURES

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Half of those with Hepatitis C in Baltimore don't know they have it!

By Sally Altland Bjornholm, LCSW-C, MPH, Program Manager, HIV/HCV Routine Testing and Linkage to Care The JACQUES Initiative
Institute of Human Virology, University of Maryland School of Medicine

Hepatitis C is a major factor in the life of 57-year-old Cynthia Richardson.

"I was an IV drug user and shared needles," she said. "I used to go to a clinic for routine testing. One day in 1994, they found I had hepatitis C."

Despite the test results, it took Richardson a while to get her life together.

"I stopped drinking and drugging, and I've been clean for 14 years," she said.

Hepatitis C, a virus known as HCV, is curable with pills, and new medicines are on the way. Despite the cure, HCV accounts for 30 percent of liver transplants in the United States and can lead to fatal liver disease.

One of the big issues with HCV is how easily it can spread through blood or blood products.

That reality has made Richardson, a peer educator and navigator at the University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus, a strong advocate for hepatitis C testing, providing support and education and assisting newly diagnosed Hep C patients and those who dropped out of treatment get back into care.

In many ways, Richardson sees her own risky behavior mirrored in the people she tries to help each day. The risk-taking contributes to what she calls an epidemic of Hep C, intertwined with escalating drug abuse in and around Baltimore. Most troubling is the rising tide of opioid overdoses. If not outright



Cynthia Richardson, Linkage to Care Navigator, JACQUES Initiative, University of Maryland School of Medicine's Institute of Human Virology

Courtesy Photo/UMMC

deadly, the overdoses suggest habits that can lead to HCV infection.

"You know they're sharing needles. And with that comes the risk that Hep C will keep spreading," she said.

On Friday July 28, 2017, free Hepatitis C testing will be available at University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) Midtown Campus (Community Health Education Center - CHEC), 821 Eutaw Street; and at the UMMC University Campus, 22 S. Greene Street, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The free testing, sponsored by UMMC Community Outreach and the JACQUES Initiative at the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Insti-

tute of Human Virology, is part of World Hepatitis Day, to raise awareness about what the hepatitis virus is, what it can do to the liver and how it's spread and treated.

The most common blood-borne virus, HCV is a contagious disease usually spread when an infected person's blood enters the body of someone not infected, primarily affecting the liver.

"About half of those with HCV don't know they have it, meaning they can spread the virus without intending to, so it's important to get tested and protect yourself by not sharing razors or needles and practicing safe sex," said Eleanor Wilson, MD, MHS, assistant professor

of medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Institute of Human Virology.

HCV can be acute—a short-term viral infection that spontaneously clears within six months. But people with what's known as chronic HCV can live for decades without symptoms. Chronic HCV is the leading cause of cirrhosis (scar tissue that replaces normal liver tissue) and liver cancer.

"If we can identify and treat the HCV cases aggressively, then we can reduce the progression to cirrhosis and liver cancer, and the need for liver transplantation," said liver disease specialist William R. Hutson, MD, professor of medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and medical director of liver transplantation at the University of Maryland Medical Center.

Several groups of people are key targets for HCV testing: "Baby boomers" born between 1945 and 1965, anyone with a history of intravenous drug use, anyone who had a transfusion of blood products before 1992, and individuals who had tattoos done outside of a professionally licensed business.

After living with HCV for many years without symptoms, Richardson has begun taking a medication that can cure the disease.

"Hepatitis C will keep spreading if people don't get tested for it. Some people are afraid of finding out, or afraid their partner may reject them. But Hep C can be deadly, so why not be tested, especially when it can be cured," Richardson said.

For more information, call 443-682-1401.

Free Hepatitis C Testing

Friday July 28, 2017 — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

University of Maryland Medical Center, Midtown Campus
Community Health Education Center
821 Eutaw Street in Baltimore

Friday, July 28, 2017 — 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

University of Maryland Medical Center, University Campus
22 S. Greene Street in Baltimore

Facts about Hepatitis C by the numbers:

- HCV kills 1.34 million people worldwide each year— as many as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined.
- Hepatitis C, along with its cousin hepatitis B, causes 80 percent of liver cancer cases across the world.
- The silent killer: An estimated 4.1 million people in the U.S. are infected with HCV, but half of them don't know it.
- Residents of Baltimore City and Baltimore County account for 55 percent of reported HCV cases in Maryland— an estimated 26,000 to 40,000 people.
- In Baltimore City, health officials estimate one in every two people with HCV don't know they're infected.

