

## Annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival in Annapolis continues to grow



*Jihavon Hendricks of Keur Khaleyi African Dance Company performs at the 28th Annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival honoring the legacy of a slave named Kunta Kinte and in celebration African-American history on Saturday, September 23, 2017 in Annapolis. The dance company from Baltimore's mission is to reach multi-generations and multi-ethnicities to give them information about the rich culture of the African diaspora. Hendricks says that everyone in the village can dance. Attendees also joined the company to celebrate Saturday's festivities. Over 5,000 attendees made their way to Annapolis for this year's Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival. (See article on page 15) Photo: Andrea Blackstone*



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# Guest Editorials/Commentary

## Students need an escape from public school violence

By Lance T. Izumi

America's public schools are starting to resemble war zones. Recently, a fistfight between two female students at an Alabama high school erupted into a campus-wide fracas that ended in gunfire. A massive brawl at a North Carolina school resulted in multiple arrests. And in San Diego, several teenage boys were rushed to the emergency room with stab wounds after a fight broke out.

The Obama administration, state and local school officials are largely to blame. Their fealty to a politically correct agenda prevents them from restoring order in the classroom. School choice measures like education savings accounts, tax credits and voucher programs can offer students an escape from such dangerous environments—and give those students the opportunity to learn in peace.

School violence has reached epidemic proportions. Two in three public schools report at least one violent incident per year—and one in ten schools report at least one serious violent offense, such as rape, robbery, or assault with a weapon. More than 750,000 crimes are committed on school grounds annually.

Despite these ills, many school administrators refuse to crack down on violent students. Activists claim that traditional punitive measures, like suspension, discriminate against minority students. Tough punishments, they say, cause kids to fall behind in school, making them more likely to drop out and wind up incarcerated.

This view was effectively inscribed into law by a 2014 letter from the Obama administration's Office of Civil Rights. The letter warned public school administrators that traditional disciplinary measures could violate federal nondiscrimination law.

As a result, half the states and several large municipal districts installed severe restrictions on school discipline. The Los Angeles Unified School District has effectively banned suspensions entirely. This shift has resulted, predictably, in more violence.

Take a decision by the past superintendent of the St. Paul, Minnesota district to significantly limit the ability of school staff to interact with the police or impose harsh punishments on bad students.

Violent student behavior quickly spiked to an all-time high. One brawl got so bad, school staff had to close the doors on all the classrooms to prevent any more students from joining in. As one veteran teacher put it: "We have a segment of kids who consider themselves untouchable."

Other anti-suspension districts have suffered similar results. In both Oklahoma City and Baton Rouge, two in three teachers have reported an uptick in bad behavior. Nearly 70 percent of teachers in Jackson, Mississippi say their classrooms spin out of control on a regular basis.

It's impossible for teachers to restore order if they can't remove chronically disruptive students from class. Ironically, the victims are often poor students of color the politically correct advocates claim to care about.

Students need an escape. They shouldn't be forced to attend violent public schools. Expanding school choice programs can give these kids a shot at a better future.

Consider Zaya Lumumba, a teenager subjected to bullying at her public school in Indiana. Her parents applied for a state-run scholarship program for low- and middle-income students and then used the money to move Zaya to a private school nearby. Her mood immediately improved, as did her academics; she registered a top grade point average her first semester at her new school.

Politically correct administrators are trapping young people in violent schools. School choice can liberate them.

*Lance T. Izumi is the Koret Senior Fellow in Education Studies at the Pacific Research Institute. He is also the author of the newly released book, "The Corrupt Classroom."*



## Community Affairs

### Faith leaders across the country encourage congregations, communities to register to vote

Washington, D.C.— To mark National Voter Registration Day on Tuesday, September 26, 2017, faith leaders with the nation's largest faith-based grass roots organization are helping their congregations and community members learn about their voting rights and encouraging them to register to vote.

PICO National Network is also urging elected officials to make access to voting easier, noting that the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity has done more to encourage voter suppression than anything else.

"The right to vote is sacred and one of the first things we can do to protect it is to ensure everyone in our respective networks is registered to vote," said Bishop Dwayne Royster, political director for PICO National Network.

National Voter Registration Day, first observed in 2012, offers a prime opportunity for faith leaders to encourage people to counter voter-suppression trends

on display in communities across the country by engaging their communities in voter education and outreach efforts.

The American Civil Liberties Union noted that since 2008, various states have enacted laws "to make it harder for Americans— particularly black people, the elderly, students, and people with disabilities— to exercise their fundamental right to cast a ballot."

"Like our ancestors before us, we continue to fight for our right to create a true democracy about and for the people, a right to declare our God-given voices to champion the cause of the widow, the stranger, the sick, the children and ALL the people who are the most vulnerable in our society," said Phyllis M. Hill, Southeast regional director of PICO National Network's Live Free Campaign. "We must vote, talk about voting, build systems and structures that make it easier to vote, and create strong vehicles—organizations and institutions—to make the vote matter long term. Voter Registration Day isn't about one day. It is, however, a reminder to engage and build with our various communities to make our Kingdom Come."

## What you should know about the Community Reinvestment Act

By Christopher G. Cox  
Publisher/Managing Editor  
realesavvy.com

Since it was passed in 1977, the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) has enabled thousands of low- and moderate-income families—many in minority communities—to become homeowners. In the current political climate, however, many observers, who have played a role in monitoring how effectively the CRA is enforced, wonder whether it will continue to offer broad access to affordable mortgage financing.

James Perry, the chief executive officer of the Winston-Salem, N.C. branch of the Urban League, has nearly 15 years of experience in the area of fair housing, primarily with the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, where he served for 10 years as executive director.

“The CRA has been an extremely valuable tool for providing access to mortgage financing for disadvantaged individuals, particularly African Americans and Latinos,” Perry said. Unfortunately, it appears the act might be imperiled based on the rhetoric we hear

from many in the current Administration, as well as in Congress.”

