

Save Our Village Feeds Baltimore's Homeless and Underserved



Antoinette Rucker (center) created Save Our Village Baltimore, a grassroots organization in April 2017 to meet the needs of Baltimore's homeless by providing them with hot food, clothes and care packages filled with toiletries and other essential items. Save Our Village has hosted events designed to encourage people to come out and donate their time and resources to benefit a part of the population that most people overlook. Rucker hopes to one day expand Save Our Village Baltimore to be able to consistently provide food, supplies and aid to underprivileged residents and struggling families. (Above): Antoinette Rucker is surrounded by her volunteers. For more information on Save Our Village Baltimore and to find out how you may help, visit @SaveOurVillageBaltimore on Instagram. (See article on page 9) Courtesy Photo

Family and community pay tribute to Willia Bland

By Stacy M. Brown

Many of the tributes to Willia Bland, the late Flair Studios owner, began similar to what Rain Watkins of Baltimore wrote: “My daughter went to Miss Willia’s Studio when she was in Mondawmin Mall many years ago and did a fashion show there she will be truly missed. God Bless the Family,” in a tribute on the webpage of March Funeral Homes, who hosted memorial services for Bland who died on February 18, 2018.

Bland’s daughter, Diane Mitchner says she had grown accustomed to salutes from strangers long before her mom passed away.

“She was phenomenal. The legacy she left is beyond anything people could imagine,” Mitchner said, as she nervously prepared to say goodbye to her mother one last time.

“She had this dream and she came from simple people. Her father was a railroad man who worked as a fireman on the railroad,” Mitchner said. “He was also a man of diction and used to hold court in barbershops. Mom grew up with that and my grandmother, who was a seamstress, taught all the girls how to sew. This was their life. Our life as we grew up.”

In business for nearly a half-century, Bland’s Flair Studios began with a dream of making a more enjoyable—if not more fulfilling life for others.

“Mom was born in 1925. When she was three and her sister was one, her parents moved to Baltimore,” Mitchner said.

The move from the family’s home in North Carolina was precipitated by a threat made by the Ku Klux Klan who had planned to attack and assault Bland’s father.

In 1968, Bland began Flair Studios and the first classes were held in the dining room of Bland’s partner, Lucille Barton. Later, the duo moved the studios to Bland’s basement, then to the Mondawmin Mall and eventually to Catonsville.

“After Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and the riots tore apart Baltimore and other places. Many people



Willia Bland
1925 — 2018

were soul searching to determine what they could do to help, and that’s when my mom started the studio,” Andrea Travis, Bland’s daughter and vice president and director of Flair’s modeling program, said in an earlier Baltimore Times interview.

Mitchner said her mom simply loved everyone and was always welcoming.

“She was creative. She just believed all things are possible and she went after it,” Mitchner said. “Some of the things people don’t know about her is she had two sayings. One of them were from Robert F. Kennedy where he said, ‘some see things as they are and say why. Others see things as they ought to be and say why not.’”

Mitchner added that her mom also inspired others to “dare to dream dreams that we never dreamt before.”

“Now, that wasn’t original with her but you would think it was. The things she did, the suggestions she made to people; she didn’t take credit for them. She made you think you came up with the idea and let you take all the credit,” Mitchner said.

Bland’s effect on others was clearly seen, her family noted.

Granddaughter Willia Noel is a Broadway dance sensation appearing in, “The Lion King,” and was named dance captain in New York and on Broadway where she has been since 2008.

Bland, who once volunteered and began a trend of volunteer work at a government hospital after World War II, enjoys as compelling a legacy as any. Mitchner recalled taking Bland to the doctor and when a nurse, who only noticed her first name, realized whom she was caring for, she was stunned.

“She said, are you Willia Bland? My mom said, ‘yes.’ She said I was one of your candy strippers,” Mitchner said.

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“She told my mom she started with her when she was just 12 years old and she said you have no idea what you meant to me, you inspired me.”

The nurse asked could she hug her and began crying, telling Bland that she had changed her life.

“I would walk down the street and total strangers would rush over to her and ask if she remembered them,” said Mitchner, who recalled how she coyly got her mother to write her junior high school valedictorian speech.

“I got a real taste of my mom’s life and I was like [shocked],” Mitchner said. “Because, this woman never stopped!”

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Time2Grind boxers win Silver Gloves titles

By Timothy Cox

The Time2Grind Boxing Club of Baltimore is at it again. This time the boxing club is sporting the talents of a grade school age boy and a middle school aged girl. Both youngsters recently won National Silver Glove titles after participating in a tournament in Kansas City, Missouri, last month.

BJ Santana Brown, 10, won his second Silver Gloves championship. He also won the same title last year.

Daijah Ruth, 13, is part of the first group of female fighters to compete for the State Silver Gloves title, according to Time2Grind Boxing Club owner and founder Mack Allison. The girls state Silver Gloves tournament was held at Rosecroft Raceway.

Coach Allison credits both boxers for being excellent students and positive role models for their younger peers. Brown fights in the 152-pound category and Ruth fights in the 100-pound girls group.