Anguillan Reggae Artist to Perform at Artscape

By Stacy M. Brown

Omari Banks has gone from playing cricket in Anguilla and around the world to playing Reggae on the main stage at Artscape in Baltimore. On Sunday, July 23, 2017 Banks has scheduled an hour-long performance beginning at 3:30 p.m. at the festival which attracts hundreds of thousands of spectators each year.

“This is my first time at Artscape and I’m really excited to perform on the mainstage as I’ve heard that it’s an amazing atmosphere and I look forward to experiencing that,” said Banks, who, in 2003, became the first Anguillan to play test cricket for the West Indies.

Test cricket is the longest form of the sport of cricket and is considered its highest standard, according to information found on various sports-related websites.

Test matches are played between national representative teams with what’s called “test status,” as determined by the International Cricket Council. The two teams of 11 players compete in a four-inning match, which could last a week.

“Playing cricket for the Caribbean team – the West Indies Cricket Team – was almost every kids’ dream growing up,” Banks said.

“I thoroughly enjoyed my time doing so but the passion to get better every day dwindled and I started playing the guitar more than wanting to bat or bowl so I knew it was time to move on,” he said.

Banks said he became immersed in songwriting and perfecting his musicianship and dedicated his himself to playing which led to his debut album, “Move On.”

In his biography, Banks said he wanted to take his music to an international market and use his gifts to make a positive impression on individuals everywhere.

“Being someone who has already traveled the world with sports, I’m able to have a broader perspective than



Omari Banks album, “Sunlight” is available on iTunes.

Courtesy Photo

a lot of other people,” he said.

“I can communicate to all levels of thinking from a child to an adult and my music is ageless and really touches lives because the stories are true and it talks about what’s really going on,” Banks said.

The New York Times noted that the Reggae singer sounds like “a cross between Bob Marley and Bob Dylan,” while Vibe Magazine said Banks has a voice as “calming as chamomile and charisma that bubbles like a champagne toast.”

He’s not just a dynamic performer— Banks writes and composes most of his own songs and between his music and his magnetic mojo, one of Anguilla’s most beloved talents has the makings of an international superstar, reviewers at Vibe Magazine said.

Banks said fans will be in for a treat at Artscape, America’s largest free arts festival, attracting more than 350,000 attendees over three days.

The festival features more than 150 fine artists, fashion designers and craftspeople; visual art exhibits on and off-site, including: exhibitions, outdoor sculpture, art cars, photography and the Janet & Walter Sondheim Prize; live concerts on outdoor stages; a full schedule of performing arts including dance, opera, theater, film, experimental music and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Also featured at Artscape are family events such as hands-on projects, demonstrations, competitions, children’s entertainers and street theater; and an international menu of food and beverages that’s available throughout the festival site.

It’s estimated that Artscape has an economic impact of \$28.5 million for Baltimore.

Those factors only contribute to Banks’ determination to wow the Artscape audience.

“They can expect a happy island feel with a bit of rock and soul,” he said. “I try to speak positive through my music.”

Banks will also draw on the inspiration he gets from his home.

“Anguilla is a beautiful island in the North-Eastern Caribbean with the population of barely a small town in most countries,” he said. “But, we are a people of passion, pride and happiness, not forgetting our beautiful beaches that are second to none.”

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Phantasmagoria heads to Baltimore

Theatrical Stage Thriller Coming to Theater Project

By Ursula V. Battle

Halloween isn't until October 31, but with its haunting and whimsical stories of horror, the critically acclaimed Victorian Horror Troupe Phantasmagoria, is sure to leave you believing that the scariest time of the year might have arrived early.

Phantasmagoria's "Wickedest Tales of All" will rip into Baltimore's Theatre Project located at 45 West Preston Street in Baltimore from Thursday July 27 — Sunday July 30, 2017.

The limited engagement marks Phantasmagoria's return to Theatre Project. The Victorian Horror Troupe wowed audiences and drew sell-out audiences with its first two touring shows including performances in 2016 at Theatre Project.