Under the CRA, the federal government monitors how well banks and other lending institutions are doing in meeting the credit needs of the entire community, with the goal of making certain that neighborhoods, which can be categorized as low- and moderate-income, are not overlooked. Under provisions of the CRA, a bank’s application for

get a mortgage, take out insurance or access other financial services. Redlining did not take into consideration an individual’s qualifications and creditworthiness. The practice of redlining disproportionately affected black borrowers.

“Too often, inner-city problems have been viewed in silos, rather than strategically,” Rockey said. “You can’t consider such factors as access to affordable

“Actually the CRA requires lenders to make credit available in disadvantaged communities at the same rate as in majority communities.”

“There is more than enough blame to go around for what caused the housing crisis,” Rockey explained. “There were many factors involved, including predatory lending, by unscrupulous banks and lending institutions and investors propping up subprime mortgages without a truthful and honest examination of what they represented.”

Perry and Rockey are also in agreement that the way CRA compliance is currently measured does not fully recognize the rapidly changing nature of the banking industry.

“The CRA predates the Internet,” Perry said, “and looks at such things as where a bank locates its retail branches and how many of those branches are in African-American and Latino communities.”

“Where a bank has branches is still relevant to its obligations under the CRA,” said Rockey. “But as banking has become increasingly mobile, with more and more banking transactions being handled on smart phones and other digital devices, we are hopeful that new measures of CRA compliance would be considered.

Perry and Rockey, although viewing the CRA from somewhat different perspectives, both support what is has accomplished for urban communities, as well as what it has the potential to continue to accomplish.

“In terms of community development the CRA is a way for a bank to do well by doing good,” Rockey said.

*Christopher G. Cox is the publisher and managing editor of realesavvy.com.*

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***“Institutions that do not have a good record of CRA compliance can have these business activities constrained by officials with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC), a division of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, which monitors CRA compliance.”***

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new branches, relocation of existing branches, mergers and acquisitions, and other corporate activities are closely evaluated.

Institutions that do not have a good record of CRA compliance can have these business activities constrained by officials with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC), a division of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, which monitors CRA compliance. OCC uses a four-tier ranking system to measure compliance: outstanding, satisfactory, needs to improve and substantial noncompliance.

Chris Rockey, community development market manager for the Greater Maryland for PNC Bank, said that CRA was enacted as a direct response to “redlining,” which was an unethical practice whereby banks and other lending institutions made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for residents of poor inner-city neighborhoods to borrow money,

housing, elimination of blight, high levels of commercial vacancy, safety and availability of public transportation, individually and in isolation. Effective CRA programs look at the totality of how these issues impact a community and how they can all be addressed simultaneously.”

Rockey discussed one such strategic program in Baltimore where PNC partnered with other institutions, including a competitor bank, to raise \$10 million in capital to invest in a community development project. Rockey referred to working with other competitor banks on such projects to as “co-opetition.”

Both Rockey and Perry agree that the CRA has to some extent, been unfairly blamed for the housing crisis of 2008 and the subsequent loss of billions of dollars in home equity.

“The rhetoric that the CRA was largely responsible for the housing crisis comes mostly from the ‘right,’” said Perry.

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# Wanda Draper brings new life to Reginald F. Lewis Museum

By Stacy M. Brown

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture has seen its share of both lean times and healthy times.

The Baltimore landmark ended the 2016 fiscal year with about \$400,000, a paltry sum for a museum. However, after Wanda Draper was named the new executive director replacing the retired A. “Skipp” Sanders, the museum has rebounded—generating \$1.5 million in its most recent fiscal year.

“Like most nonprofits, we’re struggling financially—but we’re showing progress including retail sales; and my goal is to keep us firing on all fronts and moving us forward,” said Draper, a longtime communications professional who worked 25 years at WBAL-TV.

A Baltimore native, Draper graduated from the journalism program at the University of Maryland and later attended the Johns Hopkins University School of Contemporary Studies and the University of Maryland School of Law.

Draper served on the original board of directors at the museum in 1999, after initially turning down the invitation.

“I was so busy that I didn’t think I had time and, every time that I had been asked to serve on a board, it’s one of those things where you show up, you write a check and go to a gala,” Draper said.

Of course, a letter from the governor inviting her to serve just a couple of days after she initially turned the offer down, convinced her to join the board, she said. The rest is history.

Quickly however, she learned the Reginald F. Lewis Museum board was different. It involved hands-on work, like brainstorming ideas about where to locate the museum and how to raise money.

“The first time I came to a board meeting for the museum, the whole concept of having an African-American museum in downtown Baltimore kind of hooked me,” Draper said.

For eight years beginning in 1999, Draper served as one of the founding board members.

During the first five years on the board, she says members were not only



**Since Wanda Draper was named the new executive director, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture has rebounded, generating \$1.5 million in its most recent fiscal year. Courtesy Photo**

tasked with raising capital and finding a location, but they also had to decide who would design and build the museum.

“We raised \$38 million to pay for the museum so that we could open debt free and we raised [an additional] \$2.5 million to design and install a permanent collection so the museum could also be debt free,” Draper said.

Today, Draper says many challenges remain, including getting Baltimore residents to visit the historic museum. While many visit from outside of Maryland and even from other countries, Draper says it’s been difficult convincing the locals to come.

“I think people don’t appreciate what we have here while those from other countries and states are blown away,” she said. “I think local people have not come inside to see what we have and when they have, they’re amazed that we have 82,000-square-feet of space and 13,000-square-feet of just exhibits.”

For those who might consider the new and wildly popular Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington a challenge for the Lewis Museum to attract guests, Draper says it’s quite the opposite.

