

# BLAC

**INSIDE: BLAC's annual calendar pullout**  
Can you spot your city's Hidden Gems?

**WHAT'S THE  
PUFFING PROBLEM?**

A look at the vaping trend

**HERMIT HANDBOOK**

Keep busy at home while  
you wait out the cold

## ♦ MIND ♦ CONTROL

Using mindfulness meditation for a steady start to the new year





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But don't take our word for it — come see it for yourself. There's no better way to discover all Wayne State has to offer than by setting foot on campus and taking in the sights and sounds of Midtown. We can't wait to meet you.

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— INSIDE —  
**HIDDEN GEMS:**

BLAC's annual  
calendar pullout!

JANUARY 2020

# INSIDE

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Photo taken by Lauren Jeziorski





# Online in January

Visit [BLACdetroit.com](http://BLACdetroit.com) for web exclusives and to stay up on what's happening in black Detroit



## January Happenings

Browse the expanded version of our Access Detroit calendar.



## Level Up

Career guru Linda Taliaferro tells us how to get ahead at work in 2020.



## Plug Your Event

Visit [BLACdetroit.com/Calendar](http://BLACdetroit.com/Calendar) to upload an event.



## Seen Galleries

See the 'who's who' attending top events around you. Did we spot you?



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Black Life, Arts & Culture

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Lower School: March 3, 9am  
Middle and Upper School: March 25, 9am

February 13, 2020

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# Driving Community

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## Demeeke Williams, Founder and Chief Director, Hydrate Detroit

**With a belief that safe and affordable water is a basic human right, this activist works to prevent water shutoffs and change policy in Detroit.**

**(R)**egardless of race, status or any other markers, certain rights are inherent to all human beings. We call these human rights – and chief among them is access to clean, safe and affordable water. Hydrate Detroit is a local nonprofit providing emergency water deliveries and water restoration services to Detroit families, and working to enact policy and legislation that supports water rights.

Spurred on by the 2014 reports

of mass shutoffs across Detroit, Demeeke Williams founded Hydrate Detroit, then called Detroit Water Brigade. In an effort to help alleviate the city's debt by cracking down on past due bills, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department plugged the taps at tens of thousands of Detroit homes, affecting upwards of 100,000 residents. The name change to Hydrate Detroit happened in 2016, Williams says, to better represent an overarching

mission of education, organization and legislation. "More than just delivering water," he says, "we wanted to be advocates of water."

Residents facing water shutoffs are encouraged to contact Hydrate Detroit by phone, email or by heading to their website to complete the Water Intake form. Williams says, "We will give them a call back, we'll go over their information, try to figure out what's been happening and we will do what we can."

This may include calling the water department's collection unit on behalf of the client and advocating for a reduction or requesting that the household be entered into the department's 10/30/50 Plan, which allows customers to pay either 10%, 30% or 50% of their past due amounts and have the balance divided over six to 24 months.

But, according to the department's website, payments must be made in full and on time to stay on



the plan. So if times are tough, some families still live in fear that one late payment could get them bumped from the plan and their service interrupted.

“We want water shutoffs to be abolished. No one should ever have their water shut off. Period,” Williams says. He says they’ve had a hard time getting Mayor Duggan and other city officials to come to the table, but they’re still hard at work. Hydrate Detroit also wants to see rates capped at an affordable price so that bills never become unpayable for the average Detroiters. He says, “Your bill should never go up over \$100

per month.”

Williams and Hydrate Detroit are passionate about dispelling the myths around people facing shutoffs – namely that they’re blatantly and deliberately not paying their bills because they’d rather spend the money elsewhere or because they don’t think they should have to pay. “We have documented evidence of over 500 clients that have been trying and been paying over and over and over again to where they have no recourse,” Williams says. Maybe they’re not paying adequately or quickly enough for the department’s liking, but he says his clients are doing what

they can. He says his team has also come across countless billing errors and miscalculations.

This spring, Hydrate Detroit will start to reinvigorate its #ShareWater campaign, an encouragement to “be neighborly” and share water with those who may be without. If you’ve ever had the misfortune of having your water shut off, recall that experience and, if you can help your neighbor avoid going through that, or at least make it a little easier, Williams urges you to lend a hand – or a case of water.

He says he understands that the process can make people feel overwhelmed, scared and frustrated, but he says, “We want to make sure that Hydrate Detroit is a safe place. We will work with them. Nobody is turned away, and we will get the results.” The effort is only made possible by donations, the dedication of volunteers and community solidarity.

“Water is an essential human right, and everyone should have access to clean, affordable water,” Williams says. “We want to make sure communities understand that you will have to fight environmental racism – it’s a thing.”



## WATER RIGHTS

For more information about Hydrate Detroit, to donate or to find out how you can get involved, visit [hydratedetroit.org](http://hydratedetroit.org).

**“It takes a village to raise a child – but just one person to change a community.”**

*Ford Motor Company salutes Demeeko Williams and Hydrate Detroit for the innovative program they have developed to provide essential services to the residents of Detroit. Providing access to basic needs such as food, water and housing is core to Ford Fund’s community development strategy. Organizations that help to remove these barriers to access are empowering people and communities take the next step toward economic stability, success and a higher quality of life.*

*Ford Fund’s programs in this area include our Client Choice Food Hub at our Ford Resource and Engagement Center in Detroit as well as our support of Cass Community Services’ Tiny Homes project. At the Food Hub, and in partnership with Gleaners Community Food Bank, Ford has helped individuals and families gain access to millions of pounds of food.*

*By coming together to help ensure that everyone in our region has access to critical resources we can build a stronger city, a stronger region and a better world.*

– Pamela Alexander,  
director of community  
development for Ford  
Motor Company





When it's dark before dinnertime and the air outside is plain disrespectful, snuggling up at home feels like the move. After the holiday hustle and bustle, you and your wallet may just need to decompress. We see you; this is a safe space. So, whether you're looking to curl up with a good book, Netflix and chill, kick off a game night or try a new recipe, we've got your hermit handbook.

Inspired by true events, executive producer Jordan Peele presents this nail-biter starring Al Pacino. The series follows a diverse squad of Nazi hunters in 1977 New York City who discover that hundreds of escaped Nazis are living in America. The vigilantes set off on a bloody crusade of justice and revenge. In the process, they discover a far-reaching conspiracy and must stop a new evil plan. They hadn't released an official launch date as of our print date, but keep a look out for it early in the year.

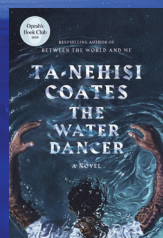




## WHAT TO READ

### Jay-Z: *Made in America* by Michael Eric Dyson

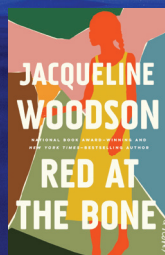
Award-winning author and academic Michael Eric Dyson unpacks the biggest themes of Jay-Z's career, including hustling, and recognizes the way that the artist and mogul has always weaved politics into his music, making important statements about race, criminal justice, black wealth and social injustice.



### The Water Dancer by Ta-Nehisi Coates

The Atlantic national correspondent and New York Times bestseller Ta-Nehisi Coates presents his debut novel. When his mother is sold away, young Hiram Walker loses his memory of

her, but he's gifted with a mysterious power. Years later, when Hiram almost drowns in a river, that same power saves his life. This brush with death births an urgency in Hiram and a daring scheme: to escape the only home he's ever known.