The evocative troupe of storytellers, dancers and chorus will leave you sitting on the edge of your seat, as they embark on adventures through their most popular tales of terror, horrific folk tales, legends and myths from around the world. Stories include Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death," Charles Dickens, "A Madman's Manuscript," and centuries old ghastly Nursery Rhymes from "Gammer Gurton's Garland."

Phantasmagoria's "Wickedest Tales of All," was created by John DiDonna, who is also director of the production. The co-directors are Seth Kubersky and Kevin G. Becker. The production also features dance, live music, explosive stage combat, and large-scale puppetry.

Caribbean-born actress Kisheera Victrum plays "Fabienne" in the production.

"Fabienne is a voodoo priestess who is on the dark side of the scale," said Victrum. "You don't want to cross her. You want to have Fabienne on your side. She is always alert, and is always watching. She is really a fun character to play."

Victrum attends Valencia College in Orlando, Florida where she is studying acting and production design. She recalled going to see a performance of Phantasmagoria before auditioning for the troupe.

"I was blown away," recalled Victrum. "I thought the show was outstanding. To



Above: Caribbean-born actress Kisheera Victrum plays voodoo priestess "Fabienne" in the production. PHANTASMAGORIA's "Wickedest Tales of All" features storytelling, dance, live music, explosive stage combat, and large-scale puppetry.

Courtesy Photos

be cast in the show is an absolute dream come true. The experience has been amazing. I learn something new every time I am in the room with the directors and performers."

With the ongoing critically acclaimed success of the past eight years of ongoing original shows, Phantasmagoria's "Wickedest Tales of All" will feature the "Best Of" the last seven years, in newly approached and re-imagined versions.

"Sometimes the story is horror, but not gory horror," said Victrum. "It's more creepy and mystical. Phantasmagoria really has its own style. Audiences can expect to have a really good time at this show."

The production also features the choreography of Mila Makarova and Serafina Schiano, fight direction by Bill Warriner, and all original music and

stage credits include playing the role of "Helene" in Sweet Charity, Matron "Mama" Morton in Chicago and "Salima" in Valencia College's production of Ruined.

"Acting has been the one thing I would do for free," said Victrum noting she would like to teach one day. "It's a bonus that I am getting paid for it. I want to be the kind of teacher than can give stage directions, build the set, act, and make costumes. The more hats you wear, the more opportunities you will have in the future."

"Broadway would also be nice," added the 22-year-old with a smile.

As a child, Victrum says she loved musicals, and even put on her own shows. "My cousins and I often pretended we were The Cheetah Girls. I never lost or grew out of the desire to always want to perform."

According to Victrum, a Phantasmagoria comic book along with the next stage production is currently in the works.

"Phantasmagoria 8 'Chains of Fire' is on the horizon," she said. "We are having auditions, and there are some former Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey Circus performers who want to join us. It's very exciting."

The talented actress said she is looking forward to performing in Baltimore. "This will be my first visit to Baltimore," said Victrum, noting that special thanks goes out to publicist Edie Brown. "I can't wait. I have a list of places I want to visit when I arrive. Audiences can expect an unforgettable experience."

Due to some horror elements, the show is not recommended for children under seven. General Admission tickets are \$25.00; \$20.00 for seniors/military; and \$15.00 for students. For tickets or more information, call 410-752-8558 or visit: www.theatreproject.org



soundscapes by Les Caulfield and other artists.

"We also break the fourth wall," said Victrum. "We are like the breath on the back of your neck."

In addition to Phantasmagoria's "Wickedest Tales of All" Victrum's

Walmart, Maryland Food Bank initiative raises over \$211,000

By Stacy M. Brown

Across the United States, one in eight Americans, including one in three children, struggle with hunger. In Maryland, more than 682,000 individuals are recognized as food insecure, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

Baltimore residents and those across the state answered the call for help and generated more than \$211,200 for the Maryland Food Bank to help fight hunger, according to Walmart Officials.

Walmart's "Fight Hunger. Spark Change," campaign, which kicked off on April 17 and ran through May 15, encouraged individuals nationally to take action against hunger and help families in need through simple acts of support online as well as in-store purchases and donations.