“It helps us tremendously,” she said, noting that museum’s executive director, Lonnie Bunch, used to attend Lewis Mu-

seum board meetings while he adopted his vision and plan for the D.C. location.

seum board meetings while he adopted his vision and plan for the D.C. location. “We have a connection, we are a Smithsonian-affiliate and we work very well,” Draper said. “The biggest advantage is that people go there and it’s

crowded so they often stop here.” The Lewis Museum has undergone a major reorganization since Draper took over as executive director.

“As a result, we do business a little differently. One of the things we’ve been able to do over the last nine months is connect our community to the museum,” Draper said.

A new highlight is the “Maryland Collects: Jacob Lawrence” exhibit, which runs through January 7, 2018. It features more than 50 prints by Lawrence from personal collections in and around the state.

“He’s one of the best-known artists of the 20th century,” Draper said of the famed painter, storyteller and educator renowned for his portrayals of African-American life.

“The difference is that you will not see this anywhere else in the world in 50 pieces,” Draper said. “Every single one of the pieces are owned by someone in Maryland who loaned it to us. When you walk in, it literally takes your breath away.”



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# Maryland Collects: Jacob Lawrence at the Reginald Lewis Museum

By Ursula V. Battle

In a fitting birthday tribute, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture presents “Maryland Collects: Jacob Lawrence.” The exhibition consists of 50 fine art prints and three artist books by artist Jacob Lawrence from collections in and around Maryland. The exhibition opened on September 9, 2017, and will be on display through January 7, 2018. The Reginald F. Lewis Museum is located at 830 East Pratt Street in Baltimore.

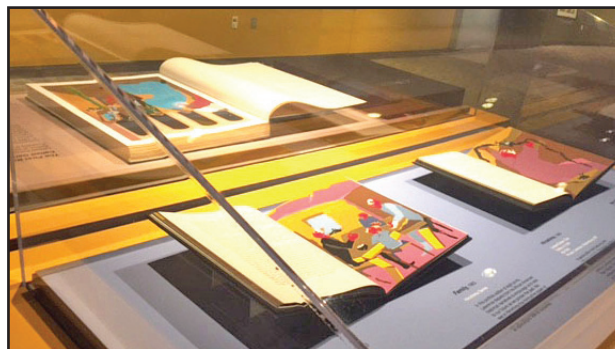
Lawrence, one of the best-known artists of the 20th century, was a painter, storyteller, visionary, poet, social commentator and educator, renowned for his portrayals of African American life, most notably, in Harlem. Lawrence, who passed away in 2000, would have turned 100 on September 7.

“This started out as new signature series, which was a show we do every three or five years,” said Charles E. Bethea, Chief Curator/Director of Collections & Exhibitions for the Reginald F. Lewis Museum. “We decided to start off our new series by honoring the 100th birthday of Jacob Lawrence, who was born on September 7, 1917. The planning for this started 10 months ago, and was curated in-house.”

He added, “We want people to enjoy the show anesthetically, and hopefully delve deeper into the pieces themselves. With the work Jacob Lawrence was doing, he really wanted to educate the masses, and to contribute to the African American history not readily taught in school.”

The exhibition was assembled from local collectors, and features prints reflecting the vivid colors and simplicity of form seen in Lawrence’s earlier paintings. The collection offers a visual overview of Lawrence, who is credited as being one of the greatest narrative story painters of the 20th century.

“Lawrence set out to inspire and uplift in a tangible way,” said Bethea. “There are 50 prints here from 19 collectors. Each of these pieces tells a story. Some have narratives on them that give insight



into his thought and creative process.”

For more than 50 years, Lawrence transferred pieces of himself and his experiences onto his paintings, prints, murals, and even costume designs. A keen observer of Harlem during its stimulating renaissance and devastating Great Depression, Lawrence used the city to express the character and identity of African American urban life.

His compositions captured historical events of African American history not taught in school, as well as unheralded scenes of modern urban reality. He was the first Black artist to be represented by a New York Gallery (1941) and the recipient of numerous honors and awards

during his lifetime. His work is included in public and private collections around the world.

“Lawrence’s works reflect his experiences,” said Jacqueline Copeland, director of Education & Visitor Services for the Reginald F. Lewis Museum. “He absorbed all of those experiences and put it in his art work. He was a prolific artist, storyteller and griot. He had a spirit of generosity, and was generous with his art. We think anyone who comes to see this collection can relate to the pieces here. People will also be attracted to the brilliance and color in all of his works.”

She added, “He continued to produce



(Top left) “Lawyers and Clients,” 1994, courtesy of The Honorable Robert M. Bell, Chief Judge/Maryland Court of Appeals (Retired). (Top right) “Olympic Games,” 1971, Private Collection, Bladensburg, MD. (Left) Three artist books which are part of the exhibition. Photos by Ursula V. Battle

works until his death in 2000. We have an amazing body of work on display, and people will really be wowed by what they are going to see.”

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum will also host a series of programs and events in connection with the exhibition. They include: Saturday Fun: Printmaking for Kids on Saturday, September 16th at 11 a.m.; The Joy and Pain of Collecting Art later that day at 1 p.m. Jacob Lawrence Family Day on Saturday, October 7 at noon; and Dollar Day Celebrates Jacob Lawrence on Saturday, December 9 at 11 a.m. For additional events and information, call (443) 263-1800 or visit [www.lewismuseum.org](http://www.lewismuseum.org).

# Ravens look to rebound from worst loss in franchise history

By Turren Davenport

The Ravens traveled to London, England in week three with a 2-0 record, including two wins over their AFC East rivals. Things were looking up for Baltimore as they left American soil.

However, things have changed since the Ravens suffered a 44-7 loss to the Jaguars. It was the most lopsided loss in franchise history.

The team was without two of their most important players— offensive guard Marshal Yanda and defensive tackle Brandon Williams. The physical presence that both players bring on game day was sorely missed.

Head coach John Harbaugh is eager to put the loss behind him, but also wants to use it as a learning lesson.