### Red at the Bone by Jacqueline Woodson

National Book Award-winning author Jacqueline Woodson is back with this novel about an unexpected teenage pregnancy that pulls together two families from different social classes and

exposes the private hopes, disappointments and longings that can bind or divide us. Moving forward and backward in time, Woodson uncovers the role that history and community has played in the experiences, decisions and relationships of these families, and in the life of the new child.

## WHAT TO COOK



### Sausage and Vegetable Stew

Is anything better on a bitter winter night than a stew of meat, potatoes and veggies? This recipe delivers kielbasa, root vegetables and tons of flavor. Top it off with a dollop of sour cream and a deliciously crusty bread and slurp away. Feed four in about 45 minutes.



### Baked Creamy Garlic Rigatoni

This creamy, meatless pasta combines all the winter comfort food essentials: pasta, beans, Italian cheeses and fragrant herbs. Feed your family of four in just 40 minutes.



### Creamy Hot Cocoa

Just add cocoa powder, sugar, salt, milk, vanilla extract, half-and-half and water for a warm cup of classic. In less than 10 minutes, you've got four mugs of good old-fashioned chocolate goodness.

## WHAT TO PLAY

### Escape Room The Game

During two 60-minute mysteries – Prison Island and Asylum – plus an introductory mystery, you'll work with a teammate to solve puzzles and discover hidden clues in this race against the clock. Works with the free Escape Room The Game app for Android or iOS.

### New Phone, Who Dis?

From the creators of What Do You Meme, this adult – and we do mean *adult* – game allows you and your friends and fam to compete to create the funniest or most outrageous text thread. An "inbox" card is drawn and takes the stage, then each competitor plays a different reply against that card to try and come up with the best combo.

### Blank Slate

To play this clever family-friendly game, write a word that could complete the phrase on the cue card. Try to think outside the box, because you get the most points for matching just one other player, but not too far left, because match no one and you get nothing.

All available on Amazon.



Head to [BLACdetroit.com/IndoorDossier](http://BLACdetroit.com/IndoorDossier) for the full recipes.



taxdriveusa.com



Photo by Bre'Ann White. From left: Samuel Little, Jerry Hardy, Ryan Tucker

## A RUN FOR YOUR MONEY

If you're using the every-six-months method for paying taxes, Jerry Hardy has some advice: Stop immediately.

"When I worked at the post office, the guys would recommend we pay taxes only half the year and it was better to wait for the rest. That ended with me being behind with the IRS. I want to change the culture of guessing," he says.

Hardy founded and owns Tax Drive USA, the first black-owned mobile tax business servicing metro Detroit. He runs it with his close friends Samuel Little and Ryan Tucker. Tax Drive USA is 100% paperless, 100% black-owned and 100% mobile.

Preparers drive to the client, saving everyone time and money. Hardy says, "40% of our clients don't have a vehicle; 15% are disabled or in a position where they really can't go anywhere for themselves. Distance isn't a problem – we see clients as far as Ypsilanti and Pontiac. We dress up when we drive out and treat everyone with respect, regardless of where they live."

Hardy says Tax Drive USA also aims to be transparent. "We as black people have a lot of distrust when it comes to money and finance," Hardy says, exacerbated by a lack of knowledge. "We provide another option to taking the bus in the cold just to get ripped off."

– A.S.



madisonmilesandfriends.com

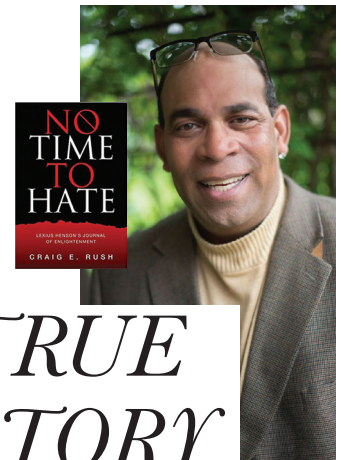
## COLORING BOOKS

So that young girls of color can see characters who look like them, native Detroiter Daralynn Walker authored *Madison Miles & Friends*, a children's chapter book series that promotes representation and addresses self-identity, character and confidence. The series highlights a diverse group of black girls who express themselves through the things they love to do while traversing their worlds as brown-skinned girls.

*Madison Miles and the Big, Big Move* follows 12-year-old Madison's struggle to adjust and deal with bullies after a big move from Georgia to Michigan. *Olivia Jackson and the Great Cupcake Caper* follows Olivia as she tries to juggle her studies, friendships and her first big cupcake order. "When I looked at the numbers of books that are created per year that reflect kids of color, it is less than 20%," says Walker, mom of three.

Walker also wants to push literacy. "I decided to set it at a third-grade reading level since that is a major transition. The great thing about the book is that it is a chapter book, (but) it will still have illustrations and sight words," Walker says. Each book is 100 pages and 10 chapters of colorful illustrations for that leap from character to chapter books. Two more books are scheduled for release in spring.

– C.L.



## TRUE STORY

Author Craig E. Rush says there's one good thing Donald Trump has done for America, although he won't call him "President." He says, "He's split America right down the middle in some ways and shown us where we stand with big portions of the country, and in a lot of ways that's a good thing. That's the first step to knowing what we have to do."

Rush is a Detroit transplant from Cleveland. He's had "a very interesting life" that includes an education at The Ohio State University and careers in aviation and entertainment. He says he was inspired to write his new book, *No Time to Hate: Lexius Henson's Journal of Enlightenment*, out of curiosity about his own lineage and his irritation at the watered-down black history that the school system feeds us.

"My mother didn't know her heritage, and it left her with a hole in her soul. Our history is so distorted and slavery focused, and it's done for a reason – so we stay discouraged. We have so much history that has nothing to do with slavery," Rush says.

Using newspaper archives and the expensive magic of Ancestry.com, Rush pieced together the remarkable story of his great-great-grandfather. Lexius Henson Sr. was one of the most successful restaurateurs during the Civil War. He served high-class meals on fine china and monogrammed napkins for generals and famous figures.

"It was enlightening to learn that I was descended from a black man that did all those things in the South, at that time," Rush says. "I titled my book *No Time to Hate*, because black people have never had time. We were too busy struggling to succeed. Now we really don't have the time to let hate blind us."

– A.S.

**No Time to Hate** is available at all online booksellers and from [craigrush.us](http://craigrush.us).



onefragranceco.com



# FLUID FRAGRANCES

One Fragrance Co. was designed with the idea that a scent should be about the individual – not the gender. Jamie Wadsworth created a gender-neutral fragrance line to reframe the way we see self-expression and representation.

"One (Fragrance) represents the individual. There is only one you, there's (only) ever going to be one you. That is your individuality," explains Wadsworth.

One Fragrance launched in fall 2018 with a line of vegan, cruelty-, phthalate- and paraben-free products. Wadsworth's first scent, Enigma, made use of citrus – something both men and women can easily wear. "'Enigma' meant different," she says, "and I wanted to represent duality." After success with her first fragrance, she celebrated the

brand's one-year anniversary with the new Heaven on Earth collection.

"Heaven on Earth is really just about feeling some type of peace while you're here, and (about) what motivates you and feeling like your best self on earth." The new collection introduces four new scents: Gilded, Armor, Sundaze and The Garden, all with a variety of masculine, feminine, fun and flirty notes.

She also added a skin care line which includes hand-poured soap, a Slick Stick lotion bar and a shimmering body oil. Expect a lot more from the One Fragrance Co. in the new year, like pop-ups and more body care products. Wadsworth says, "Another thing I'm working on is having parties where people can make their own scent."

