

BLAC[®]

Black Life, Arts & Culture

**BY THE
BOTTLE**

Black-owned
wine brands

**A HELPING
HAND**

The ins and
outs of IVF

THE BLAC LIST

Celebrating Detroit's Black Entrepreneurs



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Schoolcraft College is proud to play at The Corner Ballpark. We know the field we play on also is important to Detroit. That's why our team pitches in with the "Tiny Tigers" baseball camp and helps with clean-up projects around the park.

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on the field and willingly serve in the community.*

- Cali Crawford, Schoolcraft College Director of Athletics



MAY 2021

INSIDE

- 6 Online at BLACdetroit.com
- 8 Letter from the editor
- 10 Contributors

FEATURES

- 32 MOMS-TO-BE
Exploring IVF and other assisted reproductive technology
- 38 SAVVY & STEADFAST
Detroit entrepreneurs share their stories and offer advice for up-and-comers

DEPARTMENTS

- 16 DISCOVER
Black-owned wine brands, a spa on wheels, a new coffee company and more
- 22 APPRAISED
Artist Rashaun Rucker uses his work to tell stories
- 24 NATIVE
TLC star Deon Derrico on raising 14 kids on camera
- 27 POP ART
New and upcoming books, movies and TV
- 30 IN STYLE
Keeping it cool in chic but easy looks
- 48 ACCESS
New exhibitions from the DIA and the Wright
- 50 SEEN
Detroit Tigers Opening Day

SPONSORED

- 12 DRIVING COMMUNITY: FORD MOTOR COMPANY FUND
DeLashea Strawder, executive and artistic director, Mosaic Youth Theatre Detroit
- 15 ASK THE EXPERT: HEALTH ADVICE FROM ASCENSION MICHIGAN
Can the risk of stroke be reduced?

ON THE COVER:
Nailah Ellis-Brown, Ellis Isle
Photo by Lauren Jeziorski



PRESENTED VIRTUALLY

THE 84TH ANNUAL
DPSCD
STUDENT
EXHIBITION
APRIL 23–MAY 30, 2021
 DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

VIEW EXHIBITION at dia.org/dpscd2021

The 84th Detroit Public Schools Community District Student Exhibition is organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Detroit Public Schools Community District. This exhibition is made possible by the generous support of the Ruth T.T. Cattell Education Endowment Fund.

Left: Donald Calloway, *Stuck in the Lines* (detail), digital art, Grade 10, Cass Technical High School, Teacher: Natalie Barmore.
Right: Hina Woodberry, *In My Eyes* (detail), drawing, Grade 9, Cass Technical High School, Teacher: Natalie Barmore.



Online in May

Visit BLACdetroit.com for web exclusives and to stay up on what's happening in Black Detroit



For Mom

Thoughtful and affordable Mother's Day gifts



Spring Spirits

Refreshing and bright porch-worthy cocktails



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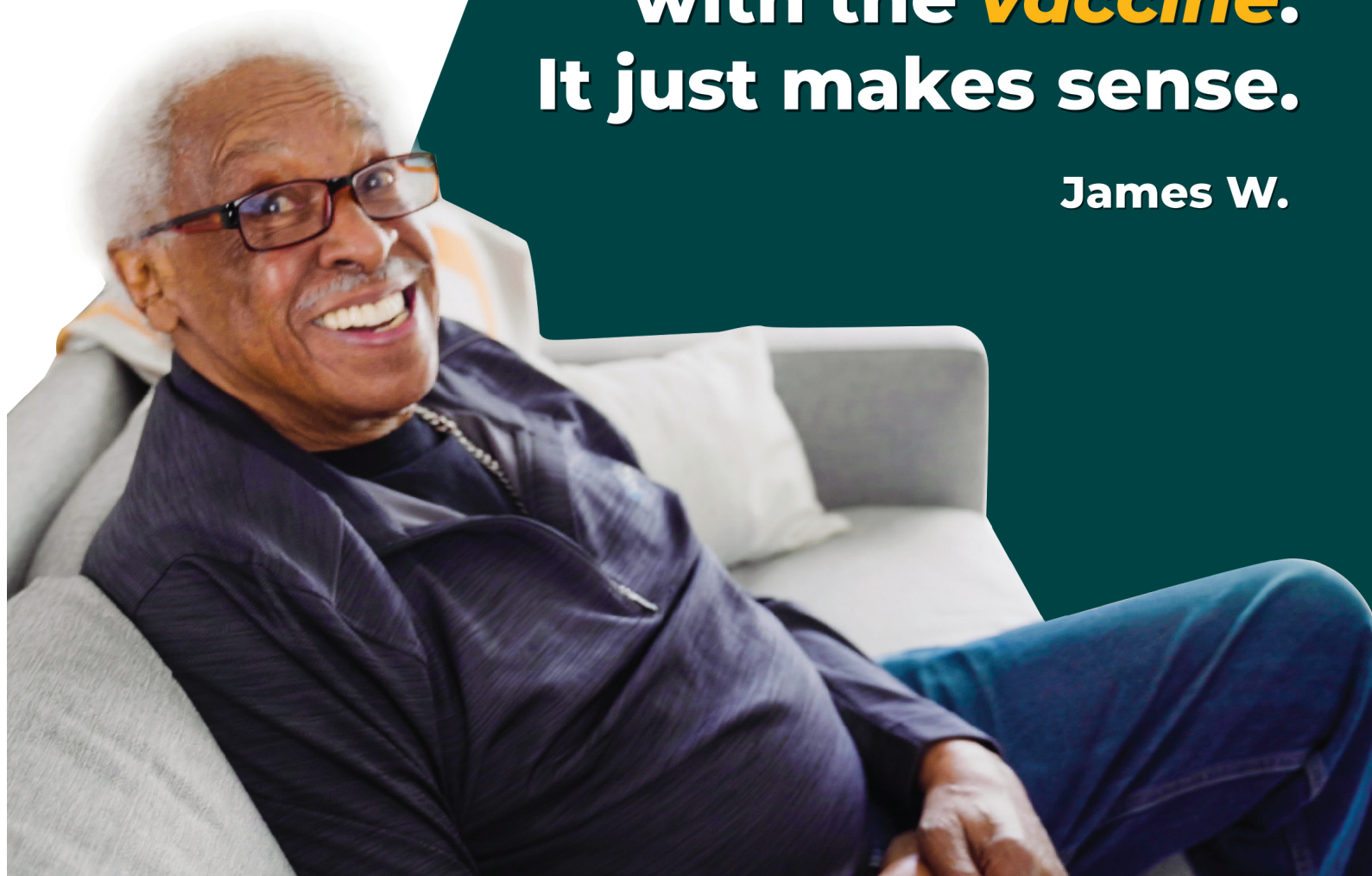
SEEN Galleries

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James W.