Brown is the son of Denise Worsley and is a fourth grader at Yorkwood Elementary School. Ruth is the daughter of Denika Glover and Kenneth Glover and is a seventh grader at Loch Raven Technical Academy.

Ray Rodgers, 81, a coordinator for the National Silver Gloves organization in Independence, Missouri says that Ruth's victory is significant, since females have only been competing in Silver Gloves



Coach Mack Allison (center) with his championship boxers from Time2Grind Boxing Club, 13-year-old Daijah Ruth (left) and BJ Santana Brown, who at age 10 has won his second Silver Gloves Championship.

Courtesy Photo/Time2Grind Boxing Club

competitions for the past ten years.

The National Silver Gloves Tournament in Missouri included more than 400 fighters from all across the

country. The more popular Golden Gloves competition includes fighters from age 18 to 39, while Silver Gloves boxers are between the ages of eight and 14.

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Guest Editorials/Letters

Novel explores misconduct in Brooklyn's legal system

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Contributor

In January 2014, Kenneth Thompson made history by becoming the first African American district attorney of the New York City borough of Brooklyn.

As Brooklyn's district attorney, Thompson "ordered his office not to prosecute low-level marijuana arrests, in part to devote more resources to fight gun crimes, rape and domestic violence. He said he also wanted to spare younger New Yorkers from 'the burden of a criminal record,'" according to the New York Daily News. "He also moved to vacate or supported the dismissal of convictions of 21 people wrongly convicted of murder and other offenses...and presided over the prosecution against Police Officer Peter Liang in the accidental shooting death of Akai Gurley at the Pink Houses."

In October 2016, Thompson died from cancer, but his career has been immortalized in a novel by Frederic Block, a senior United States District Court Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

In an interview with Above The Law (ATL), a website that provides news and insights about the legal system, Block said that "Race to Judgment" is based in part on Thompson's life.

Block told ATL that when he presented a signed copy of the book Thompson's widow, Lu-Shawn she told him that the book was a wonderful way of perpetuating Thompson's legacy.

Block said that early in his career, Thompson tried one of his first cases in front of the judge as a federal prosecutor. "I was impressed with his ability and immediately knew he was going places," said Block.

Block continued: "Since then, I followed his career with great interest as he rose to the pinnacle of the New York legal world. 'Race to Judgment,' my new reality fiction novel, which explores themes of corruption and misconduct in the Brooklyn criminal justice system, is loosely based on Ken's career. It is dedicated to his memory."

Block's book draws from his more than two decades on the federal bench and tackles such cases as the 1991 Crown Heights riot that pitted African American and Orthodox Jewish residents against each other during an especially tense time in Brooklyn.

According to a description of "Race to Judgment" on Amazon.com, the reality-fiction novel, "tracks the rise of the fictional African-American civil rights protagonist Ken Williams...from his days as an Assistant United States Attorney through his meteoric rise to unseat the long-term, corrupt Brooklyn [District Attorney, because of a spate of phony convictions against Black defendants, including another one of the judge's real cases (JoJo Jones in the book) for the murder of a Hasidic rabbi."

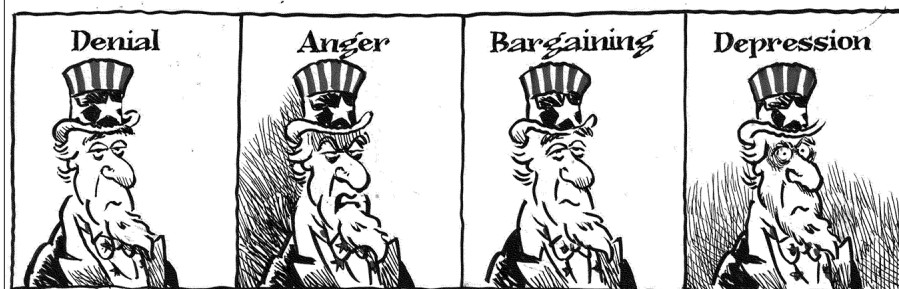
Thompson's legacy lives on as the inspiration for the main character in "Race to Judgment," and readers will recognize the close professional relationship between Thompson and Block.

Block's biography on Amazon.com said that he was appointed United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York on September 29, 1994, and entered duty on October 31, 1994. He assumed senior status on September 1, 2005.

"During his 23 years on the bench, Block has presided over a number of high-profile cases, including the trials of former Bear Stearns hedge fund managers Ralph Cioffi and Matthew Tannin, Kenneth 'Supreme' McGriff, Peter Gotti, Lemrick Nelson, and nightclub magnate Peter Gatien," the biography said.

A press release about the book said, "With 'Race to Judgment,' Frederic Block has not only created an exciting novel but he also provides an insider's look at the New York criminal justice system—from the deplorable conditions at the Riker's Island prison, to the mistreatment of African American prisoners, to the practice of stop-and-frisk which has disproportionately targeted minorities."

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF



Letters to the Editor:

Editor:

Re: A Preventable Shooting Tragedy

The Parkland, Florida, shooter had a history of violent behavior. Police were called to his house many times but they did not arrest him because the school board had an agreement with the police not to arrest any students.