– C.L.



Of Teeq Tequila's three products, co-owner Nayana Ferguson says it's hard to pick a favorite. "It's like picking a favorite kid! I'd say that the Coconut Lime is my favorite, just because there's nothing like it on the market. It's the smoothest, and you can sip it alone," Ferguson says.

Tequila fans agree. Since Teeq's launch two years ago, the brand has expanded to more than 300 retailers and won the Metro Times Readers' Choice award for best Michigan tequila in 2019.

Ferguson, a Cass Tech alumna and Detroit native, became one of the few black women leaders in the spirits industry when she left a 15-year career as a financial analyst.

After a lifetime full of personal struggle, including two cancer diagnoses, she says that she and her husband came up with the idea of owning a tequila company on a whim. "We were having what we like to call 'couch talk' and it grew from there," she says. They make Teeq Tequila for people like themselves – grown folk who want a cleaner, classier drink.

Real tequila distilled in the Mexican state of Jalisco is made from the agave plant. Done right, it's naturally gluten-free and low in carbs, sugars and calories. "Everybody has a crazy spring break story about puking on the beach," Ferguson says. "That's a stereotype (that) Teeq wants to reimagine. As a pancreatic cancer survivor, I can't have all the sugar and artificial syrups. So I keep them out of my product."

In addition to Coconut Lime Blanco, enjoy Reposado and Blanco. Bottles with her signature hummingbird logo might be on shelves in California and Florida in upcoming months.

"We chose the hummingbird because it's Latin imagery that hasn't been used by a lot of brands," she says. "In mythology, the hummingbird flew over you and took your wishes into the universe to make them real." **B**

– A.S.

teeqspirits.com





## Broken to Beautiful Music

From overcoming domestic violence to being presented the Spirit of Detroit Award, westside native Lay'na Michelle is more than a singer – she's a survivor. Through the years, Michelle has transformed trauma into tracks and tracks into inspiration for those existing in the same spaces she once lived.

The self-described "R&B Empress" has come a long way from writing songs about saving bunnies at the age of 3 – as her mother tells it – to producing songs like "Battle Scars," which imbue a sense of fearlessness and vigor in those wrestling with leaving abusive partnerships.

Michelle says her personal story – along with a joint of the cannabis strain Blue Dream, which she smokes to treat her PTSD – aided in formulating the lyrics behind one of the most popular songs from her album *Blue Dream Ave*. She says, "I was young when I was affected by domestic violence. I thought I was in love until he slammed my head into the wall. It woke me up, but at the same time, I was still in love. The only thing that got me out of that was (that) he moved away. I got into another relationship, and he talked to me like I was the scum of the earth. What got me out of that relationship is that he cheated. It's like I had to sit back and say, 'What are you doing wrong?'"

This all leads to her meeting the love of her life, her music investor and longtime manager Russell Jarrett. Jarrett is the one who encouraged Michelle to pursue a music career full-time after he heard her singing in the shower. From that day on, Michelle says he has been one of her biggest supporters, and she attributes much of her current success to their partnership.

Not only did the "I Want 2 Know" singer win the Spirit of Detroit Award last year, but she also was nominated for an Indie Music Award for Female Artist of the Year. And she's nominated for thicknation.org's BBW Female Artist of the Year.

In addition, Michelle performed for the Detroit Pistons twice in two months, making her the first independent African American artist to perform original music for the Pistons fans



*"I was young when I was affected by domestic violence. I thought I was in love until he slammed my head into the wall. It woke me up, but at the same time, I was still in love."*

at Little Caesars Arena. This fun fact garnered her a temporary exhibit at the Wright, which displayed the outfit she wore, a photo and a little about Michelle and her career.

"I always told my family that I was going to be in the Charles H. Wright Museum," Michelle says. "I didn't know if it was going to be from inventing something. I didn't know if it was going to be from a famous quote. I just never knew what it was going to be for, and then this happened over 10 years later. It's like, oh my goodness, I spoke it and it happened. There is power in the tongue."

Michelle says *Blue Dream Ave* exudes life, inspiration, happiness and triumph. She explains how songs such as "Battle Scars" extend power to the weak-hearted, and songs like "I Want 2 Know" and "Growing Pains" delve into the expectations in relationships and the gray areas in between. "You're going to go through emotions,

but in the end, you're going to be happy you listened to it, because you're going to be happy about every song I put on the album," she says.

The singer is currently working on a mixtape but took a brief hiatus when she started to have seizures from what doctors say is "unresolved sexual assault trauma." Despite this setback, she sets her sights on The Empress Mall, her "sip 'n' shop" event scheduled for April 25 at the VFW Hall in Southfield.

"I want to let people know you can do anything as long as you put your mind to it," Michelle says. "Through everything that I've been through, I am strong enough to get through anything that life tries to throw at me, and that feels really, really good." **B**

[laynamichelle.com](http://laynamichelle.com)



# WHERE WILL YOUR CHILD THRIVE THIS SUMMER?



METRO PARENT



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## Sunday, February 23

Noon – 3 p.m. • Bloomfield Hills High School

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# *As We Enter a New (Election) Year, the Future of Our Nation Could Rest on Black Shoulders*

BY DESIREE COOPER



Many Detroiters spent New Year's Eve in church at watch night services, which have become a staple in the black community. Instead of going to clubs or house parties, the faithful gather in a sanctuary to reenact that New Year's Eve in 1862 when enslaved Africans huddled together to wait for President Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.

Well, that's what we believe we're doing when we celebrate watch night, but this version of events isn't entirely true. First, watch night is not the invention of the black Christian community. Moravian churches near what is now the Czech Republic held New Year's Eve watch nights in the 1700s to reflect on the past year and voice hopes for the year to come. And John Wesley, founder of the Methodist faith, is said to have held watch night vigils during each full moon.

When it comes to the antebellum watch night on freedom eve, scholars agree it was unlikely that slaves gathered on plantations on Dec. 31, 1862 to await news that Lincoln had signed the proclamation at midnight. Can you imagine masters allowing enslaved blacks to gather and pray for their freedom in the middle of the Civil War? Not hardly. Their freedom celebrations would have to wait until the traitorous South was defeated in 1865.

Watch nights did happen on freedom eve, but they were largely held above the Mason-

Dixon Line, as Northern blacks gathered in anticipation that their shackled kin would be freed by Lincoln. And while that impending freedom may have felt like a holy act of God, it was, in fact, an act of war. The proclamation specifically says that the freeing of slaves in Southern states was "a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion." Realizing that emancipation would wreak

American voting would flip four states – Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin – and give Democrats a 294-244 majority in the Electoral College." In the 2018 midterms, black voters swung elections to Democrats across the country.

But there's a difference between watch night 1862 and watch night 2019. Today, we are on the brink of a civil war ignited by racism,

ing down, standing down, looking down is not an option. We have to go into the new year standing up."

Our polling places have been closed, our people have been erased from voting rolls and the Voting Rights Act has been gutted. Voter suppression is rampant. We've been gerrymandered out of our voices and criminalized out

*"Today, we are on the brink of a civil war ignited by racism, classism and treasonous oligarchs. But this time, we don't have to be the pawns — we can be the power."*

havoc, Lincoln freed the slaves in order to hasten the South's defeat.