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information, visit **detroitmi.gov**.



Chasing a Dream

This month, we're spotlighting Detroit's Black entrepreneurs, which I'm particularly excited about. I'm no entrepreneur, but as a creative, I've always felt like the two spheres are kin to one another. I spent years as a freelance writer, and so, I get the hustle. I get the late nights. I get steadfastly stomping out a path that most will be unwilling to follow – or even understand. I get the soul-wringing desire to spend your days doing what you love and birthing something that didn't exist before. Our cover star is Nailah Ellis-Brown of Ellis Isle (formerly Ellis Island Tea). I interviewed Ellis-Brown and our other entrepreneurs, and she and I spoke about some of the inspiring things the brand has been up to – but she also talked about the hard work (Page 38). No spoilers, but the beverage company is switching gears in a few major ways, but to get there, Ellis-Brown shares, hasn't been easy. And that's the real of it.

Vetra Stephens of cannabis brand 1st Quality Medz and Nelson Sanders of custom suiting house Dandy round out our main profiles. Photographer Lauren Jeziorski visited each one at their places of business, capturing that entrepreneurial essence. Also look out for a handful of honorable mentions. We asked each of them the same three questions: What personal quality has served you best as an entrepreneur? What's one thing you thought you knew about entrepreneurship that has been proven wrong? And, what advice would you give to budding entrepreneurs? Their answers ran the gamut and gave us beautiful insight into what fuels a business owner.

This Mother's Day, while we celebrate the mothers, we also want to acknowledge the millions of women who are struggling with infertility, an issue that affects Black women more often than white women. Writer Kaye Byrd calls on endocrinologist Dr. Karen Wheeler of Reproductive Medicine Associates of Michigan to walk us through in vitro fertilization, the most commonly used assisted reproductive technology (Page 32). Discover the ins and outs, from the medicine to the money to the mental. We also check in with Deon and Karen Derrico, the Detroit-bred, Las Vegas-based couple who are parents to 14 biological children (Page 24). Season 2 of their TLC reality show, *Doubling Down with the Derricos*, premieres on June 1.

We're also looking ahead to National Wine Day on May 25 by rounding up our favorite Black-owned brands (Page 16), discovering a new mobile spa (Page 18), plus much more. And see our snapshots of folks heading into Comerica Park to watch the Detroit Tigers take on the Cleveland Indians on Opening Day (Page 50). Yes, please, for the love of God, take me out to the ballgame. Or anywhere that's open.



Photo by Lauren Jeziorski

Paris Giles
Senior Editor

BLAC.

Black Life, Arts & Culture

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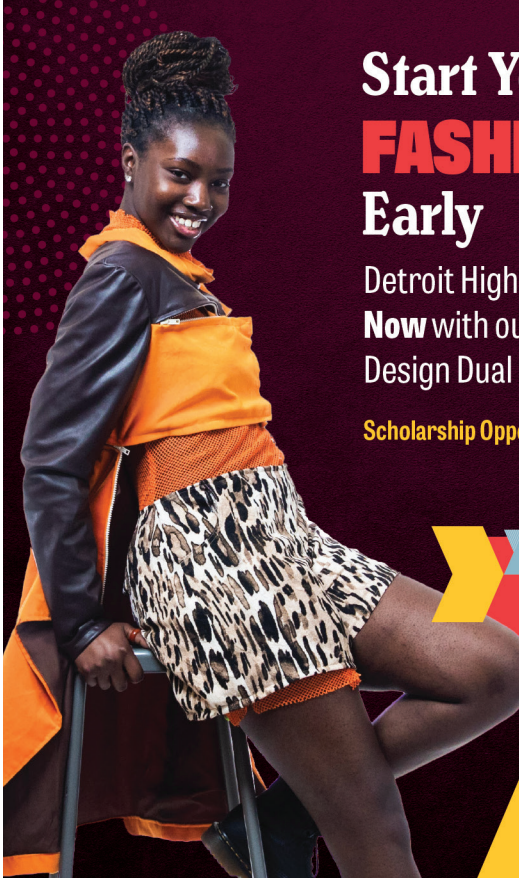
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Working Wonders.

The Loyola Work Experience Program

Since 2003, Loyola High School has placed talented juniors and seniors in businesses throughout the region. Our gifted young men fill entry level positions as part of their core curriculum. Find out how you can join in our work as a Program Partner. Contact **Kenneth Gardner** at **(313) 861-2407, ext. 126**. Or email: kgardner@loyolahsdetroit.org



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Meet Our Contributors

Each issue would be impossible without the help of our freelance writers and creative contributors.



Kaye Byrd, writer

Kaye is a heart-centered writer focused on social justice and wellness issues. An advocate for mental health, she is passionate about facilitating meaningful conversations for women that normalize therapy and cultivates a healthy mindset as the basis for self-care. She shares the passion for her soul-nourishing, empathy-driven and life-giving work on her social media platforms. Born and raised in Detroit, she is a world traveler and avid reader, and welcomes opportunities to share her wisdom to uplift others. Find Kaye's work on Page 33.