Nationwide, the campaign raised more than \$19.8 million to support Feeding America and its nationwide network of food banks by sharing campaign messages via social media, donating to local Feeding America food banks in-store at the Walmart register, or purchasing select products that triggered a donation.

"The \$211,248.70 raised for the Maryland Food Bank in 2017 is record setting, the amount is almost \$80,000 more than last year's generous donation from Walmart," said Amy Chase, director of Corporate Relations for the Food Bank.

There were a few reasons for the campaign's success, including the food bank having sent information to all Walmart store managers in the area, Chase noted.

"We personally educated their team on our mission, in turn making their associates ambassadors for the food bank when asking their customers to donate at the registers and purchase the selected products from the suppliers that triggered a donation," Chase said.

Also, she said there was an added component this year through Discover where a donation was triggered every time a customer used their Discover Card at the register.

Working with Discover card and five suppliers, including: Campbell Soup Company, General Mills, Kellogg Company, The Kraft Heinz Company and PepsiCo, the "Fight Hunger. Spark Change" campaign proved to be a great

example of Walmart's long-standing commitment to hunger relief and our dedication to ensuring that families have access to affordable, nutritious and sustainably grown food, said Kathleen McLaughlin, president of the Walmart Foundation and chief sustainability officer for Walmart.

"Together with Feeding America, our suppliers and customers, we continue to work in the communities we serve to make a real difference for those who are struggling with hunger," McLaughlin said.

In October 2014, Walmart announced a commitment to create a more sustainable food system, with a focus on improving the affordability of food by lowering the "true cost" of food for both customers and the environment, increasing access to food, making healthier eating easier, and improving the safety and transparency of the food chain. This commitment includes a goal of providing four billion meals to those in need in the U.S. by 2020, store officials.

"Donations like this go directly toward buying and distributing food to individuals and families in need across the state. Given the fact that every \$1 we receive enables us to purchase approximately three meals, that's equivalent to 633,000 or more meals for food insecure Marylanders," Chase said.

While the numbers around food insecurity seem to be improving, Chase says there is still a lot of work to be done.

"As it stands now, the level of donations we receive is not keeping up with our ability to distribute food. We could be delivering even more food if we had more financial resources, and that's why we appreciate campaigns like this that raise awareness around the problem of food insecurity locally and at a national level in an effort to get more financial supporters, advocates, and volunteers," she said.

"We thank all those who took part and helped provide meals for Marylanders in



Through Walmart's "Fight Hunger. Spark Change," campaign, Maryland residents answered the call for help and generated \$211,248.70 for the Maryland Food Bank to fight hunger between April 17 and May 15, 2017. The amount was \$80,000 more than last year. (Pictured) The Walmart Management Team from the White Marsh Store in Baltimore County, Maryland.

Courtesy Photo/Walmart

need," said Carmen Del Guercio, president and CEO of the Maryland Food Bank.

"Most people focus on donating to food banks during the holiday season, but thanks to this campaign, we're able to address the issue of hunger during the

spring and summer months, when donations are often lowest, Del Guercio said. "That's why we're grateful to Walmart and their partners for supporting our efforts to ensure our hungry neighbors have regular access to healthy food," he said.

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Peabody Conservatory to offer dance degree

Internationally known dancer, choreographer and teacher, danah bella will chair new Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance program

Baltimore— Building on its long history of high-level training for dancers, the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University will launch a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance program beginning in the 2018-19 academic year, pending approval of the Maryland Higher Education Commission. danah bella, the founder of danah bella DanceWorks and former chair of the dance faculty at Radford University, will lead the new department.

“The Peabody Conservatory Dance BFA is designed to prepare exceptional 21st century artists to push the boundaries between dance and science and expand the role and relevance of dance,” said Abra Bush, Peabody’s senior associate dean of institute studies. “With her bold artistry and diverse experiences as a performer, choreographer, and teacher, we’re thrilled that danah bella has agreed to lead this innovative new program at Peabody.”

The dance program leverages the strengths of the Peabody Conservatory’s status as both a premier conservatory and a division of Johns Hopkins University, a world-class scientific, medical and research institution.

In addition to developing as performing artists, students will explore the interconnections between dance, music, science and medicine, and will have opportunities to develop expertise in other areas including composition, citizen artistry, performing arts medicine, movement therapy, and non-traditional approaches to pedagogy. The Dance BFA also builds on the strong foundation of one of the oldest continuously-operating dance training centers in the United States.