The FBI received a viable tip indicating he wanted to shoot up a school, but the lead was not pursued.

The following are incredible:

A student saw the shooter in a stairway loading his rifle but did nothing to try to stop him when told "things are going to get messy around here."

The student left the building, did not call 911, but informed a teacher. The teacher drove the student to a baseball field, and then went back to the school to check it out, but the shooting had started.

Why did the armed deputy sheriff assigned to protect the school stand around during the shooting? If true, why did three police officers arrive at the school and take cover behind their vehicles, and not enter the school?

Arming teachers who are not trained to be police officers could be disastrous. What happens when a police officer enters a school during a shooting and encounters a teacher with a gun?

We should increase the age to purchase a firearm to 21. Most school shooters are under 21. We have to improve the background check system. Schools need to lock all entrances and install shatter-proof glass and alarms. A heavily armed security guard should be stationed in every school.

Donald Moskowitz
Londerry, NH

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‘Black Panther’ showcases power of STEM applications

By Tyra Metoyer,
External Mobilization Manager, API

*Article contains spoilers for the
“Black Panther” movie.*

As I sat in the theater mesmerized by Marvel’s record-breaking “Black Panther,” there were so many moments and messages that filled me with an overwhelming sense of pride. The Black Girl Magic was palpable. King T’Challa was a strong, thoughtful king who loved and respected all of his leading ladies. Erik Killmonger was the best supervillain I’ve seen in a really long time. And of course, I want my next trip to the continent to include a visit to the breathtakingly beautiful Wakanda. However, all of those moments paled in comparison to my fascination with the STEM applications and the genius of Princess Shuri.

I am convinced that we can use Black Panther and Princess Shuri to help young people imagine their own STEM futures and the role they can play in driving innovation as we all prepare for the fourth industrial revolution. This

revolution will be characterized by a range of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and digitization. This revolution can be led by the next generation of “STEM-inists.”

The Wakandan princess is the youngest of the strong, female characters showcased in this Ryan Coogler-directed blockbuster. She is unapologetically smart, funny, brave, and beautiful. Her

we fell in love with the way she proudly showed off her latest advances in her lab, but hopefully you took note when Agent Ross expressed his skepticism stating that, “bullet wounds don’t just magically heal overnight.” Shuri chided him, saying, “They do here: but not by magic; by technology.”

For now, I will forgo my strong desire to layout the numerous parallels between vibranium (the fictitious precious metal)

craft trades positions. I like to say that every job in our industry is a STEM job, because they will all include technology and problem solving (engineering).

More than ever, I am convinced that jobs are the solution to so many of our national and global challenges. Jobs (careers) are not only a way out of poverty, but they also give people’s lives purpose, meaning, and a reason to get out of bed every morning; when we’re really fortunate, jobs fuel our passion.

The future belongs to those innovators who are preparing now to address the challenges of tomorrow. That future is a STEM future—no matter what career or profession we choose. Based on everything we understand now and contemplating the disruptions we haven’t yet imagined that are sure to define this fourth industrial revolution, we know that our future will be characterized by constantly evolving technology.

I imagine a future where our children thrive on innovation, work in labs like Princess Shuri’s and participate in making choices for how to make our communities safer and better. I am passionate about our industry’s workforce of the future and the role I get to play in building awareness that I hope will lead to more jobs for more women and people of color. I hope you are raising or mentoring the real-life Shuris, who will push the boundaries of what’s possible and lead the innovations of the future. I can’t wait to meet them.

Tyra Metoyer is a Manager of External Mobilization for the American Petroleum Institute. You can follow Tyra on Twitter @tyram02.

“More than ever, I am convinced that jobs are the solution to so many of our national and global challenges. Jobs (careers) are not only a way out of poverty, but they also give people’s lives purpose, meaning, and a reason to get out of bed every morning; when we’re really fortunate, jobs fuel our passion.”

language even demonstrates her tech-savvy leadership of the most technologically advanced nation in the world. As Shuri emerges as an unlikely “Shero,” her position is challenged when M’Baku tries to dismiss her as a mere child. Yet, we are introduced to energy spears, kimoyo beads, sound absorbent sneakers, variations of the Black Panther suit, vibranium cars, and virtual modes of transportation—all out of the imagination and innovation of the young, hip princess.

In her very first scene, after lovingly teasing her brother, she snaps back, “just because something works doesn’t mean it can’t be improved.” Hence, our first glimpse into her engineering mind. Yes,

and natural gas and oil, but I will say that they are not only driving our advanced manufacturing renaissance in this country, but are also the building blocks of innovations that will support prosperity, discovery and human advancement across the world.

The energy industry is and will continue to be a major source of job opportunities in STEM fields. The natural gas and oil industry supports more than 10.3 million U.S. jobs, and recent reports project 1.9 million job opportunities by 2035, nearly 40 percent of which will be held by African Americans and Latinos. In addition to the large number of engineers, more than a million jobs can be characterized, as semi-skilled and skilled

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Women Elevating Women hosting Multicultural Women's Symposium

By Stacy M. Brown

Professional forums that cater to the multicultural, businesswoman are largely absent, according to Betty J. Hines, a strategic business consultant who works with CEOs and their executive management teams.