@heykayeburd
girlgrow.com



Jasmine Graham, writer

Jasmine is an artistic storyteller from Detroit. A broadcast journalist by trade and an artist by heart, she blends the two to express impactful narratives through writing and photography. She's a freelance writer for publications locally and national, and her goal is to share the beautiful complexity of the underrepresented through art. In 2019 and 2020, her work was featured in both a solo and collaborative art show at Detroit Artists' Test Lab. Jasmine's photographs were also recently chosen to be placed along the halls of Western Michigan University. Find Jasmine's work on Page 18.

stillstostory.com



Nick Pizana, writer

Nick Pizana is a professional artist and writer from Detroit. He studied journalism at Wayne State University and is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in painting at Cranbrook Art Academy. As a painter, Nick works primarily in making colorful murals that draw from his background in street art and comic books. His work can be seen all around Detroit, from Hart Plaza to Eastern Market. In addition to his painting practice, Nick co-owns KO Studio Gallery in Hamtramck. Find Nick's work on Pages 20 and 22.

@shorin_nick
nickpizana.com



Arianna Smith, writer

Arianna is a 22-year-old native Detroiter with a varied background and a love for cultural news. A graduate of Wayne State University's journalism program and BLAC's former intern, you can find her scoping out the latest restaurant, boutique, art project or gaming lounge in Detroit – when she isn't glued to the screen watching a Marvel movie. A Black-owned business is the best kind of business, in her eyes, and Detroit stories are the best kind to tell. Find Arianna's work on Page 16.

ariannasmithport.weebly.com

WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR TALENTED CONTRIBUTORS!

If you're an experienced writer, photographer or artist interested in working with BLAC, email your resume and samples of your work to editor@BLACdetroit.com.

Eric Doeh Named Interim CEO of Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network



Eric Doeh

DETROIT, MI - Eric Doeh has been appointed interim CEO of the Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network (DWIHN). Doeh, who started with DWIHN four years ago as Chief Network and Compliance Officer, has most recently been Deputy CEO/COO. He replaced Willie E. Brooks, Jr. about a month ago after the Board voted 8-2 to not renew Brooks' contract after he failed to disclose that

a lawyer hired in the mental health agency's legal department was his son-in-law.

"This organization is bigger than one person," said Doeh. "One of my priorities is to restore any sense of trust that we may have lost as a result of this because no matter how well you think you've done, there's always the question of what does the public think of the work that we do?"

Doeh leads at a time when mental health services in Wayne County are at their most needed.

"At the end of the day, we remain dedicated to caring for the state's most vulnerable citizens, ensuring transparency, restoring trust, and continuing to provide quality service," said Doeh. "I want to make sure we do it well, we do it efficiently, and that we are honest."

In addition to serving 75,000 people in the midst of a pandemic, the mental health network today is building a new crisis center along Woodward Avenue, launching an outreach program to better serve and reach the city's homeless, and placing clinicians in Detroit's 911 call center to better handle calls involving the mentally ill.

Last December, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, Detroit Police Chief James Craig, and Doeh, announced a partnership to fix a "broken system" by adding behavioral health support to police, 911 dispatchers, and homeless outreach workers.

Since September 2019, DWIHN has trained 258 officers in total from police departments around the state, including officers from the newly launched co-response efforts in Livonia and Canton. There has been 112 staff from DPD's 911 communications center trained in CIT, with Livonia's dispatchers to

be trained in May 2021.

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training is a 40-hour course that teaches a community-based approach to help people who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

Detroit Police Captain Tonya Leonard-Gilbert said the partnership has been a success and has been expanded from downtown to the 9th Precinct near the Grosse Pointes.

Help your local community by improving treatment and outcomes for individuals with mental health. Visit DetroitWayneCIT.org and join the Detroit-Wayne CIT today.

The Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network (DWIHN) is the largest and most diverse Community Mental Health system in Michigan. We are committed to serving the people we support in a holistic manner through programs and services that utilize promising best practices. We hope to promote a community that is supportive and embraces individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities, and substance use disorder. We offer supports in Infant Mental Health, Integrated Healthcare, Supportive Housing, and Recovery to support self-determination and improving the health and quality of life for nearly 75,000 people and their families. If you or someone you know needs help, call our 24/7 HelpLine at 1-800-241-4949 or visit www.dwihn.org.



Officers being trained on CIT



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A year-long series featuring Detroiters who are driving positive change in their communities.

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DeLashea Strawder, Executive and Artistic Director, Mosaic Youth Theatre

This former theater kid now helms a youth development organization that preaches the power of creative arts – and of finding your voice.

By now, we know what creative arts can offer to young people's lives, and taking center stage is Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit. Its varied programming is meant to fuel artistic development, but also self-expression. DeLashea Strawder, Mosaic executive and artistic director, says, "We are a creative youth development organization supporting young people in the Detroit area, helping them to thrive, empowering them with the tools that they need to activate their

voices to excel on stage and in life." Mosaic Youth Theatre hosts tiered, age-tailored programs of increasing intensity allowing young people to cultivate creative skills and, Strawder says, "really hone in on the story they want to tell and synthesize as they grow older."

The popular Youth Ensembles are year-long programs for which auditions are held once or twice a year. "As you participate in the program, your leadership training, your college and

career pathways, and your artistic skills development continues to grow with you," she says. Mosaic also offers summer camps, school residencies, and apprenticeships and internships that teach backstage tech, art administration and entrepreneurship. "We're a college-positive culture," Strawder says. "We want young people to be able to see themselves in a variety of different career paths, and have access to the education and mentorship that they

need to pursue their chosen destiny. In our nearly 30-year history, young people who have participated in our Youth Ensembles program, 95% of them have gone on to college, graduating high school on time."

In years past, Mosaic Youth Theatre held two large performances annually at the Detroit Institute of Arts and one concert at the Redford Theatre. They also invited the public into the Mosaic space for intimate and interac-

tive black box performances. Of course, COVID forced them to pivot toward virtual programming, which, Strawder says, they co-designed with their young people. In the process, she says they've discovered a deeper appreciation for what Mosaic means to their young members' social and emotional health. A positive: they've been able to reimagine their alumni engagement, "sticking closer to the young people in our program as they transition from high school through their college career." This time has also enabled them to create more networking opportunities between their youth and likeminded creatives throughout the country.