"The things that we did in that game are things that we can improve on— in all three phases. Players have already seen the tape," Harbaugh said during his press conference on Monday, September 25, 2017. "I saw them watching it and talking about it. We'll work on correcting the things we need to correct, but you always have to do it with a forward mindset. We've got to apply the correction and improvement for the next game."

The loss was the worst game of quarterback, Joe Flacco's career. Flacco only completed six passes for 36 yards. It was a truly embarrassing performance.

For Flacco, the main task at hand is to not let the game snowball into the next one. He is working to keep the confi-



Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco is pressured by Jaguars defensive end Calais Campbell during the game at Wembley Stadium in London in week three of the 2017 NFL Season. Courtesy Photo/NFL.com

dence level high as they go into their next game.

"You've got to keep guys' heads up," Flacco said. "So much of this game is confidence and going out there and getting it done."

Rebounding from the loss is not the only issue the Ravens have on their hands.

Before the game started, the players joined together to show unity after the NFL was challenged by President Don-

ald Trump, who called out the league for allowing players to protest during the National Anthem. He said those that chose to take a knee while the National Anthem was played should be fired.

President Trump also made a plea to fans to not watch football and leave the stadium if a player protested. He even went to the extent of calling players who protest, "sons of b&%^\$@!"

Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti made the following statement in regards to players.

"We recognize our players' influence. We respect their demonstration and support them 100 percent. All voices need to be heard. That's democracy in its highest form."

Fans were outraged because of the Ravens taking their stance. Many went to the extent of burning their jerseys or any other team apparel.

Now the Ravens return home to face their arch rival, the Pittsburgh Steelers. Both teams are coming off of losses so this normally hard fought game will be even more brutal.

The Steelers are dealing with their own controversy regarding the National Anthem. Head coach Mike Tomlin and the team stayed in the locker room while the Anthem was played. They did so in hopes of avoiding the attention and focusing on the game.

The only problem was one of their players, Alejandro Villanueva is a former serviceman and chose to stand outside of the tunnel by himself. The event ended up drawing more attention to the pregame festivities.

Sunday's game against the Steelers will be an interesting one to watch. The Ravens are 2-1, and the Steelers are 2-1 as well.

## Free Fall Baltimore returns in October 2017

The 12th annual Free Fall Baltimore presented by BGE returns Sunday, October 1 through Tuesday, October 31, 2017. A program of the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts, Free Fall Baltimore offers hundreds of free arts and cultural events for the whole family throughout the month of October at participating venues throughout Baltimore City. Held in conjunction with National Arts and Humanities Month, area attractions and organizations showcase the importance of the arts with free concerts, dance and theater performances, festivals, lectures, workshops, art exhibitions, tours, special events and more. A full schedule of events and participating organizations can be found at: [www.freefallbaltimore.org](http://www.freefallbaltimore.org). Join in the fun with Free Fall Baltimore!



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# Navy Veteran from Baltimore competes in Invictus Games

By Stacy M. Brown

By Saturday, September 30, 2017, retired Navy Lieutenant Brad Snyder will know if he earned a medal from the Invictus Games in Toronto, which began on Saturday, September 23. However, with or without a medal, the veteran from Baltimore will count as a winner.

Snyder is among the 550 military competitors from 17 nations who compete across a dozen adaptive sports at the annual Invictus Games—the only international sporting event for wounded, ill and injured service members.

Created by Prince Harry and sponsored by Jaguar Land Rover, officials said the games use the power of sport to inspire recovery and support rehabilitation.

For Snyder, a multi-medal winner in swimming events at the Paralympic Games, he's looking forward to competing in Toronto.

"I have seen this initiative grow from the beginning, and it's great to see what it's become," Snyder said. "I was able to spend a little time with Prince Harry in

Colorado Springs at the Warrior Games in 2013 when the seeds for the Invictus Games were sown, and it will be a distinct honor to compete this year for the first time."

The Olympic and Paralympic movements have been immense sources of inspiration for Snyder and being a part of them over the past five years have pushed him to expand his perception of what he is capable of.

"They have helped me to see how communities unified under common ideals that work together can be so powerful and have such a positive impact," Snyder said.

Joe Eberhardt, the president and CEO of Jaguar Land Rover, North America, LLC, says his company proudly sponsors the games because of its ongoing commitment to supporting veterans.

"We feel strongly that it is important to support our service members from the athletic arena to the workplace," Eberhardt said.

Snyder, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, went on to deploy to Iraq as an



**Retired Navy Lieutenant Brad Snyder is competing in the Invictus Games in Toronto in swimming, and track and field. During his deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, he was severely injured by IED and is completely blind. At the 2013 Paralympics in Brazil, Snyder broke a world record in swimming, a mark that had stood for over 30 years. Courtesy Photo**

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Officer in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He then deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

After six months of assault operations, Snyder suffered a severe injury by an explosion of an improvised explosive device (IED), which led to complete vision loss.

A swimmer, Snyder returned to the pool as part of his rehabilitation and eventually earned a spot on the U.S. Paralympic National Team for swimming.

He has competed in two Paralympic Games earning five gold medals and two silver medals. At the 2013 Paralympics in Brazil, Snyder broke a world record in swimming, a mark that had stood for over 30 years.

The return to the water remains a high point for Snyder.

"It wasn't necessarily the act of swimming that was cathartic; it was returning to a mode of self-improvement, a mode where my family and friends had seen me before, and a mode where I could compete, and eventually succeed," he said.

Military personnel are imbued with a strong sense of purpose or mission during their indoctrination and sometimes the worst part of an injury is the perception that they can no longer fulfill their duty, Snyder said.

"Duty, purpose, and mission can be restored through competition and the power of sport," he said. "And, this can be immensely cathartic for wounded, ill and injured service members. At least, that is what my experience has shown me."

Further, Snyder says his injuries have healed and he has adapted to a point where the consequences are not a daily consideration.