Multicultural businesswomen are in search of a community that's forged with other like-minded women business professionals where they can attain successful strategies and tactics to assist them in maintaining their current success while also discovering how to scale and grow, Hines said.

Beginning Tuesday, March 6, 2018, the group, Women Elevating Women plans to deliver the answer to what Hines called the long-awaited question: "Where does the multicultural woman go for sustainable professional support?"

The organization will provide one-day business symposiums dedicated to helping to build strategic alliances to scale business and enhance professional growth, using what Hines said are the five pillars to success.

"The five pillars are cultivate, courage, connect, communicate and collaborate," said Hines, who has served as a corporate executive and is an entrepreneur, speaker, business mentor and coach and a certified group facilitator.

As an entrepreneur, Hines co-founded and owned a property and casualty company that provided small business, homeowners, and automobile insurances to the underserved urban markets in the greater Baltimore and Washington, D.C. communities.

Prior to her entrepreneurial ventures, Hines held executive and senior-level management positions at a multibillion-

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dollar Fortune 100 Company overseeing underwriting operations with annual revenues exceeding \$500 Million.

"So, I'm branching out to lend my expertise," said Hines, the chapter chair of the Greenbelt and Zenith II chapters of the Women Presidents Organization.

The March 6, 2018, symposium will be held at the Marriott Conference Center 3501 University Blvd East in Hyattsville, Maryland.

Phyllis Winchester Newhouse, who was named the 2017 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year, is scheduled to give the keynote address. Baltimore Ravens' great Ray Lewis and author and entrepreneur Avis Yates Rivers are also expected to provide remarks.

Breakout session experts and modera-

tors will include Dr. Angela Marshall; Necole Parker; Shawn Wright; Denise Smith; Dominica Grooms; Staci Redmon; Tracy Balazs; Dr. Barbara Hutchinson; Ashley Day; Nathalia Cruz; Marlene Mahipat; Marguerita Cheng; Tawana Bhagwat; Nicole Giannini; Sequena Luckett; and Y. Maria Martinez.

"This is designed to connect the multicultural business woman, be it corporate or entrepreneurs," Hines said.

Other dates for the symposium are Wednesday, May 23, 2018 in Atlanta, Georgia; and Wednesday, September 12, 2018; in Dallas, Texas.

"You have a lot of women that know there has not been a platform like this," Hines said. "But, not just women, but men and corporate America who work in



Strategic Business Consultant Betty J. Hines is among the organizers of the Multicultural Women's Symposium

Courtesy Photo

diversity and inclusion. They know this is a great opportunity to hear these phenomenal women."

Hines said there are certain things many individuals still aren't familiar with, particularly the five pillars of success—or the "Five C's."

The symposiums will also tackle various ways to target businesses, including the use of social media, Hines said.

"When was the last time you used the yellow pages? You don't," Hines said. "I have millennials who will talk about communication in the 21st century.

"I would encourage people to come out and listen to our speakers who are speaking from real life experiences and not from research. This, I believe is important for everyone, including diversity and inclusion officers," she said.

For more information about the symposiums, visit: www.womenelevating.com.

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Women's History Month

Dr. Leana Wen Leads Baltimore's Health Department

By Stacy M. Brown

Under the direction of Dr. Leana Wen, the Baltimore City Health Department is leading the country in health innovations, including "B'More for Healthy Babies," a collective impact strategy resulting in a 38 percent reduction of infant mortality in just seven years.

Wen, whose parents immigrated to the United States when she was eight, has formed and led programs like "Vision for Baltimore," an initiative to provide glasses to every child who needs them and "Healthy Baltimore 2020," a blueprint for health and well-being that enlists all sectors to achieve the ambitious goal of cutting health disparities in half in ten years.

For Wen, a Rhodes scholar who received her medical training from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and Brigham & Women's Hospital/Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, it's quite easy to identify where she gets her inspiration.

"My mother," she said. "My family came to the U.S. with less than \$40 to our name and my parents worked many odd jobs."

While she also credits her father for his hard work, clearly it was the trials and strength of her mother who carved a path of service for Wen.

"My mother cleaned hotel rooms and worked in a video store. She took night classes and eventually became a public school teacher. She took care of everyone, including me and my little sister and my father's parents, all the while volunteering in the community," Wen said about her mom who died eight years ago from breast cancer. "She's someone that I look up to every day."

With attention to sexual harassment in the workplace thanks to the #MeToo movement, Wen says she was about 10 years old when her mother was ill-treated by her boss.

"She had a boss who harassed her verbally and physically. I remember my mother coming home and she couldn't stop crying. She thought if she spoke up, she'd lose her job, or her boss could place our entire family's immigration status in jeopardy," Wen recalled. "I could feel her shame, fear and indignity."

Wen vowed that if she were ever in a position of power, she would help change such injustices.

She has done just that at the Baltimore City Health Department, implementing mandatory training for the leadership team. She has also hired qualified women to help lead her staff, with women as her Chief of Staff and all three of her Deputies.