Strawder moved into the role of executive and artistic director in July 2019, but she's been involved with Mosaic Youth Theatre in a leadership capacity for more than a decade,

and, before that, she was a student of its programs. She attended Detroit Public Schools and enjoyed an arts education from elementary onward, graduating from Detroit School of Arts. "In my high school career, I had the opportunity to really learn more about the power of my own voice as I participated in Mosaic. And, so, I came back because I wanted to be a part of ensuring that young people had a safe space to connect, create, and really embrace the power of who they are and the power of their own voices," Strawder says.

She says Mosaic has plans to reintroduce in-person programming this summer. Look out for entirely outdoor summer camps happening in July at no cost to families, with admission granted through a lottery system. Strawder says they're still firming up the locations, but expect a

two-week camp on Detroit's east side, a two-week camp on the west side and a three- to four-week program in the Brightmoor area. They'll also pilot "mobile micro camps," bringing performances and condensed camps into neighborhoods. And New Voices Detroit is back this summer, which pairs young playwrights and composers with professional coaches who help them bring their ideas to life.

"Detroit has a rich history of artistic legacy," Strawder says, creating works that often spotlight issues that deserve attention on a larger scale. She says, "93% of the young people that are participating in our program are young people of color. I experienced directly the impact that the arts can have on helping to embrace who you are, ignite your own voice, and really build agency in the community and what you'd like to see in it."



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

For more information on Mosaic Youth Theatre or to get involved, visit mosaicdetroit.org.

"Ford Fund believes that investing in the needs of our youth is an essential step toward empowering our communities for a promising future."

Together with BLAC Detroit, Ford Fund salutes DeLashea Strawder and Mosaic Youth Theatre for providing pathways for youth, allowing them to amplify their voices through arts and culture. Ford Fund is a longtime investor in programs that support the "A" in STEAM because of the important role arts play in educational success.

In addition to being a longtime supporter of Mosaic Youth Theatre, Ford is a national presenting sponsor of the GRAMMY in the Schools initiative, which provides financial support to schools for their music programs in addition to hosting career days and other programming.

Ford also partners with Living Arts to provide programming at our Ford Resource and Engagement Center in southwest Detroit. Music and the arts are valued elements of a community. We thank Mosaic Youth Theatre Detroit for their tireless commitment to youth in our region.

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





Signed, numbered, limited edition Kamala Harris AKA VP Prints

BLAC is proud to offer a limited number of 16" x 20" Kamala Harris AKA VP prints, signed and numbered by the artist. Each reproduction is printed on archival matte paper using premium quality pigmented ink to show off the vibrant color palette of the original painting.

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Benjamin Osowa, M.D.

Can the risk of stroke be reduced?

African-Americans are more impacted by stroke than any other racial group in the United States, according to the National Stroke Association. In fact, they are twice as likely to die from stroke as Caucasians. Knowing your risk factors for stroke and controlling them is the first step in preventing a stroke, or cerebral vascular accident (CVA), sometimes called a “brain attack.”

“By definition, a true stroke means decreased blood flow to the brain,” explains Dr. Benjamin Osowa, M.D., a board certified specialist in Internal Medicine with the Ascension Medical Group.

There are two major types of stroke: “ischemic” and “hemorrhagic.” An ischemic stroke happens when blood flow to the brain becomes blocked, while a hemorrhagic stroke occurs when an artery in the

brain leaks blood or breaks open. This leaked blood damages brain cells by putting too much pressure on them.

A transient ischemic attack (TIA), sometimes called a “mini-stroke,” differs from the other types of stroke because blood flow to the brain is blocked for only a short time. TIAs typically resolve in 24 hours.

African-Americans suffer strokes at an earlier age, and tend to have more severe strokes, the National Stroke Association adds.

“African-Americans tend to have a far worse presentation with hypertensive strokes,” Dr. Osowa says. With these types of strokes, African-Americans tend to have more bleeding and greater disability after the stroke. Some reasons for this include undiagnosed or poorly treated high blood pressure, diabetes and tobacco use.

The old saying “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” holds true for reducing the risk for stroke. Some of the risk factors for stroke, such as a family history of stroke, or presence of sickle cell disease, cannot be controlled. However, other risk factors can and should be reduced.

“Modify your risk factors,” Dr. Osowa recommends. “No tobacco. Control diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure.”

Identifying and controlling high blood pressure, or hypertension, is a good place to start. Dr. Osowa, who lost his father and uncles to strokes, urges all African-Americans to know their blood pressure numbers and to work with their doctors to control high blood pressure.

Seeing your doctor regularly and treating high blood pressure is key. Taking your blood pressure medica-

tions as prescribed is also important. Dr. Osowa says that patients who experience side effects from the medications often stop taking them, as his own father did.

“People will say, ‘I was feeling well, then the medication made me feel bad.’ Then, they stop taking the medicine,” he says, adding that people need to discuss any concerns with their doctor, and perhaps try a different medication. Don’t stop taking your medication without your doctor’s approval.

Anyone experiencing signs of a stroke, such as sudden weakness, numbness, slurring words, or mental confusion should go to the emergency room immediately.

“There is a three- or four-hour window to begin treatment,” he says. Procedures like removal of the blockage or emergency medications work best the sooner they are started.

THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

Who else misses going to a winery and making an evening of it? COVID may have temporarily turned our backyards and front porches into private tasting rooms, but the spirit never died. Wine harvest season may not start until late summer (don't tell the sommeliers that we're celebrating early!), but with so few

Black-owned and -operated wineries around, it's never the wrong time to uplift and support the ones that do exist. Consider adding one of these Black-owned brands to your wino wish list. You'll be lifting a toast to innovation, passion and history while you power through the – we hope – last leg of the pandemic in your fuzzy slippers.