Here we are in 2020, once again pawns in the war against traitorous forces. Russians have paid off the Republican leadership, installed a puppet president and taken control of a social media propaganda machine. They have targeted our young, black people – being "woke" means refusing to vote. It has been a quiet, insidious attack that threatens the nation that we built with black blood and treasure.

Just like 150 years ago, blacks again hold the balance of power in our democracy. According to the Center for American Progress, "A return to 2012 levels of African

classism and treasonous oligarchs. But this time, we don't have to be the pawns – we can be the power. We don't have to spend the night before an election on our knees, hoping that a white benefactor hears our prayers. We can organize, demand, protest, register and vote.

"Long before any Russian hack, the American electoral system was compromised by hate and fear," said the Rev. William J. Barber at his 2017 watch night service at his Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Washington, D.C. "They wouldn't be working so hard to get us to bow if they weren't afraid of the power we have when we stand. We may be headed into some fiery times, but bowing down, fall-

of our liberty. But, as blacks in America, we've been in this place before. In fact, America has never been willing to share democratic ideals with its darker brother. But that doesn't mean this democracy is not ours. We have to remember that our ancestors' blood has soaked this soil and our hands have built this nation.

As African Americans, we are on the cusp of a new freedom eve. We can watch it roll in on our knees, or we can be vigilant every day of 2020, turning watch night into action, prayers into power, hopes into change. **B**

DESIREE COOPER IS THE  
AUTHOR OF *KNOW THE MOTHER*.



# How do social determinants impact health?



Peter Dews, M.D., M.S.

For over 20 years, Peter Dews, M.D., M.S., an internal medicine physician with Ascension Medical Group, has seen the impact that social determinants – like where a person lives, nutrition, isolation and access to transportation – have on health.

“Over the course of my career, I’ve worked in homeless and rural health care, and have worked extensively with vulnerable populations – urban and rural poor, or isolated seniors – and I don’t think anyone would disagree that social determinants are a substantial influencer of health outcomes,” Dr. Dews says. According to the Commonwealth Fund, about a third of the deaths in the U.S. can be accounted for by social factors.

“While perhaps a bit of an oversimplification, on some level this could be thought of as an extension of the nature versus nurture conversation,” Dr. Dews says. “In order for anyone to have the best chance

to reach or maintain their full potential, they should exist in the best environment possible.”

Although the picture is improving, and not purely a Detroit phenomenon, recent estimates suggest that 20-25% of Detroit neighborhoods still qualify as “food deserts,” usually devoid of fresh vegetables and fed by cellophane wrapped choices from convenience stores, gas stations and liquor stores. There is strong evidence that ensuring people have access to healthy food can significantly lower health care utilization and costs.

Housing plays a large role in health, too. “Those living in poor conditions or facing housing insecurity, relocating from one temporary environment to another, are usually under chronic psychological stress,” Dr. Dews says, “and people who are subjected to these types of living conditions can develop or delay treatment of chronic medical conditions. Treating chronic conditions at a later

stage can result in more complicated care and higher costs.” There is strong evidence that providing people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, with supportive housing can significantly lower expensive forms of health care, thereby reducing costs.

“There has always been a clear ethical and moral case for addressing social determinants, however highlighting the business case is important in order to get broader buy in and more permanent funding,” Dr. Dews notes. In fact, there’s a growing body of evidence that demonstrates the positive impact of addressing social determinants on health outcomes and use of resources.

“There’s been studies that look at the impact of providing housing to the elderly,” he says. “It was demonstrated that in addition to reductions in hospitalization and emergency room visits, there were also decreases in nursing home and

long-term care facility admissions.” This creates savings for Medicare and Medicaid, he adds. Home-delivered, medically-tailored meals have been found to lower inpatient hospital admissions, as well as 30-day readmissions. In addition, providing transportation to non-emergent doctor’s visits has been shown to reduce the cost of care, particularly for the older community.

In order to improve personal health outcomes related to social determinants, Dr. Dews says individual decisions matter, such as quitting smoking, limiting alcohol consumption and even who you hang out with. It is also very important for people to establish a “therapeutic relationship” with a physician.

Although it may seem difficult, get involved in society. “You have to participate in society to affect social determinants of health.” Educate yourself and become locally politically active so you can affect the policies that impact your environment, he adds.

Get more health information and find a doctor near you by visiting  
[ascension.org/michigan](http://ascension.org/michigan) or calling 866-501-DOCS (3627)





# WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

*The last decade saw a brand-new term added to the vernacular: vaping. Ostensibly safer than smoking tobacco, e-cigarettes have been touted as a familiar way to deliver the nicotine that smokers crave and help them shake their addiction to traditional cigarettes – but how safe are they, really?*

*Not-yet-understood vape-related illnesses and deaths, and the rise of nicotine addiction among teenagers have triggered the smoke alarm.*

*BY ARIANNA SMITH*





# WALK DOWN WOODWARD

and you'll see lines of tourists, college students and residents puffing on electronic cigarettes and vaporizers, one after the other – "like people trains," as my nephew described. The blanket declaration that "vaping is better than smoking" led to an e-cigarette boom that's sweeping the nation at a rate that's alarming some, despite the fact that electronic cigarettes began as a method to wean smokers off the cancer sticks.

They might be effective – some evidence shows short-term success when used in smoking cessation programs – but experts have not had time to thoroughly examine this new, rapidly accelerating trend. Reports of injuries related to vaping and vaping paraphernalia are on the rise, alongside troubling information about a nicotine addiction crisis that sweeping the teenaged population – low-income teenagers notwithstanding.

## *TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK?*

You may ask, "Isn't this a white people issue?" or, "Why should I care?" Problems related to cigarette use affect nearly all people – black and white, young and old. For now, we'll focus on that favorite auntie who tries to quit Marlboros every year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 14% of adults in the United States are smokers. That's down significantly from previous numbers, but it still means that 34.3 million people smoke cigarettes, a habit that kills one out of every two long-term users. And 16% of smokers are black and more likely to die of a smoking-related disease than their white counterparts. Smoking can even fast-track conditions like diabetes.

E-cigarettes have been touted as a safer alternative to smoking. They deliver the nicotine that smokers are addicted to without the deadly stuff like carbon monoxide and tar. The way it works is a rechargeable battery heats up

a metal coil which vaporizes a nicotine liquid – available in replaceable cartridges – turning it into a mist, which users then inhale. The first prototype was made by Hon Lik, a Chinese pharmacist spurred by his own smoking addiction and his father's lung cancer diagnosis.

So, how beneficial are e-cigarettes in helping to curb our addiction to the real thing? According to a report published by the U.S. National Library of Medicine, black smokers were more likely to report plans to continue using e-cigs compared to whites and Hispanics. The same report said that black participants were more likely to use e-cigarettes as a cessation aid and "may be particularly vulnerable to maintaining their use."

Lynn Sutfin, spokesperson for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, says, "We've seen 59 cases of injuries and illnesses relating to vaping in the state of Michigan, and two deaths so far."

The MDHHS released a public health advisory in response to severe lung injuries relating to vaping. At the time of advisory, there had been 2,290 cases identified in 49 states overall. Patients who have used vaporizers or electronic cigarette devices have suffered pneumonia, ruptured alveoli – the air sacs in the lungs – and other potentially fatal pulmonary problems.

"I don't think we'd say vaping is safer than smoking," Sutfin says. "The causes of a lot of these issues are hard to determine because the problem is so new. It could be additives in the liquid, certainly, but it could also be the hardware or just the practice itself."