"It's just who I am," he said. "The U.S. has come a long way since Vietnam, and I believe that our homecoming veterans are treated very well. It's great to be able to share this sentiment with our allies, and celebrate our service. Most often, the only time we spend with our friends abroad are in war zones and battlefields, so it will be nice to share some fun in the wonderful city of Toronto."

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# Disney On Ice presents Dare To Dream

## Encouraging Show Comes to Baltimore Oct. 11-15

By Ursula V. Battle

Throughout their lifetime, the young and the young at heart, are constantly encouraged to dare to dream. Through its exciting new show, Disney has brought the encouraging words to life through an exciting new show. Entitled Disney On Ice presents Dare To Dream, the breathtaking production comes to Royal Farms Arena October 11, 2017 through October 15, 2017.

Presented locally by MetroPCS, the show celebrates what's possible as five Disney heroines spark the courage inside us all in exciting Disney fashion. Produced by Feld Entertainment, Dare to Dream features an incredible display of special effects, stunning set design and breathtaking choreography on the ice. Hosts Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse will take audiences on an expedition across raging seas and snow-covered mountains in this action-packed extravaganza.

"Dare to Dream is really strong in its message," said performer Quiesto Spieringshoek, who is featured throughout the show. "It embraces kids and their dreams. It encourages them to reach a little farther and to put in the extra effort. They see these characters aspire to do something. They watch these characters overcome the obstacles they face and make friends along the way. From the beginning to end, the show has a very strong message. It is uplifting, and makes a child feel, that if these characters can do it, they can do it to."

The show will allow audiences to see how far Moana will go in an epic adventure with demigod, Maui, to save her island and discover her true identity. They can join Belle as she fearlessly befriends the enchanted castle staff and reveals the Beast's gentleness. Children and adults can experience Anna's devotion to her sister, Elsa, on her life-changing journey to stop an eternal winter.

The show features edge-of-your-seat explorations with Rapunzel, Flynn Ryder, Cinderella and friends from

around the Disney Kingdom as they find the heart and determination to overcome obstacles and make their dreams come true.

The show is very classic, but very modern," said Spieringshoek referring to the classic and newer Disney characters. "I am still star-struck by Donald Duck and Goofy," he added with a laugh.

Spieringshoek is a native of Cape Town, South Africa, and has been with Feld Entertainment since 2011. He has been skating since the age of 11, and was encouraged to try his 'feet' at ice-skating by his best friend.

"She was already on this journey, and took me along with her," he said. "She transitioned from a competitive skating career to a professional skating career. She took athleticism and arts and combined them. For me, this journey has been something of a marathon story. It has been amazing."

The 29-year-old is encouraging everyone to come see the show.

"This show conveys to never think less of yourself," said Spieringshoek, noting that he is looking forward to returning to Baltimore. "When you look deeper into each story, some of these characters initially could not understand their abilities and power. Each story and their characters have a unique message, which makes the show so great."

He added, "The show teaches a very valuable lesson about being happy with who you are and that anything is possible."

Feld Entertainment® is the worldwide leader in producing and presenting live touring family entertainment experiences that uplift the human spirit and bring people together.

Tickets start at \$20 and can be purchased at all Ticketmaster outlets via charge, by phone at 1-800-745-3000, via [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com), and at the Royal Farms Arena box office.



*Quiesto Spieringshoek, a native of Cape Town, South Africa, is performing in the production. Courtesy Photos*



*Disney On Ice presents Dare To Dream, comes to Royal Farms Arena from Oct.11-15, 2017.*

# 'The Christians' Comes to Baltimore Center Stage

*Play runs through Oct. 8;  
Examines leadership and faith*

*By Ursula V. Battle*

The cost of challenging one's beliefs, the responsibility of leadership, and the distance that exists when people of strong convictions and common faith discover that they might not believe the same thing takes "Center Stage" with the production, "The Christians." The stage play opened Thursday, September 14, 2017, and runs through Sunday, October 8, 2017, and is the theater's first production of the 2017/18 Season.

Does absolute tolerance require tolerance of the intolerant? Can a divided head find a way to lead? When the stakes are eternity, what happens if your pastor is wrong? These are some of the questions raised in *The Christians*, which features singing by the Greater Baltimore Church of Christ Choir (performing Sep 7–17); Community Choir of Baltimore Center Stage (performing Sep 19–Oct 1); and New Psalmist Baptist Church Choir (performing Oct 3–8).

"The Christians specifically examines leadership and faith," said Baltimore Center Stage Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah. "Faith is fundamentally what we have all been discussing since 9/11. The church in this play is a metaphor for our communities and our country."

He added, "What happens when you no longer trust those you have entrusted to lead you? I'm thrilled to bring this production to Baltimore and for Center Stage to serve as a convener of many more conversations about leadership...in Baltimore, in Maryland and in our country."

Baltimore's Center Stage's Associate Artistic Director, Hana Sharif is directing the production, which boasts a majestic set converting the venue's Pearlstone Theater into a modern-day megachurch.

"It has been incredible," said Sharif. "Night after night, the audience has responded. I don't think there is anyone who has walked away without affirma-

tion of their experience or belief system or questioning it. The charge for us was to be a place where everyone felt they had access to this journey and experience. I wanted people to connect no matter what walk of life or religion they come from."

She added, "That is the fabric of Lucas Hnath's work. There are a lot of Bible verses in the play. He went as far as to choose translations from different versions of The Bible— some not being part of the mainstream. He wanted to create a patch of work that examined different aspects of Christianity. We used that as a filter for how we looked at the work and in creating the tapestry of the church. This piece really allowed us to have a beautiful sense of community connectivity."

During its run, there will be activities aimed at engaging theatergoers in conversation. This includes "Table Talk" for impromptu, audience-driven conversations, as well as post-show panel discussions with leaders from different faiths and opportunities to meet the actors.

"We also have a very diverse cast," said Sharif. "The show and the audience has been a wonderful representation of the City of Baltimore. This show tackles such essential questions. Religion is used as a metaphor to address questions regarding leadership and sacrifice. We are dealing with such things right now in the arena of politics and economics."