BROWN ESTATE VINEYARDS

Short, sweet and to the point. This one might be my favorite name on the list. Brown Estate in Napa Valley was officially established as a winery in 1996 on land purchased by the family in 1980. They were the first Black-owned winery in the region at the time. According to their website, the scarab beetle they use as their logo is “an ancient Egyptian agricultural totem, a symbol of good luck and long life.” Brown Estate is known for their line of Zinfandels, but the 2019 Chaos Theory quickly became a fan favorite with its notes of tea rose, cloves and Italian sports car leather.

brownestate.com





AMOUR GENÈVE WINES

We guarantee you've never seen a cooler looking wine than this. Amour Genève, owned and created by Coviello Salinès in Europe, is the world's first *blue* wine. Salinès was inspired by his father's adoration and collection of all things blue and, as a tribute to him, used molecular gastronomy to create the wine by adding natural pigmentation from Italian Nebbiolo grapes to fermenting Spanish Verdejo grapes. The result is a deep electric blue color, with floral notes of white peach, grapefruit and citrus. Amour Genève can be purchased online and shipped worldwide. And, right now, the brand is running a fundraiser for Spelman College with limited-edition bottles.

amourbluforever.com



BODKIN WINES

Nothing quite expresses the scarcity and plight of Black winemakers like the phrase, "We few, we happy few." That has been Bodkin Wines' motto since Chris Christensen founded the brand with his partner in 2011 in Healdsburg, California. The quote is from the famous Shakespeare play *Henry V*, and it's apt that it's spoken by a king. Bodkin Wines was the first U.S. brand to produce sparkling sauvignon blanc, which remains their most popular and highly-praised variety. Christensen is quoted on the website as saying: "I want to make wine that can be enjoyed in the here and now, wine for the connoisseurs and for the novices. Bodkin Wines should be enjoyed at family events, momentous occasions, picnics and barbecues – not hoarded in someone's basement."

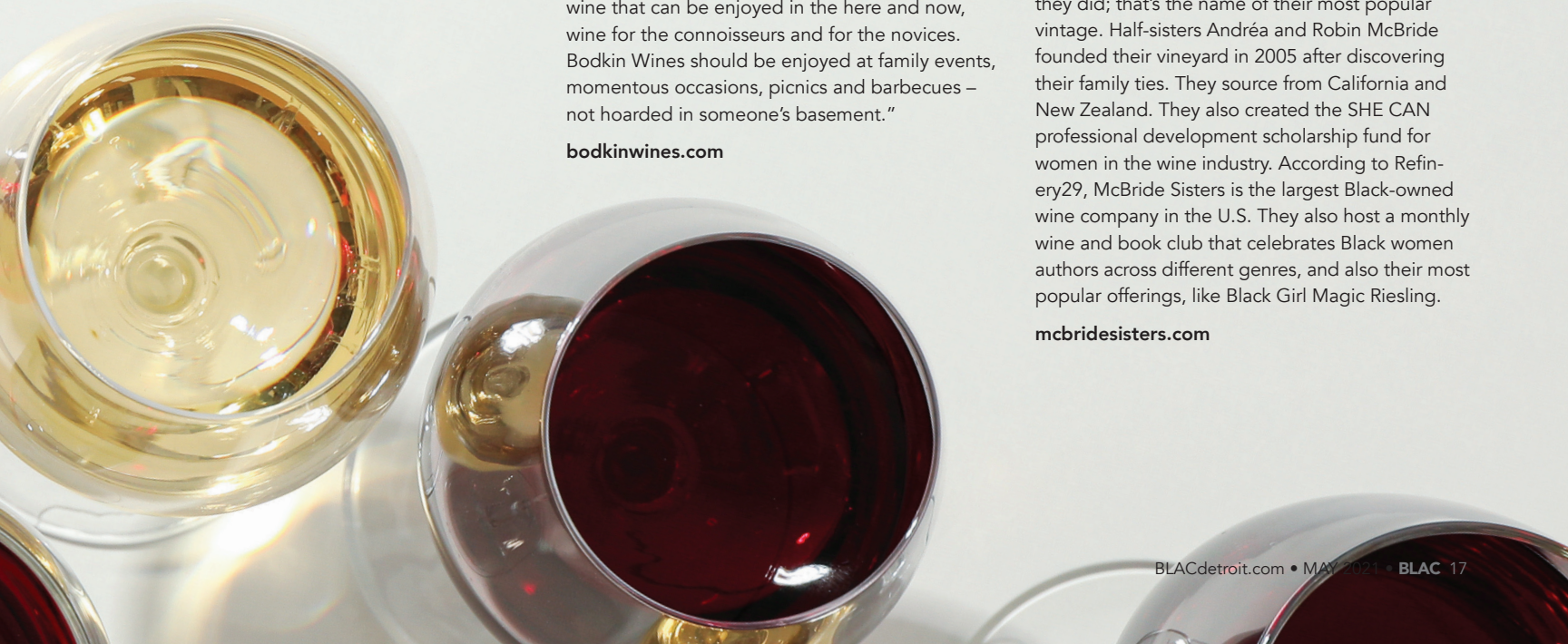
bodkinwines.com



MCBRIDE SISTERS COLLECTION

This brand is what it looks like when you turn the phrase "Black girl magic" into a wine. In fact, they did; that's the name of their most popular vintage. Half-sisters Andréa and Robin McBride founded their vineyard in 2005 after discovering their family ties. They source from California and New Zealand. They also created the SHE CAN professional development scholarship fund for women in the wine industry. According to Refinery29, McBride Sisters is the largest Black-owned wine company in the U.S. They also host a monthly wine and book club that celebrates Black women authors across different genres, and also their most popular offerings, like Black Girl Magic Riesling.

mcbridesisters.com



MOBILE MASSAGES



What started as love and care for an aging grandparent has grown into SpaLand, the mobile spa service by Brandy Ali. She began giving massages in 2003 and, after graduating with a degree in health sciences and finishing her massage training in 2005, Ali began contracting her services to the top spas and parlors around metro Detroit. After spending years working for others, keeping only a small percentage for herself, she realized she wanted to be her own boss.

While pondering the how and where, Ali reminisced on why she fell in love with massage therapy in the first place. Years prior, she'd spent time acting as a caretaker for her grandmother, who often experienced pain and discomfort. Ali's grandmother said she was the only one who could make her feel better with her massages. Ali says, "I told her, 'Grandma, I am going to create SpaLand and cater it to senior citizens.'" She saved her money, prayed and, last June, bought a truck worth \$50,000 for just over \$16,000 in an online auction – and hit the ground rolling.

"I go where people call me," Ali says. "I wanted to create something that was convenient.