"We have a zero-tolerance policy to ensure a workplace



Dr. Leana Wen, Baltimore City Health Commissioner
Courtesy Photo

of equity and respect. Every allegation is immediately and thoroughly investigated. Discriminatory and unprofessional behavior is never tolerated or accepted," Wen said. "My job as a leader is to speak up for all those who may not be able to. For those who may fear repercussion, as my mother did."

Wen advises women and minorities on careers in public health. She also mentors young people who stutter.

"I had a severe speech impediment growing up," she said. "I couldn't imagine being someone else's mentor. But no matter who we are, there's someone out there looking up to us. It's our obligation to be role models and lift others up with us."

Wen has conducted health research in various countries, including some African nations. She says it has helped her shine a light on how people should view health.

"We think about health as health care," Wen said. "But what determines how long and how well [we] live, is less about what happens in your doctor's office and more about where one lives, the air we breathe, and other resources in our communities."

She says it's important to invest in public health.

"It's also an investment in our public safety, our education and the future of our community," Wen said.

A multiple award winner for her work, Wen credits the people she works with and Mayor Catherine Pugh for accolades like the 100 Most Influential Marylander's and Maryland Leading Women awards. She has also received the American Public Health Association's highest award for local public health—the Roemer Award.

"I work with a phenomenal team at the Baltimore City Health Department and every single person is an inspiration to me every day," she said. "They come from the communities they serve, and are so passionate about serving the most vulnerable. I'm really very fortunate to work with this team and the honors that I receive, I do so on behalf of my team and the mayor."

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Save Our Village Feeds Baltimore's Homeless and Underserved

By Alisa Hyman

It all started with a question. Baltimore native Antoinette Rucker has volunteered with organizations committed to feeding the homeless for years. After volunteering one Thanksgiving, she noticed all the people, especially the children and young adults who were standing in line for a Thanksgiving meal.

"People are in the giving spirit around the holidays," Rucker recalled. "But the need extends beyond Christmas. What about the rest of the year?"

In April 2017, Rucker answered her own question by creating Save Our Village Baltimore, a grassroots organization formed to meet the needs of Baltimore's homeless by providing them with hot food, clothes and care packages filled with toiletries and other essential items.

"I wanted to create an outlet for people who looked for year-round opportunities to contribute to the communities in which we live by lending a helping hand to Baltimore's homeless and underprivileged," Rucker explained.

There are organizations in Baltimore that feed the homeless, but Rucker wanted to offer something other than cold sandwiches in brown paper bags, so every weekend, she cooks hot meals on a small propane grill. The menu usually consists of scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage and French toast, but Rucker has also distributed soup, chili, and other hot, filling meals. Rucker and her volunteers serve, on average, 80 people each weekend, and to date, Save Our Village Baltimore has passed out over 3,000 meals and 400 care packages.

"I created Save Our Village because it breaks my heart to see young adults and women with children begging for change," Rucker said. "I can't imagine what it feels like to experience the ache of hunger every single day."

Rucker believes that the need for hot food and toiletries is so great that she continues to go out into the community every weekend despite the fact that she is not yet an official non-profit organization.



Antoinette Rucker wanted to offer something other than cold sandwiches in brown paper bags, so every weekend, she cooks hot meals on a small propane grill. The menu usually consists of scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage and French toast.

Courtesy Photo



"Not being an official non-profit prohibits me from eligibility for grants and donations from large markets and retail stores. I'm currently working through the paperwork and will soon become an official non-profit organization, but until then, there are people in my city that are hungry and need help, so I am willing to do whatever I can to meet their needs, even if it means spending my own money to buy food and supplies," Rucker said.

Despite the expense, Rucker feels a deep sense of obligation for the people she meets each weekend.

"One Saturday morning," she recalled, "One young man told me that I was cooking the first meal he'd had in three days. He knew if he could just make it to Saturday, I'd be there and he could count on a hot meal and some toiletries. Every weekend, people are waiting for me and depending on me, so every weekend, I show up for them."

Save Our Village has hosted events

designed to encourage people to come out and donate their time and resources to benefit a part of the population that most people overlook. For Thanksgiving, in addition to serving food and passing out supplies, a local barber was on hand providing free haircuts.

Rucker has also partnered with other local organizations in an effort to have an even greater impact in the community.

"I conducted my own research by interviewing a few of the homeless people with whom I interact on a regular basis," Rucker said. "And I found that so many people who are homeless [also] have drug addictions and mental illnesses [which] makes securing stable housing very difficult. Some of them have been robbed and raped on the streets, and in shelters. Save Our Village Baltimore is my way of providing a helping hand to a population of people [who] struggle every single day."

Rucker hopes to one day expand Save Our Village Baltimore into a grand oper-

ation, which would consistently provide food, supplies and aid to underprivileged residents and struggling families. In a city where 21 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and 3,000 residents are homeless, Save Our Village Baltimore is more than a free hot meal on weekends—it's an organization that gives people hope.