She added, "This play helps us to navigate our way through questions relating to humanity. This is a beautiful compelling story that I hope that everyone will have an opportunity to enjoy."

Baltimore Center Stage is a professional, nonprofit institution committed to entertaining, engaging and enriching audiences through bold, innovative and thought-provoking classical and contemporary theater.

To purchase tickets for *The Christians* or for more information, visit [www.centerstage.org](http://www.centerstage.org) or call the box office at (410) 332- 0033.



*Baltimore Center Stage's Associate Artistic Director, Hana Sharif directs The Christians production which opened Thursday, September 14, 2017, and runs through Sunday, October 8, 2017, and is the theater's first production of the 2017/18 Season.*



*The Greater Baltimore Church of Christ Choir performing during The Christians stageplay. Courtesy Photos*

# UMBC professor receives \$1.5 million grant to build organ-saving device

By Stacy M. Brown

Gymama Slaughter, an associate professor of computer science and electrical engineering at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, will develop a bioreactor to extend the viability of life-saving human organs as they await transplant.

A bioreactor is a vessel that carries out a biological reaction and is used to culture aerobic cells for conducting cellular or enzymatic immobilization

The Ghana-born Slaughter, who is also the director of the Bioelectronics Laboratory at UMBC, will be able to build the organ-saving device because of a major new grant from the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command.

She and her team, which includes Johns Hopkins University associate professors Warren Grayson and Gerald Brandacher, will receive nearly \$1.5 million over three years. They will create a bioreactor by integrating in-line sensors, mechanical stimulator, and blood perfusion system to more accurately and continuously monitor organs as they are transported for transplantation.

The team will also develop a system that closely mimics the organ's natural environment.

Slaughter's focus will be to develop metabolic sensors that continuously monitor the organ's nitric oxide and oxygen levels while Grayson is tasked with creating a mechanical stimulator to keep the organ moving during the transportation process, so the organ tissue does not become rigid and die. Meanwhile, Brandacher will develop technology to continuously supply the organ or tissue with blood, to maintain viability, and will



*Dr. Gymama Slaughter and her team, which includes Johns Hopkins University associate professors Warren Grayson and Gerald Brandacher, will receive nearly \$1.5 million over three years to develop a bioreactor that will extend the viability of lifesaving human organs and tissue for transplantation.*

Photo by Marlayna Demond

focus on the clinical aspects of the grant.

"Cell, tissue and organ transplants have become an increasing viable clinical treatment options for injured soldiers and veterans, and those types of transplants are severely limited by short preservation time in addition to tissue and, or, organ death that occur during that preservation period," Slaughter said. "This new technology will significantly increase the efficacy of treatment options for organ and reconstructive transplantation to enable soldiers and veterans to return to a highly-active and productive lifestyle."

Slaughter and her seven siblings moved to America from Ghana when she was 12-years-old.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree

in Chemical Engineering and a Ph.D. in Computer Engineering from the Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

Slaughter is a recipient of the National Science Foundation Career Award that recognizes junior faculty who exemplify the role of teacher-scholar through their work. She joined UMBC as an assistant professor in 2010.

Her research aspiration is to develop novel and powerful diagnostics tools that integrate nanotechnology with biology and electrochemistry, thereby enabling their applications in homeland security, medical diagnostics and environmental protection.

The funds received to build the organ-saving device will allow Slaughter and her team to design an instrument that

they hope will ultimately help improve the quality of life for those in need of tissue or organ transplantation.

"Our multi-parametric perfusion bioreactor is designed to mimic the physiological microenvironment of tissue and organ, while using in-line bio-sensors to non-invasively monitor bio-makers of stress and functional activity to provide real-time feedback on organ health," She said, when asked what might be the most important feature of the device.

Currently, organ and tissue donors typically need to be near transplant recipients due to limitations in organ transport. Some organs reportedly are only viable for about six hours, and they must be kept at very cool temperatures to remain feasible, so the transport process can be a race against time.

With technological improvements, the viability of the organs could be increased to about 36-hours, greatly expanding the distance an organ may be transported between donor and recipient.

Receiving the grant allows the team to be able to fully concentrate on developing the potentially life-saving device.

"The grant's impact expands well beyond reconstructive transplantation, as the process that extends the viability of tissue can be applied to organs and whole extremity transplants as well," Slaughter said. "This work also signals a dramatic change in future tissue and organ transplant preservation technologies."

Slaughter noted that she has always been interested in saving lives and she draws inspiration from her family, including her mother, husband and three children.

"They always keep me on my toes," Slaughter said. "They're always there to encourage my crazy ideas."

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# Sweet Honey in the Rock to perform at BlackRock

Germantown, Md.— BlackRock Center for the Arts will host the Grammy Award-winning, African-American, all-woman a cappella ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock on Sunday, October 8, 2017 at 7 p.m. as part of their 15th Anniversary Season opening weekend.

The troupe's powerful and moving sound holds roots of gospel music, spoken word, blues and jazz. Starting out in the D.C. vocal workshop Black Repertory Theater in 1973, the women have since made it their mission to present African-American history and culture through the powerful expression of sign language, song, and dance. This performance will feature sign-language interpretation (stage right).

Tickets to see Sweet Honey in the Rock are between \$29-55. Tickets may be purchased by phone: 301-528-2260 or online: blackrockcenter.org. Patrons who benefit from sign-language interpretation are recommended to purchase stage right seats or may send an inquiry to info@blackrockcenter.org for more information.



As part of the 15th Anniversary Season opening weekend, Sweet Honey in the Rock will perform at the BlackRock Center for the Arts in Germantown, Maryland on Sunday, October 8, 2017 at 7 p.m. Courtesy Photo/BlackRock

BlackRock Center for the Arts is a cultural cornerstone and the leading venue for the performing and visual arts in Upper Montgomery County, Maryland.