You can call me any time, and I will be there in an hour." Ali's clientele lead busy lives and can't always get to the massage parlor. She says it's important for people to understand their body and get routine massages – it's the self-care that we all need. With massages, you learn what feels good, what doesn't and how your muscles react. Her growing team of 12 massage therapists will stretch you, work out your muscles and use pressure points to relieve stress.

In addition to a variety of massages, including deep tissue, hot stone, prenatal, reflexology and Swedish, SpaLand Mobile Spa also offers facials, manicures, pedicures and, soon, vaginal steaming. Lovers can also book a date night complete with a couple's massage and dinner prepared by a chef. The spa features a TV and refrigerator, a main room that expands for more space and a private room in back. This summer, Ali plans to introduce a yacht and bring the same experiences to sea. She's also gearing up to add more SpaLand trucks, with one specifically for senior citizens and able to accept insurance.



@spalandusa
spalandusa.com



MAKE EVERY DAY BETTER



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ymcadetroit.org/give



HELP SAVE LIVES

You can help save lives by becoming an Eliis certified YMCA lifeguard. Ages 16 and older are welcome. If you know how to swim we will train you. YMCA staff perks: Free Y Individual Membership, Discounted Family Membership, Flexible Schedules. This is a great opportunity for retirees, college students, or those just looking for a way to give back. Help keep our pools open and safe for the community to enjoy.

ymcadetroit.org/careers



IMPACT Why the Y?

The most unique part of the YMCA experience is our impact. When you join the YMCA you are not just joining a gym, you join a community-benefit organization. Last year while we closed for 6 months—we distributed over 200,000 meals, and provided essential childcare and educational services to over 11,000 children. And, we are poised to do it again this year—only better.

View our 2020 Community Impact at online at bit.ly/c19impact

YMCA OF METROPOLITAN DETROIT

ymcadetroit.org

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CARLS FAMILY YMCA
300 Family Drive, Milford
(248) 685-3020

FARMINGTON FAMILY YMCA
28100 Farmington Rd, Farm. Hls
(248) 553-4020

PLYMOUTH FAMILY YMCA
650 Church St, Plymouth
(734) 453-2904

BOLL FAMILY YMCA
1401 Broadway, Detroit
(313) 309-9622

DOWNRIVER FAMILY YMCA
16777 Northline Rd, Southgate
(734) 282-9622

MACOMB FAMILY YMCA
10 North River Rd, Mt Clemens
(586) 468-1411

SOUTH OAKLAND FAMILY YMCA
1016 W. 11 Mile Road, Royal Oak
(248) 547-0030

CAMPING SERVICES
» ymcadetroit.org/camp

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
Detroit Swims, Girls on the Run, Healthy Living, Metro Youth YMCA, Y Arts, Y Positive Play Initiative
» bit.ly/3IPmsup



BUZZ AROUND TOWN

A new Detroit-based coffee company has been brewing a buzz. Detroit Black Coffee was founded by coffee aficionado and Detroit native Jasmine Jackson, who got the idea for the company while working at Starbucks. During her downtime, Jackson experimented with different roasts and blends, testing them with customers who enjoyed her drinks. She became deeply interested in the science behind what gave different beans their flavor and caffeine content. She wanted to get

involved in Detroit's re-emerging business community through coffee and used her background in culinary arts from Dorsey Schools to propel her vision.

Jackson started small, selling coffee brewed in her kitchen to friends and family. When lines started forming outside her house, she knew it was time to take the next step. "People starting coming to my house at 7 in the morning as if it were a coffee shop," she says. Today, Jackson sells her coffee online ground or as bags of whole beans, which include flavors like Red Velvet and Cinnamon Toasted Pecan. Others, like Cadillac Blvd. and 3030 Fairview, are hometown nods to the coffee's bold and robust taste. The names also draw from Jackson's love of Detroit and her belief in its people. "I just love my city, and I'm happy to help bring out that pride."

Detroit Black Coffee also offers cold brew, lemonades and teas, all made with the same attention to flavor as the coffee. Jackson plans to roll out a mobile coffee service this spring. Customers will be able to find the cart's location on the company's Instagram page; it'll also be bookable for events.



@detroitblackcoffee
detroitblackcoffee.com

TASTE OF

JAMAICA

Opened in February by couple Tiara and Anthony Harriot, Good Vybz Restaurant & Lounge is bringing the flavors of Jamaica to metro Detroit. Tiara says she's always had an interest in cooking. Anthony, who is from Jamaica, taught Tiara how to make authentic Jamaican cuisine. She was drawn to the taste and bright visuals of the food, which matches its strong flavor. "There's a lot of color. They use a lot of peppers. It's a colorful, fun food," she says. After testing recipes with family and friends and seeing their reactions, Tiara finally decided to open a restaurant. "I built up my clients at home, serving meals to anyone that's interested in Jamaican food," Tiara says.

Flavor is at the heart of Jamaican food, and Good Vybz has it. Spices and ingredients are imported directly from Jamaica to ensure an authentic taste. Among their signature dishes are classics such as curry, oxtail and jerk chicken, served with mouthwatering sides like coconut cornbread, red beans, rice and cabbage. While you can find traditional Jamaican meals, Good Vybz also offers experimental dishes, like Tiara's Rasta Pasta. "I came up with it – basically Alfredo pasta with my own twist," Tiara says. Customers can choose between chicken or shrimp pasta tweaked with flavorful Jamaican seasonings in a homemade sauce. Pair your choice with a Jamaican soft drink or juice.

Looking forward, Good Vybz plans to open up their lounge when COVID restrictions are lifted, expand the menu and apply for a liquor license. **B**

32758 Grand River Ave., Farmington
@goodvybzrestaurant
goodvybzrestaurant.com





PAISLEY PAPER CO. is a black woman owned stationery design studio that specializes in celebrating the snarky and funny parts of life.

I started Paisley Paper Co. after my friends encouraged me to get back into calligraphy and hand lettering. I found that I really enjoyed designing and making greeting cards and other stationery products.

Andrea Williams, Paisley Paper Co. | 2017



BAGS TO BUTTERFLIES is a Detroit-based social enterprise that empowers formerly incarcerated women with transitional employment, resources and a caring network to assist the ladies on their journey to success.