"Save Our Village Baltimore knows that our efforts will never be a solution to the problem of homelessness, but I hope we can limit the amount of distress and desperation that plagues the poor and hungry in our communities, while promoting selflessness, understanding, and consideration to people who have been abandoned and left to fend for themselves."

For more information on Save Our Village Baltimore and to find out how you may help, visit @SaveOurVillageBaltimore on Instagram.

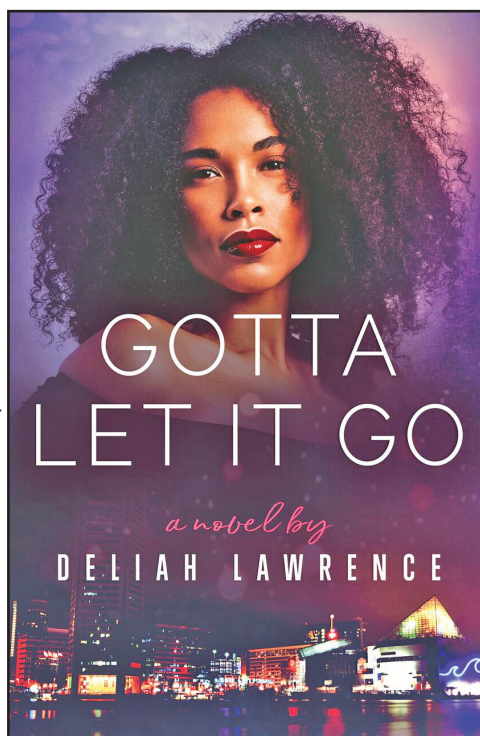
Deliah Lawrence among authors on “Women Writers Who Rock” Panel

Baltimore— Baltimore-area attorney Deliah Lawrence, author of the romantic suspense novel “Gotta Let It Go,” was one of four women authors featured at the Black Writers’ Guild of MD (BWG) “Women Writers Rock” panel discussion on Saturday, March 3, 2018 at the Enoch Pratt Library located at 4330 Edmonson Avenue in Baltimore.

The authors discussed their publishing journeys and shared tips about the writing process, followed by a Q&A segment for the audience. The three other panelists featured were: Janice Adams; Margaret Pagan; and Minister Carenda Pittman. BWG’s President Jim Wright served as the panel moderator.

Deliah (“Dee”) Lawrence enjoys writing romantic suspense novels, as well as poetry and short stories. Her debut novel, Gotta Let It Go won the 2011 Finalist Next Generation Indie Book Award in the multi-cultural fiction category.

In “Gotta Let It Go,” moments before Deidre Hunter signs the papers that will end her marriage to her cheating husband, her best friend and divorce attorney gets murdered. Devastated by this tragedy, she sets out with one-intent—to find the killer. In the midst of the investigation, she finds herself attracted to Hill Harris, the handsome but elusive homicide detective assigned to handle the case. Despite his warnings to follow proper police procedures, she strikes out to uncover clues on the crime-ridden



The novel “Gotta Let It Go” written by Deliah Lawrence won the 2011 Finalist Next Generation Indie Book Award in the multi-cultural fiction category.

Courtesy Photo

streets of Baltimore, which forces her into dangerous circumstances and potential heartache.

“I enjoyed writing this first book in my series particularly because it gives readers a snapshot into the lives of people in Baltimore who live on both sides of the law,” said author Deliah Lawrence.

Lawrence is a member of the Maryland Writers’ Association, Black Writers’ Guild of Maryland, Sisters in Crime and Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance. She will release “Gotta Get It Back,” a sequel to her first novel in late spring 2018.

To learn more about author Deliah Lawrence and her novels, visit www.authordelialawrence.com.

BGE Engineer named Black Engineer of the Year

Baltimore— Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) engineer Taiwo Alo was named the Errol B. Davis Legacy Award winner at the 2018 Black Engineer of the Year Awards (BEYA) conference held earlier this month in Washington, D.C.

“I am deeply honored to receive this award and am inspired to join past recipients who I have long admired and respected,” said Alo. “What makes my experience at BGE so rewarding has been the number of great mentors who have helped me develop as a professional with an emphasis on effective leadership.”

Alo joined BGE in 2009 as an electrical engineer in the Transmission Planning unit and now serves as a manager of BGE’s Transmission Engineering Design and Standards unit. His team provides engineering and project management support for electric facility construction, oversees infrastructure maintenance programs and investigates unplanned outages.

The BEYA conference annually convenes engineering students, practitioners, recruiters and executives from public and private sectors to facilitate workforce diversity within the nation’s largest science and tech-based agencies and companies. Alo joins a long list of Exelon employees who have been honored by BEYA in the past, including Darryl Stokes, vice president of transmission operations and planning, Exelon Utilities and former BGE vice president.

“The BEYA conference presents opportunities through career fairs and compelling seminars to further develop talent through thoughtful discussions that students and professionals may not be exposed to in the classroom or in the workplace,” said Stokes, who also chairs the nonprofit Advancing Minorities’ Interest in Engineering (AIME)



BGE engineer Taiwo Alo was named the Errol B. Davis Legacy Award winner at the 2018 Black Engineer of the Year Awards conference held earlier this month in Washington, D.C.