Since 2002, the nonprofit arts center has been providing the community with diverse performing arts programs, free gallery exhibitions and arts education

experiences. BlackRock Center for the Arts is located at 12901 Town Commons Drive in Germantown, Maryland.

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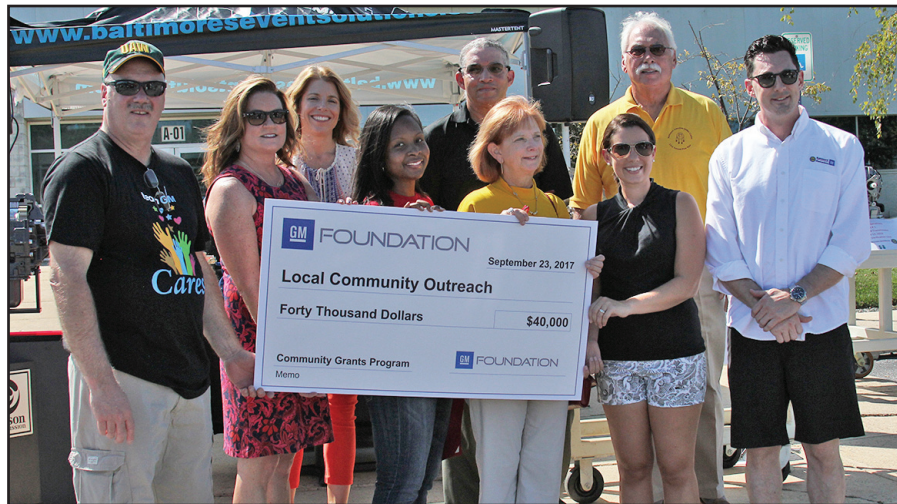
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## Five local charities receive GM Foundation grants



*(Left to right) UAW 239 Chairman Guy White; Cecilia Helmstetter, United Way of Central Maryland; Shawn Kros, CEO of The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region; Crystal Adams, Maryland Foodbank; Juan Boston, Baltimore American Indian Center; Maryland State Senator Kathy Klausmeier; Dennis E. Seymour, Ph.D. Baltimore American Indian Center; Stefanie Freeburger, Junior Achievement of Central Maryland; and GM Baltimore Operations Plant Manager Eric Shelhorn.*

**Courtesy Photo/GM Baltimore Operations**

White Marsh, Md.— On Saturday, September 23, 2017, the General Motors Foundation in partnership with GM's Baltimore Operations team provided a \$40,000 grant to five local charities. Eric Shelhorn, the new GM Baltimore Operations Plant Manager made the announcement during the plant's 7th Annual Classic Car Cruis'in.

The charities receiving the grants are: Maryland United Way, \$10,000.00; The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region, \$10,000.00; Junior Achievement of Central Maryland, \$10,000.00; Maryland Food Bank, \$5,000.00; and Baltimore American Indian Center, \$5,000.00.

Maryland State Senator Kathy Klausmeier attended the event and gave out proclamations to each of the recipient organizations for their efforts, and to

General Motors for consistently helping those in the community in which their employees work and live.

The car show raised \$1,645 for the White Marsh Volunteer Fire and Ambulance Company. Last year, General Motors donated six acres of Baltimore Operations land to the organization to build their new facility.

This year, the GM Foundation will provide \$2 million in funding to nearly 200 organizations in 45 plant cities. Since 1976, the General Motors Foundation has donated nearly \$1 billion to U.S. charities, educational organizations and disaster relief efforts worldwide. In 2016, the company began transitioning from a U.S.-focused, foundation-based giving model to a global social impact strategy to promote economic growth around the world.

## Dawn Kirstaetter appointed to lead Advancement and Strategic Partnerships at BCCC

Baltimore— Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) has appointed Dawn Kirstaetter as vice president for Advancement and Strategic Partnerships at the college.

Kirstaetter is the former Deputy Mayor of Health, Human Services and Education from 2014-16; chief operating officer for Associated Black Charities (ABC); and a veteran nonprofit leader in the fields of public health and youth and family services.

In her new position, Kirstaetter will oversee fundraising, scholarships, alumni affairs, communications and marketing in addition to helping the



**Dawn Kirstaetter**  
Courtesy Photo

college build strategic partnerships with public and private sector organizations. She will serve as the college's primary liaison to the Mayor's Office, City Hall and city agencies.

St. James' Episcopal, Church of the Redeemer, Macedonia Baptist, Enon Baptist, Metropolitan United Methodist, Greater Hope Church of God in Christ, and St. John African Methodist Episcopal Present

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# Annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival in Annapolis continues to grow

By Andrea Blackstone

Annapolis is a well-known tourist destination in Maryland where out-of-towners can be found browsing in boutiques, strolling on brick-topped sidewalks leading to the United States Naval Academy or navigating through the narrow streets along City Dock admiring the yachts and powerboats.

Maryland's state capital is also known for its exciting festivals and events. The 28th Annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival was held Saturday, September 23, 2017 and was no exception to the excitement many look forward to experiencing in Annapolis.

The 28th Annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival honors the legacy of Kunta Kinte, one of 98 slaves brought to Annapolis aboard the ship Lord Ligonier in 1767 and the main character in Alex Haley's book, *Roots*. The festival also highlights and celebrates African-American history which continues to play an equally memorable part of exploring the culture of Annapolis.

Just around the corner from the place where slaves were brought to Annapolis in chains, families, friends, and solo travelers made their way toward sounds of African drum beats, the smell of freshly cooked fish and ribs, and an assortment of festival sights. Live animals and face painting gained attention from young children. Everything from colorful African clothing, books, empowering t-shirts, colorful art, crafts, and jewelry filled tables that were lined up neatly in rows.