My concept of empowering women returning home from prison began in 2014 when the daughter of a friend was sentenced to 7 to 15 years in prison.

Michelle Smart, Bags to Butterflies | 2015



MAMA COO'S is a neighborhood shop. We carry resale/vintage, locally handmade items and imported pieces. It is Mama Coo's mission to be inclusive as well as representative of our Detroit upbringing and culture. We carry this out with our price point as well as the pieces we carry.

I started my business when I was a resident at a local non-profit art gallery and transformed my residency space into a mini boutique. I then took to the streets and started doing pop-ups around the city which eventually led to opening a brick and mortar location.

Alana Rodriguez, Mama Coo's Boutique | 2015

A THOUSAND WORDS

A member of the Vanguard Artist Collective – the acclaimed supergroup of Black Detroit creatives – Rashaun Rucker is a prominent figure in Detroit's artistic community. Originally from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Rucker considers himself a product of North Carolina Central University and Marygrove College in Detroit. As an artist and photographer, Rucker is known for his linocut prints, drawings and photographs. He carries his strong artistic voice into each medium, where his work is graphic and bold, presenting a look into Black life, captured with raw authenticity.

"My art is very narrative. I'm a storyteller," Rucker says. He attributes this mind frame to his work as a photographer with the Detroit Free Press for more than 10 years. "Whether it's drawing, printmaking or photography, it's all about the stories that I'm telling." Much of Rucker's work recalls moments in his life or his family's. In his recent exhibition, *Up From the Red Clay*, with Ferndale's M Contemporary Art, Rucker reflects on his family's past in North Carolina. It included works such as "Black Love at the County Fair," in which he depicts his grandparents as teenagers in a photo booth.

Rucker also recently participated in Wayne State's *In the Air: Voices From Detroit and Beyond* exhibition; his work was placed on a billboard above HopCat in Midtown. He's earned more than 40 national and state awards, but, even with these accomplishments, Rucker has much more planned. "It's cool to just be recognized for making the kind of work you want to make, and not trying to follow a trend," he says. He is currently in residency with the International Studio & Curatorial Program in Brooklyn through mid-summer, while also preparing an exhibition with the University of Michigan later in the year. "Doing relief carving is kind of a niche thing, and I'm proud to have that success doing something I love to do." **B**

@ruckerarts
rashaunrucker.com





“My art is very narrative. I’m a storyteller. Whether it’s drawing, printmaking or photography, it’s all about the stories that I’m telling.”

Photo credit for art: Roy Feldman, M Contemporary Art

A Bundle of Blessings

Deon and Karen Derrico are parents to 14 biological kids, and Season 2 of their reality show, *Doubling Down with the Derricos*, is returning to TLC in May.

The TLC network has something special in store for fans of wholesome, family-focused reality TV shows like *18 Kids and Counting* but have said to themselves, “Man, I wonder what this would look like if there was a drop of melanin added.” Deon and Karen Derrico are the stars of TLC’s *Doubling Down with the Derricos*, along with their veritable traffic jam of 14 biological children. Since you’ve read that number, it should be apparent why they were picked to have a reality show. That’s nearly a classroom size of kids!

“We didn’t plan on having this many kids, but we did plan to have a lot. I asked my wife how many she wanted, and she told me ‘as many as God will bless me with.’ That was my golden moment, and I knew she was the one for me,” Deon says.

The Derricos moved to Las Vegas from Detroit six years ago so that Deon could take advantage of the real estate market. The second time they made the news for their large family, TLC proposed a show. “It moved like lightning! After that first sizzle reel, TLC reached out and brought us into the fold. After that, it was commonplace to have a camera in the house, and we adapted very quickly to it,” Deon says.

As is the case with many couples trying to conceive, the process of building their family wasn’t entirely easy or without heartbreak. Karen experienced multiple miscarriages and complications before and in between her successful pregnancies

due to an issue with progesterone, a hormone that helps the placenta and forming fetus “stick” to the walls of the uterus. The stigma and shame surrounding lost pregnancy and miscarriage often keeps women from discussing and fully understanding their reproductive issues. According to the National Library of Medicine, Black women have an increased risk of miscarriage compared to white women, concen-

trated between 10 and 20 weeks. “More people need to be aware of those issues and be willing to talk to their partner honestly about them. We were devastated, but we also stuck by each other, talked and supported each other until we figured out what was wrong, how to deal with it and how to make it through,” Deon says.

When it comes to managing such a large, varied household, Deon says the key to keeping peace is a strict, scheduled routine – especially when it comes to cleaning and schoolwork. “My wife is primarily the stay-at-home parent, and I bring home income, but she definitely has the harder job. She’s always



“We didn’t plan on having this many kids, but we did plan to have a lot. I asked my wife how many she wanted, and she told me ‘as many as God will bless me with.’”

been anal and OCD with order and cleanliness and schoolwork. We wash clothes every day, we never allow dishes to pile up. We found the perfect order and just kept rolling with it.” He says that, thankfully, the family hasn’t felt the pinch of the pandemic in many significant ways. Shopping in bulk and home-schooling an entire classroom were definitely challenging, but Deon says his life and experience as a Detroit native prepared him for it.

“Honest to God’s truth, there’s something about my personality that always has to be doing a lot. So, my lifestyle makes sense when you look at it that way. I’ve always been under a lot of pressure and

action, but I never see it as pressure – I thrive in it,” Deon says.

Doubling Down with the Derricos will be a glimpse into the Derricos’ hectic daily life and how large minority families love, discipline and interact with one other. Deon says that he’s most excited to be able to show the world what Black family life looks like. “The response to this has been amazing. People reach out with feedback and say they’re excited to see themselves on the screen for once, and I know this show is helping to break some of those stereotypes people have about Black people, families and men. In every way, we’ve been blessed with this.” **B**

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Bringing you the latest on Black life, arts & culture with the BLAC Fridays newsletter, each and every Friday morning.

Exclusive content, behind-the-scenes photos and weekly playlists to get your weekend started right.