Peabody has pioneered new dance forms, mounted numerous collaborative projects, partnered with prominent figures in 20th and 21st century American dance, and produced accomplished professional dancers, choreographers, directors and teachers.

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Baltimore couple wins Abell Award for urban policy

By Stacy M. Brown

George Zuo, a doctoral candidate in economics at the University of Maryland in College Park, and his wife, Dr. Stephanie Zuo, who graduated from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine earlier this year, have been awarded the Abell Foundation's 2017 Abell Award in Urban Policy.

The award is given annually to students who author the most compelling paper that analyzes a serious policy problem facing the city of Baltimore and proposes feasible solutions.

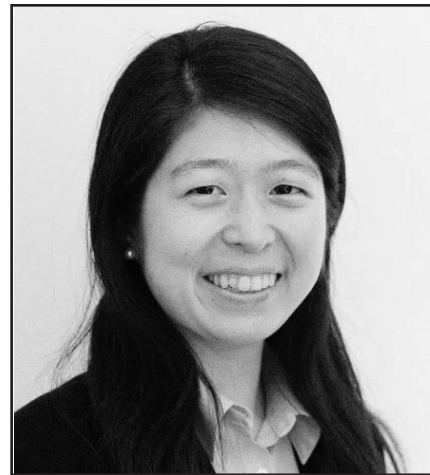
"We were delighted to learn that we had won the award. We've been working on this since the fall, and we've learned and grown a lot throughout this process so winning the award was the icing on the cake," said George Zuo, who along with his wife, said they witnessed firsthand the effects youth violence and recidivism which have remained consistent over the past five years in Baltimore City.

Stephanie Zuo, a first-year resident at



George Zuo
Courtesy Photo

the Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center Obstetrics and Gynecology program, helped her husband write a paper that proposed piloting cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) with youth offenders and those at risk of committing violence, working with the city's Juvenile Justice Center and select public schools that rank in the



Dr. Stephanie Zuo
Courtesy Photo

lowest five percent for reading and mathematics scores.

Among their determinations: for many young people, one bad decision in the heat of the moment trapped them in a cycle of violence and incarceration for life. The couple proposed breaking the cycle and cited how Chicago has used CBT to reduce youth crime and recidivism in select neighborhoods since 2010.

"We believe all youth should have the opportunity to live meaningful lives, and keeping youth out of the criminal justice system is an important step towards achieving that," George Zuo said. "This research on CBT was a perfect fit for our respective skillsets. Its implications for youth violence are enormous, and it's surprising that it hasn't gained more traction in the policy arena, especially in cities like Baltimore."

Further, it changes the narrative that it's too late to change the outcomes of teens who have grown up in disadvantaged neighborhoods, according to Zuo.

Officials at the Abell Foundation said the organization is dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life in Maryland, with a focus on Baltimore city.

"We created the Abell Award in Urban Policy almost 15 years ago. The goal was to provide students in colleges and universities in Baltimore City with a way to engage in public policy work and reward them for doing so," said Robert C. Embry Jr., president of the Abell Foundation.

"We also wanted to learn from their ideas around ways to improve the quality of life for people in Baltimore City and to share those ideas with others," he said. "Over the years we've seen some great reports, on a wide range of topics, and many of the former winners have gone on to careers in public policy, a few even in Baltimore."

"I was particularly pleased that this year's winners chose to tackle the urgent issue of youth violence. There is no more pressing issue in our city today, and we all benefit by learning about programs that have been successful in other cities," Embry said.

As advanced graduate students, the Zuos researched their paper while engaged in challenging academic programs, Embry continued, "I applaud their commitment to Baltimore City and to the important work of public policy."

The couple say they were happy to shed light on important research that has the potential to make a difference in Baltimore.

"Our work bridges the gap between that research and its potential implementation in our communities. We're honored to be recognized for our efforts, but the real reward is being able to give this research the publicity it deserves," George Zuo said.