Dr. Geneva Tatum, pulmonary critical care medicine specialist at Henry Ford Hospital, says the best way to stop smoking would be to use conventional methods until more data is gathered.

"We know that vaping does produce low levels of harmful chemicals. I'd recommend using lozenges, patches or gum, because we just don't know," Tatum says. "We do know of one chemical that's been linked to vapable marijuana cartridges, vitamin E acetate, but that's almost an entirely different issue. ▶



# WHERE THERE'S S M O K E

## A WHOLE NEW MARKET

In 2020, e-cigs and vaporizers are a long way from the prototype Lik built back in 2003. Vaping has its own culture and an industry that includes devices with more customization than a new iPhone and expos where vape aficionados perform smoke tricks.

All that nearly stopped when, last October, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer attempted to enact a vape ban in the state of Michigan. Judge Cynthia Stephens blocked it to prevent vape businesses from having to suddenly close, leaving those who shop there in a collective shrugged shoulder.

Nathan Esquivel, owner of Corktown Smoke Shop in Detroit, says that he's mostly concerned about providing for his customers who want to quit cigarettes.

"A lot of my customers just want an alternative to smoking tobacco. We can't prove that it's safer, but they feel that it is and they're happy they made the switch. We're happy we can provide for them," Esquivel says.

Responsible adults choosing to consume nicotine is fine. But I'm not sure whether the cloud coming from the group of teenagers next to me at the bus stop is coming from their breath meeting the winter air or the vapes hidden up their sleeves. Parents, teachers and concerned experts have noticed that nicotine addiction is spreading like wildfire among teenagers who've never smoked a traditional cigarette.

E-cigarette use among teens has been called an epidemic. Though big vape brands like Juul and Blu have said that their products are only meant for adults, their marketing campaigns saturated social media in an explosion of bright colors, exciting venues and smiling, attractive, teenaged-looking smokers. To its credit, following criticism, Juul did voluntarily decide to halt social media marketing and eliminate its fruity-flavored cartridges.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says that nicotine can have "long-lasting effects on teen brain development, making it harder to concentrate, learn and control impulses." Teenagers addicted to nicotine also have a higher chance of addiction to harder drugs.

“

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"I would definitely say it's a public health crisis for youth. Kids are going to try things and take risks, so it isn't surprising. I think the speed at which this happened is the most surprising thing," says Jeff Griffith, director of communications for The Youth Connection in Detroit. "Part of it definitely is the marketing. It's designed for young people. When you have flavors like chocolate milk and strawberry bubblegum, it's inevitable."

If you've never seen a Juul, it looks almost exactly like a USB stick – it even plugs into the computer to charge. Chrystal Wilson, assistant superintendent of communications and marketing for Detroit Public Schools Community District, says that parents shouldn't be vilified too harshly if their kids are caught with a vape device.

"These things are discreet. They can fit in the palm of your hand! So many parents just aren't aware that their kids are stopping at the gas station on the way home and buying them," Wilson says.

Pair delicious flavors and doses of nicotine with sleek, tiny devices that are easily concealed in a hoodie pocket, and it's a recipe for widespread teen addiction. For me, someone with a 16-year-old sister, that's a scary thought – and I'm not alone.

Wilson says that DPSCD is dedicated to getting at the root of the vaping issue when it comes to the city's teens. They've partnered

with TYC on panels and apps to educate students in light of cases like the 16-year-old boy who underwent a double lung transplant at Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital after being admitted for vaping injuries.

"It takes a village. Some of them vape because they're stressed at home or out of peer pressure. Some might just think it's cool or not understand what they're really doing to themselves," Wilson says. Griffith doesn't think that the crisis is targeting young black teens in particular; however, there might be something to be said for low-income areas.

"I don't think it's race-related. But we do work on the east side among some lower-income communities, and advertising for tobacco products like Juul is heavy there," he says.

Regardless of what you think of e-cigarettes and the apparent "crisis," the black community needs to stay vigilant, because big tobacco is certainly paying attention. In December 2018, Altria, the leading U.S. cigarette manufacturer, invested \$12.8 billion into Juul, giving it a 35% stake in the e-cig maker.

And if history is any indication, we can expect them to continue to aggressively market their products to young people and African Americans, especially in urban communities. **B**

ARIANNA SMITH IS BLAC DETROIT'S  
EDITORIAL INTERN.



An illustration of a person in a blue graduation cap and orange dress, carrying a large blue credit card labeled 'DREAM CHASER' with the number '1234 5678 12 3456' and expiration date '01/23'. The person is also carrying a black bomb with a chain attached to their ankle, symbolizing the burden of student loan debt.

# THE PERILS OF STUDENT LOAN DEBT

For many college students, student loan debt is a hard reality that can linger for years. Here's how to plan for, and manage, paying for higher education.

BY JACQUIE GOETZ BLUETHMANN

**I**f all goes as planned, Jenna Frye of Royal Oak will have paid off her undergraduate student loan debt by May 2020 – a full 11 years after graduating from Central Michigan University. When that day comes, she intends to celebrate big.

"I will throw a party, because there was a time I

didn't think I would ever pay off my loans," Frye says.

Before the party begins though, Frye still has to pay off \$11,000 more in student loan debt. As she has for the past few years, she intends to throw the tax return she receives at it while also paying approximately \$1,500 a month toward her balance. ▶



# THE PERILS OF STUDENT LOAN DEBT

## A COMMON SCENARIO

While Frye graduated with \$27,000 in student loan debt, she watched it approach \$36,000 during the years she couldn't afford to pay even the interest on it. "I had so much anxiety," she recalls. "I didn't deal with it for a while. If I knew when I was first applying for financial aid what I know now, I would have borrowed less."

Frye's is far from an uncommon story. According to the Federal Reserve, 44 million Americans collectively carry \$1.5 trillion in student debt. For the class of 2018, the average debt balance was \$29,800, Student Loan Hero reports. In 2017, the reserve adds, 20% of those with education debt were behind on their payments – and those who didn't complete their degree or attended a for-profit institution were more likely to struggle.

Experts fault the dramatic increase in the price of postsecondary education, which has grown at a disproportionate rate to that of American wages. While college is not the path for everyone, the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce anticipates that, by 2020, 65% of all U.S. jobs will require some postsecondary education.

The College Board reports that, in 2018-19, one year of college tuition cost an average of \$36,890 for a private college and \$10,230 for a public one. It's no surprise then that a USA Today poll revealed most parents worry about expenses more than any other aspect of their child going away to college.

## PLANNING AHEAD FOR DEBT

Val Meyers is an associate director in the office of financial aid at Michigan State University. She wishes that she could talk to parents about planning for college when their children were still in kindergarten.

"There are essentially three ways to pay for college: before your kids start through saving or purchasing a 529 plan, while they're in school or after they're out of school," she says. "Usually, when parents are reaching out to me, their child is a year or less out from beginning college. At that point, the conversation is fo-

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cused on paying for college while the student is in school or after he or she is out."

Meyers counsels parents and students to, if possible, pay as much as they can while the student is in school. "I urge parents that if they can even pay a little bit each month, their student will have to borrow that much less," she notes.

It's advice that she extends to the students themselves. "Students can pay for some of their education while they go to school simply by working," she says. "If they're not taking classes in the summer, they can work even more."

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID

An often-overlooked avenue for assistance with college funding? Scholarships. "I advise students to do scholarship searches – and not just once," Meyers says. "Every summer and every break, sit down and complete five to 10 scholarship applications. You have to submit a lot to get anything, but if you're persistent, you can actually help avoid borrowing by applying for and receiving merit scholarships."