Courtesy Photo/BGE

organization. “It is to our benefit to bring together organizations to find out how we can promote this pipeline for the African American community.”

Alo was one of three Exelon employees honored during the conference. PECO’s Justin Hale (Manager, New Business) received a 2018 Modern Day Technology Leader award, and Exelon Generation’s Serena Wilson-Archie (Manager, Maintenance) was honored as a 2018 Science Spectrum Trailblazer.

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Busy Baltimore actor continues to ‘push the envelope’

By Stacy M. Brown

Brown Girl Magazine, whose focus is to empower and uplift women, recently highlighted 11 reasons the magazine loves Baltimore actor Utkarsh Ambudkar, a man.

Among them: He can sing. Rap. And act. All at the same time, the magazine’s editors wrote in praise of Ambudkar, who tells the Baltimore Times that he has been busy.

In February, the musical romantic comedy “Basmati Blues” in which Ambudkar starred opposite Brie Larson was released both in theaters and on-demand.

On March 23, 2018, Netflix is scheduled to release, “Game Over, Man!” a film in which Ambudkar co-stars alongside Workaholics’ alum Blake Anderson, Adam Devine and Anders Holm.

“In April, I have a five episode arc on Hank Azaria’s “Brockmire” which airs on IFC. And I’ve got a new album called ‘Vanity’ which is scheduled for an early summer release,” Ambudkar said.

Meanwhile, “Basmati Blues” had been in the making for some time and it was only a matter of time before it hit the big and small screen, he said.

“Anthony Veneziale and I have been working with each other for well over a decade. When he calls, I come. It was a blast to be reunited with old friends and work with new ones,” Ambudkar said.

In the romantic comedy, Larson plays Linda, a scientist who creates genetically modified rice with her father and both are sent off to India to sell the creation to farmers. Linda, falls for Rajit, played by Ambudkar, a college-educated farmer. When



Baltimore actor Utkarsh Ambudkar plays Sanjay Kahn in “Bartlett,” a six-part original and streaming series, currently available on Prime Video, Vimeo on Demand and IndieVue. Ambudkar says Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, the Science Center, and the Aquarium were all staples of his childhood.

Courtesy Photo

Linda discovers that the business deal will destroy the farmer’s life, she and Rajit work frantically to stop it.

“This a magical, improvisational romp that people will love,” said Ambudkar, who also has the new comedy series, “Bartlett.”

The six-part original and streaming series, which debuted January 30, addresses subjects like office politics, gender, race equality and workplace romance, and features Tony Award winner and “Hamilton” star Lin-Manuel Miranda, Don Reed, and others.

“Bartlett” trails advertising agency bad boy Roger Newhouse, who is having a

really rough year. Maggie Knowland, the true brains behind the business success of the newly, formed agency, has left him, and their agency, for Sanjay Kahn (played by Ambudkar), one of Roger’s bitter rivals.

The six episodes take place over a single fateful day, as Roger must outwit his neurotic boss Bob Freeman, and keep everything together. Roger has just eight hours to accomplish this.

Ambudkar, who earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University says, he has been enjoying a busy and successful career.

Ambudkar’s parents immigrated to Baltimore in 1980 and lived by a gas station across the street where Camden Yards is now located. Ambudkar was born three years later and says Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, the Science Center, and the Aquarium were all staples of his childhood.

He shot his first movie, “Rocket Science,” in Baltimore in 2007 and called that a “special experience.”

“People sleep on how good the food is in Baltimore and the local music. They need to know,” he said.

When asked what has been the biggest motivator for his career, Ambudkar deadpanned: “At first, it was my stomach.”

“Now, with a little bit more success, my biggest motivator is presenting South-Asian roles to the public that haven’t been seen or are still seen as pushing the envelope, like the bedroom scene in ‘Bartlett,’” he said.

Ambudkar says he would love to one-day work with Jean Claude Van Damme— “Hands down. No one else comes close.” He would also love to play James Bond – “or some kind of spy cool guy.”

“I think I have the bone structure for such an endeavor. My favorite role to date has probably been Rin in the new movie ‘Blindspotting,’ which premiered this year at Sundance and was purchased by LionsGate,” Ambudkar said. “It’s pretty small but the filmmakers turned the cameras on and let me improvise the entire scene. That kind of freedom is rare and feels really good.”

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National Children's Dental Health Month: Importance of Oral Health

Brushing with fluoride toothpaste remains foremost in keeping children's teeth healthy.

Baltimore— February is National Children's Dental Health Month and every February, thousands of dental organizations and providers throughout the nation take time to inform and educate the public about the importance of children's oral health. This February, the Maryland Department of Health's Office of Oral Health will join with the American Dental Association to promote the 2018 National Children's Dental Health Month theme, Brush Your Teeth with Fluoride Toothpaste and Clean between Your Teeth for a Healthy Smile.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tooth decay is the single most common chronic disease among U.S. children. Left untreated, tooth decay can cause pain and infections as well as problems eating, speaking, and learning. Tooth decay is responsible for more than 51 million lost school hours each year. In the United States, more than 16 million children go each year without seeing a dentist.