As the sun began to heat up a small yet busy town, 52 African Americans from New York City, N.Y. stepped off a long tour bus to partake in the festivities. Janifer P. Wilson— founder of Sisters Uptown Bookstore— organized the excursion. Wilson owns the only black-owned bookstore in Harlem. The unique community resource center for the exchange of information and ideas has been in business for 17 years. Wilson heard about the 28th Annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival and wanted to support it. Her group visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture, before heading to the area where Kunta Kinte was said to have arrived on the Lord Ligonier ship in 1767.

“The energy of the festival is profound. We love gathering with our people in the spirit of our ancestor. We have a rich culture and once we embrace the history of ancestors and world history, we will be freedom,” Wilson said while standing in Susan Campbell Park. “Knowledge is the key to our freedom.”

Visitors such as Selina Lokko and Maikan Kone stumbled upon this year's festival. While looking at colorful jewelry, Kone said that history is right up her alley. The women who are like sisters traveled from Va. and planned to see Carr's Beach in Annapolis.

After looking at townhouses in the place where African-Americans once enjoyed performances of up-



*These festival goers visited the face painting booth*



*These festival goers visited the face painting booth*



*Youth perform during the 28th Annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival.* Photos: Andrea Blackstone



*A vendor helps an out of town visitor find merchandise.*

and-coming entertainers in the era of segregation, Lokko and Kone found their second destination. The friends described the event as fantastic. Lokko and Kone remarked that they would put it on their calendar for next year and spread the word out about it. “It’s just that huge umbilical cord, that thread among all of us. It’s just really one world, one people, one love,” Kone said, referring to like-minded people who embraced history at the festival. “I just love it.”

Jan F. Lee, who served as festival chair of the 28th Annual Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival, explained that the number of festival attendees, volunteers, and vendors all increased this year. She noted that over 5,000 attendees made their way to Annapolis for the cultural event.

The planning committee for this year's event consisted of eight volunteers and 30-40 people volunteered on the day of the festival. Approximately 80 vendors participated. Lee affirmed that that this year's goals were met.

“A few of the main goals were to have the community stage for more engaging and educational entertainment, to have more volunteers, and to have more vendors, which we accomplished. With the support of

Anne Arundel Community College, we were able to have the community stage. We received a positive response from vendors— a significant number having vended with the festival in years past that wanted to participate again. And we added a few members to the committee and received more support from people that wanted to volunteer,” Lee said after the festival. “Next, we want to continue to grow and add more to the festival so that people will learn and enjoy. We want to continue to improve the festival experience.”



*Young dancer from Keur Khaleyi African Dance Company*

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# Parents and Students reminded to check out college tax benefits

Annapolis— With school now in session, the Internal Revenue Service reminds parents and students about tax benefits that can help with the expense of higher education. Two college tax credits apply to students enrolled in an eligible college, university or vocational school. Eligible students include the taxpayer, their spouse and dependents.

## **American Opportunity Tax Credit**

•The American Opportunity Tax Credit, (AOTC) can be worth a maximum annual benefit of \$2,500 per eligible student. The credit is only available for the first four years at an eligible college or vocational school for students pursuing a degree or another recognized education credential. Taxpayers can claim the AOTC for a student enrolled in the first three months of 2018 as long as they paid qualified expenses in 2017.

## **Lifetime Learning Credit**

•The Lifetime Learning Credit, (LLC) can have a maximum benefit of up to \$2,000 per tax return for both graduate and undergraduate students. Unlike the AOTC, the limit on the LLC applies to each tax return rather than to each student. The course of study must be either part of a post-secondary degree program or taken by the student to maintain or improve job skills. The credit is available for an unlimited number of tax years.

To claim the AOTC or LLC, use Form 8863, Education Credits (American Opportunity and Lifetime Learning Credits). Additionally, if claiming the AOTC, the law requires taxpayers to include the school's Employer Identification Number on this form. Form 1098-T, Tuition Statement, is required to be eligible for an education benefit. Students receive this form from the school they attended. There are exceptions for some students.

## **Other education benefits**

Other education-related tax benefits



that may help parents and students are:

- Student loan interest deduction of up to \$2,500 per year.
- Scholarship and fellowship grants. Generally, these are tax-free if used to pay for tuition, required enrollment fees, books and other course materials, but taxable if used for room, board, research, travel or other expenses.
- Savings bonds used to pay for college. Though income limits apply, interest is usually tax-free if bonds were purchased after 1989 by a taxpayer who, at time of purchase, was at least 24 years of age.
- Qualified tuition programs, also called 529 plans, are used by many families to prepay or save for a child's college education. Contributions to a 529 plan are not deductible, but earnings are not sub-

ject to federal tax when used for the qualified education expenses.

To help determine eligibility for these benefits, taxpayers should use tools on the Education Credits web page and IRS Interactive Tax Assistant tool on IRS.gov.

## **Keep A Copy of Tax Returns**

Taxpayers should keep a copy of their tax return for at least three years. Copies of tax returns may be needed for many reasons. If applying for college financial aid, a tax transcript may be all that is needed. A tax transcript summarizes

return information and includes adjusted gross income. Get one from the IRS for free.

The quickest way to get a copy of a tax transcript is to use the Get Transcript application. After verifying identity, taxpayers can view and print their transcript immediately online. The online application includes a robust identity verification process. Those who can't pass the verification must request the transcript be mailed. This takes five to 10 days, so plan ahead and request the transcript early.

## **Hospice of the Chesapeake seeks volunteers with 4-wheel drive vehicles**

Volunteers with four-wheel drive vehicles are needed to assist Hospice of the Chesapeake patients and staff in Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties during inclement weather conditions.

For additional information or to volunteer, contact our Volunteer Department at 443-837-1508 or toll free at 800-745-6132.

Caring for life throughout the journey with illness and loss is the mission of Hospice of the Chesapeake. For more information, visit: [www.hospicechesapeake.org](http://www.hospicechesapeake.org).

*To place Legal Notices in The Annapolis Times,  
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