Meyers says most schools have information on their website linking to vetted options. She cites FastWeb and the The College Board as two credible resources for beginning the scholarship search.

"There are thousands and thousands of opportunities," she says. "Students create a profile indicating their interests, accomplishments, community service, etc." The online programs then match teens with scholarships they might be eligible for.

Cindy Hermesen, director of financial aid at Oakland University, encourages all students to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA.

"In many cases, students say they're not going to fill out the FAFSA because they think they won't qualify for anything," Hermesen says. "We don't feel that is the case. While a student may not qualify for a Federal Pell Grant, which is for the lowest income brackets, there are still cases where there are other need-based financial aid programs available geared toward middle-income families."

Students should fill out the FAFSA early and accurately, she adds, to understand what they're eligible for. Then, they must discern what they really need.

## SETTING A STUDENT MENTALITY

"We tell students to live like a student now, so they won't have to later," Meyers says. "College is not necessarily the time to buy a new car or join the most expensive gym. Lots of the things you need and want are already on campus."



Hermesen also regularly talks with students about needs versus wants. "I advise them to minimize their discretionary spending. You don't need to go to Starbucks every day."

Meyers puts it this way: "You need to be really thoughtful about what you need. Yes, you need to pay your rent. Yes, you need to eat something. It's the difference between what you need to get by and what enables you to do the things you are here for, which is to learn."

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF LOANS

Typically, Hermesen says, parents or students can set up payment plans to spread out tuition payments during the year rather than taking a loan from the get-go.

When students *do* need to apply for a loan, Hermesen advises them to look at federal loans before private ones. "Federal loans have better terms when it comes to repayment and better interest rates," she says. There may, however, be times when supplementing federal loans with a private loan makes sense.

"Costs for college are going up," Meyers says. "There are limits to what you can borrow from the federal government on both an annual and a lifetime basis. If students get to the point where they have borrowed everything they can from the federal government, what do they fill the gap with?"

One option is a parent PLUS loan – where the parent can borrow on his or her student's behalf from the federal government. Those loans are not capped.

"Families need to consider, though, that aging parents are looking at their own retirement – and taking on a loan for their child's education may not make the most financial sense," she says. "That's when you may want to look into a private student loan and do some market research."

## CONSIDERING THE COSTS AND THE CAREER

Weighing the costs of college versus future career potential is something Meyers encourages all families to do. "I passionately believe in education, but I realize my school is not for everybody," she says. "We do think finances are critical as part of your decision."

For example, she points to MSU's renowned packaging program. "If you're really passionate about packaging, maybe it's worth coming to MSU because we have this great program," she says. "If you want to be a history major though, there may be a number of schools that might suit you."

"We certainly would never want people to make a decision based just on money. We are trying to enable folks to pick the right place for their students, and then hopefully we can help them pay for it."

Hermesen also encourages students to consider future career plans early on. "Any time you change your degree program, you could add another year of school," she says. "And every time you add another year, that's going to be another year of tuition and living expenses during a time period when you could be in your career making money."

## GETTING CONNECTED

Hermesen recommends students reach out to their school's career advising office early in their first year. "Start connecting with career advising staff so you can explore your interests early," she says. "Students need to try and have a plan to graduate in four years. That means attending full time in the fall and the winter and even picking up classes in the summer."

Some students earn early credit taking college level courses in high school. "I've met students who come to us almost as sophomores," says Meyers. "Any time you can cut back on the number of years you need to be in college, you're cutting back on your debt."

Community college and online classes are additional, often more affordable, ways to pursue credits toward a four-year degree. "I encourage students to first sit down with their adviser during their first or second year to make sure any community college classes they're considering will transfer back," Meyers says.

Visit your school's financial aid office early and often for guidance on minimizing student loan debt, too, and to discuss repayment options as you near graduation.

"The worst thing is to ignore your debt and go into default," Meyers says. "That hits everything – your credit history, your ability to buy a car or rent an apartment. You don't want to be in that situation. If you have questions about repayment, come to us. That's what we're here for." **B**

JACQUIE GOETZ BLUETHMANN IS A BLOOMFIELD HILLS-BASED FREELANCE WRITER.





جسد

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Mind





Now that the bottles have been popped and the confetti has settled, it's time to look to the year ahead. More money and less weight are typical New Year resolutions, but how about a stronger, better controlled mind? Proponents of mindfulness meditation claim benefits like reduced stress, self-awareness and even improved physical health. As we shuck 2019 and cozy up to a new year, is it time to revisit an ancient tradition?

BY PARIS GILES

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. This is a beautifully simple prayer. But, cloaked in its conciseness perhaps, is that this level of objective insight requires an incredibly strong mind.

Whether you're of the philosophy that our thoughts become things outside of ourselves – think of a million-dollar check long enough, and it's only a matter of time before it manifests – or if you're a little more down-to-earth, we can agree, our minds are powerful. How we process and react to the thoughts that invade our psyche can affect our mood, our mental and physical health, and our actions – or inaction.

For millennia, meditation has been used as a tool to strengthen the mind and achieve what we like to call today mindfulness. It's a mostly secular practice in present-day Western culture, but mindfulness meditation has roots in ancient Buddhism and Hinduism.

An article titled “Buddha’s Original Teachings on Mindfulness” published in Tricycle: The Buddhist Review – a magazine published by The Tricycle Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to making Buddhist teachings and practices broadly available – reads, “Mindfulness means the ability to keep something in mind. On the Buddhist path, it functions in three ways: remembering to stay alert on what you’re doing in the present moment; remembering to recognize the skillful and unskillful qualities that arise in the mind; and remembering how to effectively abandon the qualities that get in the way of concentration, then developing the skillful ones that promote it.”

### ◆ intro to basics ◆

As a chronic overthinker riddled with anxiety – and occasional depression – I’ve always suspected that a habitual meditative practice could help to aid what ails me. I love that meme that goes something like: “My mind is like an internet browser. There are 19 tabs

open, three of them are glitching and where the fuck is that music coming from?”

I’ve dabbled in guided meditation, using the assistance of the app Headspace, but I abandoned that when the seven-day free trial ended. In preparation for this story, though, I signed up for a half-day silent meditation retreat at Still Point Zen Buddhist Temple in Detroit; along with regular community meditation sessions, they offer the retreat the first Saturday of most months.

True to form, I arrived promptly five minutes late. The teacher ushered me in whispered breath into a large room, Buddha at the helm. My fellow meditators were already in position, sitting cross-legged on large pillows, bean bag cushions under their bums and facing the walls. The instructor led me to one of the few remaining spots, right near him at the head of the class, as karma would have it. He gave a few last-minute instructions as I locked eyes with a cute, dreadlocked girl seated right next to me. I was happy to see another brown face. She and I silently mouthed “hi.” The teacher said to us, “I’d tell you to have fun, but have ►



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whatever you have," and we were off.

I sat up straight, legs crossed, hands resting lightly on my knees and aimed to focus on my breath and nothing else. Well, the thoughts came knocking, but as I'd read to do, I tried my best not to rudely shoo them away or chastise them for having dared to interrupt but to instead acknowledge the intrusion, politely explain that I was currently engaged and send them off.