In the mid-20th century the public was introduced to the idea of brushing teeth with fluoride toothpaste. This idea remains important today for good reason—fluoride prevents cavities. The evidence is overwhelming. Getting fluoride onto the teeth by brushing twice a day with toothpaste that contains fluoride or by drinking fluoridated water are highly effective ways to prevent cavities.

The Department joins the American Dental Association to communicate the importance of brushing twice a day with



Start good oral health habits in children at an early age and make sure that kids brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. This and scheduling their first dental visit by age one will get children off to a healthy start and begin a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums, according to Department Public Health deputy secretary, Dr. Howard Haft. Photo Credit: ClipArt.com

fluoride toothpaste and cleaning in between the teeth for a healthy smile. The Department offers many educational resources online including brochures and posters that educate parents and their children about the importance of brushing with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, eliminating sugary foods and drinks from the diet, and regular dental visits that help parents keep their child's

mouth healthy.

"National Children's Dental Health Month is a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of increased public awareness about the importance of children's oral health" said Department Public Health deputy secretary, Dr. Howard Haft. "Many people don't realize that tooth decay, though very common in children, is almost 100 percent preventa-

ble. Start good oral health habits in children at an early age and make sure that kids brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. This and scheduling their first dental visit by age one will get children off to a healthy start and begin a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums."

For additional tips and resources visit www.OralHealth4BetterHealth.org.

Reginald Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture Needs Volunteers

The Reginald Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture is dedicated to serving the community by providing multifaceted support through meaningful interactions with history and material culture of Maryland African Americans. Volunteers are needed to assist at the Information Desk, as Docents, for Special Events, and more. There are ongoing opportunities on Saturdays and Sundays for assistance with greeting guests and patrons at the main entrance and to work with kid's activities during public hours. The minimum age for volunteers is 14. Volunteering is open to adults, seniors, college, and high school students. Service learning credit hours can be earned by high school students. We are accepting applications for the following volunteer positions: Special Event Volunteer, Administrative Assistant, Curatorial Assistant, and Visitor Services. Contact Joy Hall at 443-263-1800 or hall@lewismuseum.org or visit the website: www.lewismuseum.org.

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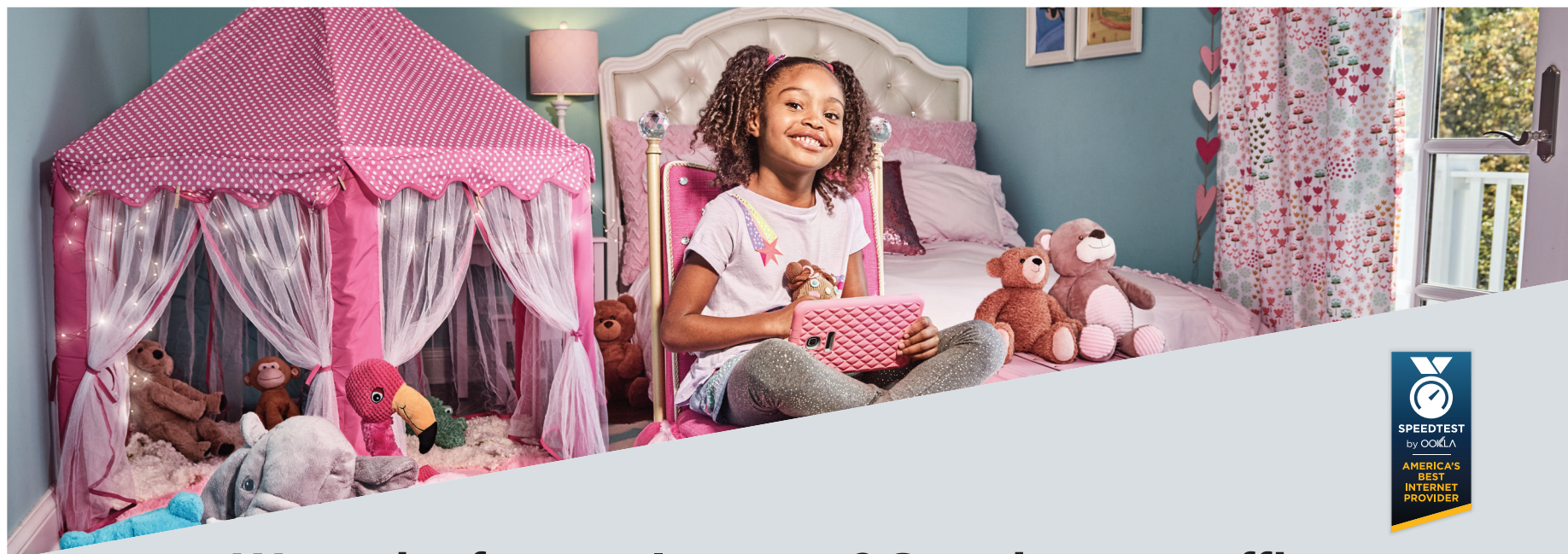
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