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Correction

An article in the July 7, 2017 issue of The Baltimore Times and The Annapolis Times about Reverend Sheila McKeithen stated, "Her publications include: Those Sisters Can Preach: 22 Pearls of Wisdom, Virture and Hope (2013); the documentary book and film Discover the Gift (2010)." In fact, Reverend Sheila McKeithen contributed to Baltimore native Bishop Vashti McKenzie's book, "Those Sisters Can Preach: 22 Pearls of Wisdom, Virtue, and Hope" (2013); and the documentary and book, "Discover the Gift" (2010), created by Shajen Joy Aziz and directed by Demian Lichtenstein. We sincerely regret any inconvenience this error may have caused.

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Marylanders urged not to consume Caribeña's yellow, Maradol papayas

Health department investigating fruits in potential salmonella contamination

Baltimore— The Maryland Department of Health is warning consumers to avoid eating Caribeña's yellow, Maradol papayas because of potential contamination with Salmonella bacteria.

Yellow, Caribeña-brand Maradol papayas have been distributed to stores throughout Maryland. Consumers are encouraged to check their papayas and throw them away, if they match the brand and type.

The department's Laboratories Administration tested five yellow Maradol papayas, recently collected at a Baltimore retail location, as part of an ongoing Salmonella case investigation.

Three of the five yellow papayas tested were confirmed to be contaminated with Salmonella. The source of this contamination has not yet been identified but could have occurred at any point in the supply chain. Further investigation is under way to determine the point of contamination.

Salmonella bacteria can cause diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and fever. Symptoms usually occur between 12 and 36 hours after exposure, but they may begin as early as six hours or as late as 72 hours after exposure. Symptoms can be mild or severe and commonly last for two to seven days.

Anyone suspecting they are ill with a Salmonella infection should contact their healthcare provider. Salmonella can infect anyone, but young children, older adults and people with weakened immune systems are the most likely to have severe infections.

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Montgomery County woman discovers more than \$100,000 in unclaimed property

Recently released unclaimed property list includes accounts worth more than \$61M

Annapolis— A Bethesda woman tops the list so far this year of Unclaimed Property recipients by finding more than \$100,000 in a bank account listed among the accounts published by Comptroller Peter Franchot.

The annual list, which was published in the spring and distributed in newspapers statewide, includes more than 80,000 new unclaimed property accounts worth more than \$61 million.

"I encourage everyone to check the unclaimed property insert or to visit marylandtaxes.com to look for your name," said Comptroller Franchot.

This year, Comptroller Franchot appears on the cover of the insert in The Franchot Zone (or Unclaimed Property cache) full of possessions and financial payoffs that banks, insurance companies and financial institutions were unable to return to the rightful owners. Any of the goods not claimed by their owners eventually go to the state.

Visit the Comptroller's YouTube channel to watch his newest video (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5LayKI2wzE>).

Along with the unclaimed property list, which is published annually as required by law, the Comptroller's Office also searches tax records to try and locate property owners. In addition, the agency has a booth at the Maryland State Fair, and other events throughout the year, to

allow people to check the unclaimed property database.

Marylanders can also check to see if their name is on the unclaimed property list through the Comptroller's website. Here's how:

- Go to marylandtaxes.com
- Enter your name in the agency's database
- Claim your property

Financial institutions, insurance companies and corporations are required to notify the Comptroller's Office of any property that has gone unclaimed, or without activity, for more than three years. This is usually wages, bank accounts, stocks or dividends, life insurance policies or from safe deposit boxes.

When the Comptroller's Office receives property that isn't monetary, as required by state law, the items are appraised and the auctioned off on eBay ([www.ebay.com/user/mdcompfranchot](http://www.ebay.com/usr/mdcompfranchot)). The proceeds are held for the owners in perpetuity. Funds are available to be claimed at any time, with no statute of limitations and are not subject to taxes.

Comptroller Franchot urges anyone who finds his or her name on the list to contact his office at 410-767-1700 (Central Maryland), or toll-free at 1-800-782-7383, to find out how to reclaim the lost property.

The Comptroller's Office honored nearly 43,225 claims totaling more than \$62 million in Fiscal-Year 2016. Since 2007, the Comptroller's Office has returned more than \$585 million in unclaimed property. In total, the agency has more than 1.2 million accounts worth more than \$1.5 billion in its Unclaimed Property accounts.

To search the Unclaimed Property database online, visit: www.marylandtaxes.com.

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