This worked pretty well, but I found that just as I'd get back to my breathing, another thought would come knocking. Oh well. I'd get back into my groove. A lot of it felt like that 10 minutes between tucking yourself into bed and actually falling asleep. I'd embrace that fuzzy feeling for a while, but then that felt too passive, and also, I was worried I'd actually fall asleep.

The other problem was the burn. I'm a notorious sloucher, so to align my spine, unsupported, for that extended time forced me to engage muscles in my back, shoulders and chest that are used to just phoning it in. Workout or meditation? I couldn't tell. But I tried, as best I could, to ignore the pain, remind myself that it existed apart from the me in my mind and return to my breath. It got easier after a while, and the schedule was mercifully 20 minutes on, 10 minutes off with a walking meditation tossed in the middle.

Afterwards, I cornered the dreadlocked girl, Reatta Jefferson of Detroit, in the temple's kitchen. This was her first retreat as well, though she told me she'd attended a few of the temple's community sessions, and she's been meditating on her own, on and off, for about four years, "since I've been on my spiritual journey."

Jefferson said she was first introduced to Buddhist principles by the lessons her kids' martial arts teachers impart during classes and training. She says, "I just want to give my children solid foundational principles. They go to church with their dad, and I don't go to church. So, they're like, 'OK mom, we know you're about peace and love but ...'" She says she wants to be able to frame her principles in a digestible format and be able to field questions about her personal philosophies and spirituality – and have information to back it up.

Though Still Point Abbott "Anzen" Melanie Davenport reminds that mindfulness meditation is not at odds with the Christian faith. She says, "I think the practice is a great way for black people to practice compassion for themselves, especially when the world is closing

in on us. I've heard meditation and mindfulness practices described as 'listening to God instead of just to talking to Him or Her.'"

Davenport adds, "Your first task, just embarking on a regular meditation practice, is to learn how to exist in the moment and not time travel. Meaning, when you're sitting, you're not thinking about what happened before that moment or what happens after. You learn to exist with things the way they are – in your own head, rather. Mindfulness – as they call it these days – is just an offshoot of learning how to do that. If you can't learn how to quiet or control your own mind, how much effort are you going to extend to controlling anything else outside of you?"

## ◆ health and wellness ◆

Renowned psychologist Dr. Gail Parker says, "A meditative mind is not a quiet mind. It is an observed mind." Parker shuttered her traditional practice about four years ago and is now a certified yoga therapist and yoga therapy educator with the Beaumont School of Yoga Therapy in Royal Oak. Here, she employs yoga and meditation as therapeutic healing modalities for self-care practices and to restore and maintain emotional balance, with a focus on race-based stress and trauma.

"In meditation, as well as in all forms of yoga – particularly in restorative yoga – you use breath as a focal point. We're always breathing no matter where we are, no matter what's going on. And once you learn that your breath is a conduit and a way of supporting health and restoration and growth, and once you learn how to utilize your breath in that way, you can do that anywhere," she says.

"You can decrease anxiety by using certain breathing techniques. You can elevate a mood by using certain breathing techniques and move beyond depressive states, for example. These are not miraculous cures and they're not quick fixes, but over time, as you become more involved and engaged in a meditation practice – particularly like in recovery – it teaches self-regulation. It teaches you how to pause before you act on the impulse to do something that may not be in your best interest."

Before Beaumont, Parker taught meditation training to peer recovery coaches at Detroit Recovery Project, the drug rehabilitation non-





"We live in a culture that is embedded in trauma, unhealed trauma. When you are chronically stressed, that means you're not even aware that you're stressed. You're just – quote – 'managing your stress.'"



profit. "The model was designed to be culturally relevant for the primarily African American population that the organization served."

In 2014, researchers at Johns Hopkins published a study for which they combed through nearly 19,000 meditation program studies, including 47 trials for which self-selection biases were accurately accounted. They concluded that mindfulness meditation programs, in particular, produced small improvements in anxiety, depression and pain, with moderate evidence and small improvements in stress. The evidence gathered was insufficient to indicate a significant improvement in attention, substance use, eating habits, sleep or weight.

It's thought that meditation works by quieting the sympathetic nervous system – the fight or flight system responsible for anxiety, tension, fatigue and depression – while activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which slows heart rate and lowers blood pressure.

The Journal of the American Heart Association published a study in 2009 for which researchers randomly assigned 201 African Americans the task of either transcendental meditation (not the same as mindfulness meditation) or attending educational classes in traditional risk reduction, like dietary changes and exercise.

After nine years, the group that meditated

showed a 47% reduction in heart attacks, strokes and death. The AHA analyzed this and multiple other studies in 2017, and deduced a possible benefit of meditation on cardiovascular health – but said that the quality and quantity of the data was modest and that more research is needed.

### ◆ social studies ◆

Data shmata. Top meditation apps Calm and Headspace enjoyed 8 million and 5 million downloads respectively in 2018 alone, according to Sensor Tower, which analyzes app figures. Like our ancient ancestors, we're still in search of enlightenment and clarity, and these and similar apps are promising to show you the path, if you can afford it. Headspace offers an annual subscription for \$69.99, billed after a 14-day free trial, or you can opt for a month-to-month commitment for \$12.99 per month, billed after a seven-day free trial, which works out to \$155.88 annually.

Most meditation and yoga instructors are white. Parker says her black patients and others she's spoken to in her work believe that the benefits offered by meditation would be

enhanced if the instructors looked like them and shared the culture, but she says yoga and meditation training is very expensive.

"The expense factor in and of itself kind of makes it challenging for members of our community to participate in those particular trainings," she says. "Bringing the conversation about racially and culturally relevant modalities is important. It's time for us to start having the conversation if yoga and meditation are to benefit all of us."

Of African Americans in particular, Parker says, "We live in a culture that is embedded in trauma, unhealed trauma" cause by wars, street violence and centuries of racism, experienced firsthand and indirectly. "When you are chronically stressed, that means you're not even aware that you're stressed. You're just – quote – 'managing your stress.'" Which she says is not the same as actually dealing with it and working to heal it.

Head of wellness brand W.I.F.E. Comma (soon to be W.I.F.E. Your Life), Toni Jones echoes the doctor's sentiments. She says, "The black community, first of all, has to understand how rooted they are with divinity. We have been indoctrinated with so much carnality and ego and trauma that we almost have a cultural identity with struggle. But, before that, our identity was rooted in divinity and royalty, and when we connect to that, we can give ourselves more permission to remember our souls and remember spiritual maintenance."

That one retreat at Still Point, lengthy as it was, didn't transform me in any profound way, but I'm even more intrigued and more apt to give meditation a real try in the new year. If nothing else, it felt strangely productive to sit silently with myself and do nothing, something I hardly ever do. Somehow my barrage of thoughts seemed way less scary in the quiet place; could it be that the noise I use to distract is actually counteractive?

It felt mighty to take some semblance of control over my own thoughts, to wear my angst instead of letting it wear me. As we wrapped the session, the teacher read from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, a text written in 700 A.D. by the Buddhist monk Shantideva. The passage concluded: "... For the sake of all that lives do I conceive the Spirit of Enlightenment, and likewise shall I too follow these practices." **B**

PARIS GILES IS BLAC  
DETROIT'S SENIOR EDITOR.



# access

DETROIT | JANUARY 2020

*Compiled By Arianna Smith*

26 SUNDAY

CHAKA KHAN



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For a complete list of events,  
visit our online calendar.

26 SUNDAY

SNOOP DOGG



### 9 THURSDAY

MOTOWN KARAOKE NIGHT. Pros and novices alike are invited to enjoy and jam out to the melodies of Motown. Free. 6:30-9 p.m. Detroit Historical Museum, 5401 Woodward Ave., Detroit. [detroithistorical.org](http://detroithistorical.org)

### 10 FRIDAY

PLYMOUTH ICE FESTIVAL. Marvel at hand-crafted sculptures of fire and ice, and enjoy festival food like hot chocolate and elephant ears. Free. 5-10 p.m. today, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Jan. 11, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Jan. 12. Downtown Plymouth. [plymouthicefestival.com](http://plymouthicefestival.com)

### 11 SATURDAY

HARRY POTTER. The Detroit Symphony Orchestra presents *The Magical Music of Harry Potter*, delivering the sounds of Hogwarts and the wizarding world's iconic scores. \$28-\$120. 8 p.m. Orchestra Hall, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. [dso.org](http://dso.org)

PAMELA WISE. The Detroit jazz pianist and composer takes the stage with special guests Salim Washington, Marlon Hayden and Louis M. Jones III for the Abstract Music Concert Series. \$25-\$30. 8 p.m. N'Namdi Center for Contemporary Art, 52 E. Forest Ave., Detroit. [nnamdicenter.org](http://nnamdicenter.org)

### 12 SUNDAY

JUNGLE BOOK. The story of Mowgli, an orphaned boy on a journey of self-discovery guided by his animal friends, comes to life in this theatrical production. \$10-\$20. 4 p.m. Music Hall Center, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit. [musichall.org](http://musichall.org)

### 15 WEDNESDAY

BELL BIV DEVOE. The New Edition members take the stage. \$72-\$85. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. [soundboarddetroit.com](http://soundboarddetroit.com)

### 17 FRIDAY

SHEN YUN. Experience the lost culture of ancient China through the art of classical Chinese dance, and see legends come to life with a unique blend of stunning costuming, high-tech backdrops and a live orchestra. \$80-\$160. Times vary today-Jan. 26. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. [shenyunperformingarts.org](http://shenyunperformingarts.org)

FIRE & ICE. Bring the family to the Oakland County Fire & Ice Festival for dog sled rides, a tube sledding hill, ice skating, snow shoeing,

ice carving and more. Free. 5-9 p.m. today, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Jan. 18, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Jan. 19. Downtown Rochester. [downtownrochestertermi.com](http://downtownrochestertermi.com)

To list an event in ACCESS Detroit, send facts and photos two months prior to [calendar@BLACdetroit.com](mailto:calendar@BLACdetroit.com). You also may upload information to BLACdetroit.com/Calendar or mail to Metro Parent Media Group, BLAC Calendar, 22041 Woodward Ave., Ferndale, MI 48220. Submissions may be edited or omitted.

Be sure to call before attending events in case of changes. For an expanded version of the calendar, visit BLAC online at [BLACdetroit.com](http://BLACdetroit.com).



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## 17 FRIDAY

SHEN YUN



## 15 WEDNESDAY

BELL BIV DEVOE



## 23 THURSDAY

MO'NIQUE

## 18 SATURDAY

**DETROIT BOAT SHOW.** Meet over 100 of Michigan's best boat dealers and fishing enthusiasts, plus enjoy new model intros, safety demonstrations, live stingrays and more. Free/ages 12 and under, \$13/ages 13 and over. Times vary today-Jan. 26. [detroitboatshow.net](http://detroitboatshow.net)

**HIP HOP SMACKDOWN.** Lil Kim, Fat Joe, Naughty by Nature, Too Short and Lil Boosie stop in. \$54-\$124. 8 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. [313presents.com](http://313presents.com)

## 19 SUNDAY

**ASHANTI.** The R&B princess stops through. \$41-\$55. 7:30 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity

Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. [soundboarddetroit.com](http://soundboarddetroit.com)

## 20 MONDAY

**MLK ANNUAL BREAKFAST.** Join this annual celebration of the life and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. \$15-\$35. 8-10 a.m. Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. [thewright.org](http://thewright.org)

## 21 TUESDAY

**AMERICA'S GOT TALENT.** The popular talent competition show visits town to hold auditions to find the nation's next great act. Preregistration required. Fees may apply. 8 a.m.-7 p.m.

Suburban Collection Showplace, 46100 Grand River Ave., Novi. [agtauditions.com](http://agtauditions.com)

## 23 THURSDAY

**MO'NIQUE.** The controversial Queen of Comedy takes the stage. \$38-\$50. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. [soundboarddetroit.com](http://soundboarddetroit.com)

## 25 SATURDAY

**FRANK MCCOMB.** The soul singing musician who blends jazz, blues, pop and R&B takes the stage. \$30. 8 p.m. Aretha's Jazz Café, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit. [jazzcafedetroit.com](http://jazzcafedetroit.com)





## 26 SUNDAY

CHANCE



## 19 SUNDAY

ASHANTI



## 31 FRIDAY

SWAN LAKE

## 26 SUNDAY

**SNOOP DOGG.** The hip-hop artist brings his *I Wanna Thank Me Tour* to town. \$57-\$86. 7 p.m. The Fillmore, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. [thefillmoredetroit.com](http://thefillmoredetroit.com)

**CHAKA KHAN.** The legendary artist performs. \$76-\$88. 7:30 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. [soundboarddetroit.com](http://soundboarddetroit.com)

## 30 THURSDAY

**STEPHANIE MILLS.** The singer/songwriter and Broadway actress stops in. \$42-\$54. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. [soundboarddetroit.com](http://soundboarddetroit.com)

## 31 FRIDAY

**YVONNE ORJI.** The *Insecure* and *Night School* actress stops in with *The Lagos to Laurel Comedy Tour*. \$30-\$40. 7 p.m. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. [royaloak-musictheatre.com](http://royaloak-musictheatre.com)

**SWAN LAKE.** The Russian National Ballet brings this classic to the stage. \$30-\$50. 8 p.m. Music Hall Center, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit. [musichall.org](http://musichall.org)

## 6 THURSDAY

**EARTHGANG.** The hip-hop duo stops in during their *Welcome to Mirrorland Tour* with special guests Mick Jenkins, Wynne and Jurdan Bryant.

\$22.50-\$55.50. 7 p.m. Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. [saintandrewsdetroit.com](http://saintandrewsdetroit.com)

**BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY.** The iconic hip-hop group comes to town with special guest Trick-Trick. \$37-\$49. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. [soundboarddetroit.com](http://soundboarddetroit.com)

## 7 FRIDAY

**WINTER BLAST.** Quicken Loans' annual event is back with live music, free ice skating, an ice garden, zip line rides, ski and snowboarding demos, and more. Free. 5-11 p.m. today, 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Feb. 8, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Feb. 9. Campus Martius Park and Cadillac Square, downtown Detroit. [winterblast.com](http://winterblast.com) **B**

## MGM Grand Detroit Annual Veterans Dinner Gala

On Dec. 19, about 300 veterans were invited to MGM Grand Detroit for its annual holiday party. They enjoyed food, photos and dancing, and comedian CoCo was the hit of the evening.

Photos by Montez Miller



Ray Williamson, Lonnie Brooks, Tim Clair



David Norwood, Larry Sandridge



CoCo



DeeDee Odom, Carl Clarke



Sean Floyd, Rob Adams,  
Stacey Cornelius, Daniel Martin



Nadekeya Irvin, Casey Morey,  
Sherri Beal, Kelley Hall, Mel James



Kabaka Kenneth Reynolds



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