Visit **BLACdetroit.com** to sign up now – your inbox will thank you.

BLAC

BLACK LIFE, ARTS & CULTURE



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We carry panties in sizes XXS-10X, bras in band sizes 28-56, and cup sizes AA-O.



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BOOKS

● **Caul Baby** by Morgan Jenkins

New York Times bestselling author Morgan Jenkins makes her fiction debut with this much-anticipated novel that explores issues of status, power and familial connection (Harper). The Melancons are an old and powerful Harlem family known for their caul, a precious membrane said to be the source of their healing power. Amarra, an ambitious college student, delivers a baby born from the caul to the Melancons to be raised as their own. But as that child, Hallow, grows up, she has questions. Did the woman she calls mother really bring her into the world? Why is she being confined the family's ramshackle brownstone? When Hallow crosses paths with her birth mom she'll have to decide where she belongs.

● **State of Emergency: How to Win in the Country We Built** by Tamika D. Mallory

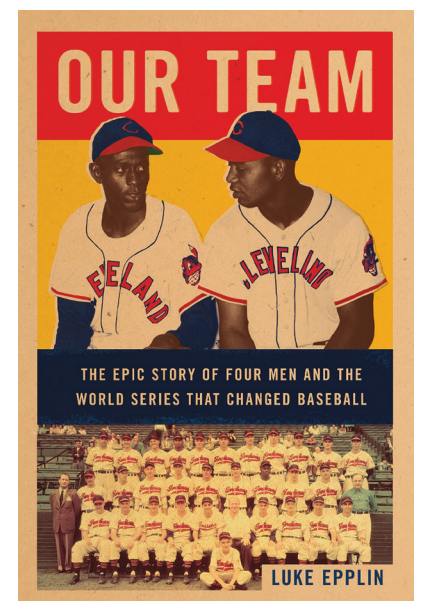
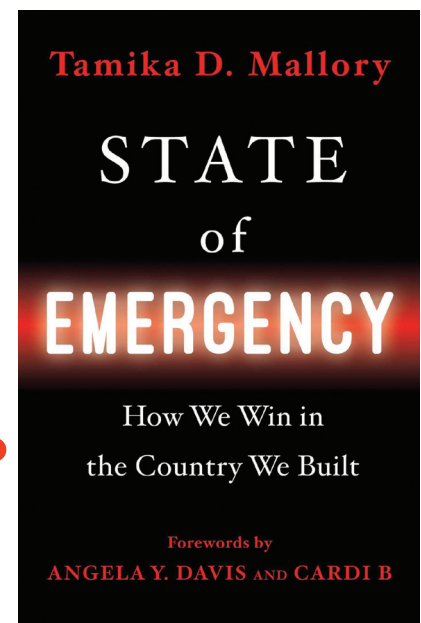
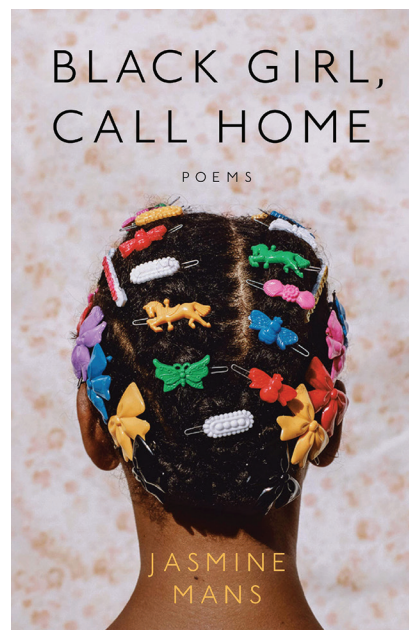
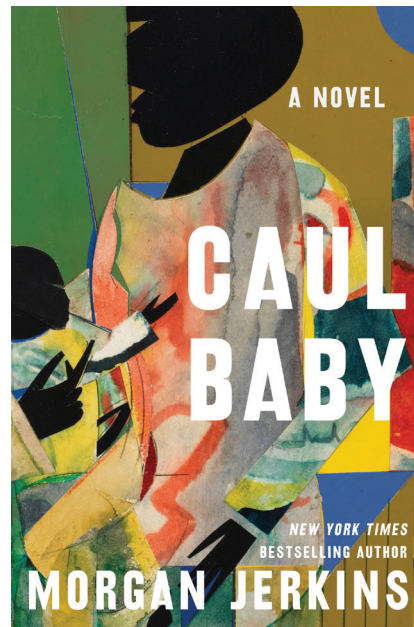
The out-front activist and organizer Tamika Mallory introduces her first book that calls on her first-hand experience fighting for equal justice and Black lives (Atria/Black Privilege Publishing). She offers her demand for tangible change and shares her keys to effective activism, which looks like radical legislation, boots-on-the-ground advocacy and a raw reckoning around history's lessons and broken promises. Release date: May 11

● **Black Girl, Call Home** by Jasmine Mans

Spoken word poet Jasmine Mans dissects race, feminism and queer identity (Penguin). Exploring what it means to be a daughter of Newark, New Jersey, each poem is a love letter to the wandering Black girl and to any woman on a path to truth, belonging and healing.

● **Our Team: The Epic Story of Four Men and the World Series that Changed Baseball** by Luke Epplin

Luke Epplin tells the riveting story of four men – Larry Doby, Bill Veeck, Bob Feller and Satchel Paige – and how their improbable union on the Cleveland Indians in the late 1940s would shape the postwar era of Major League Baseball and beyond (Macmillan). Doby was the second Black player in the majors, following just three months behind Jackie Robinson, and this nonfiction work chronicles the story of the integration of the Indians and their quest for a World Series title through the perspective of four key players. ▶



MOVIES & TV



● **The Upshaws**

Mike Epps, Wanda Sykes and Kim Fields star in this sitcom around a working-class Black family in Indiana striving for a better position in life and a happy home while juggling everyday issues (Netflix). Epps is a car repair shop owner who's married to Fields' sister, played by Sykes. Sykes created the show with writer Regina Hicks, who's also written on *Girlfriends*, *Sister, Sister* and *Insecure*. Release date: May 12

● **The Underground Railroad**

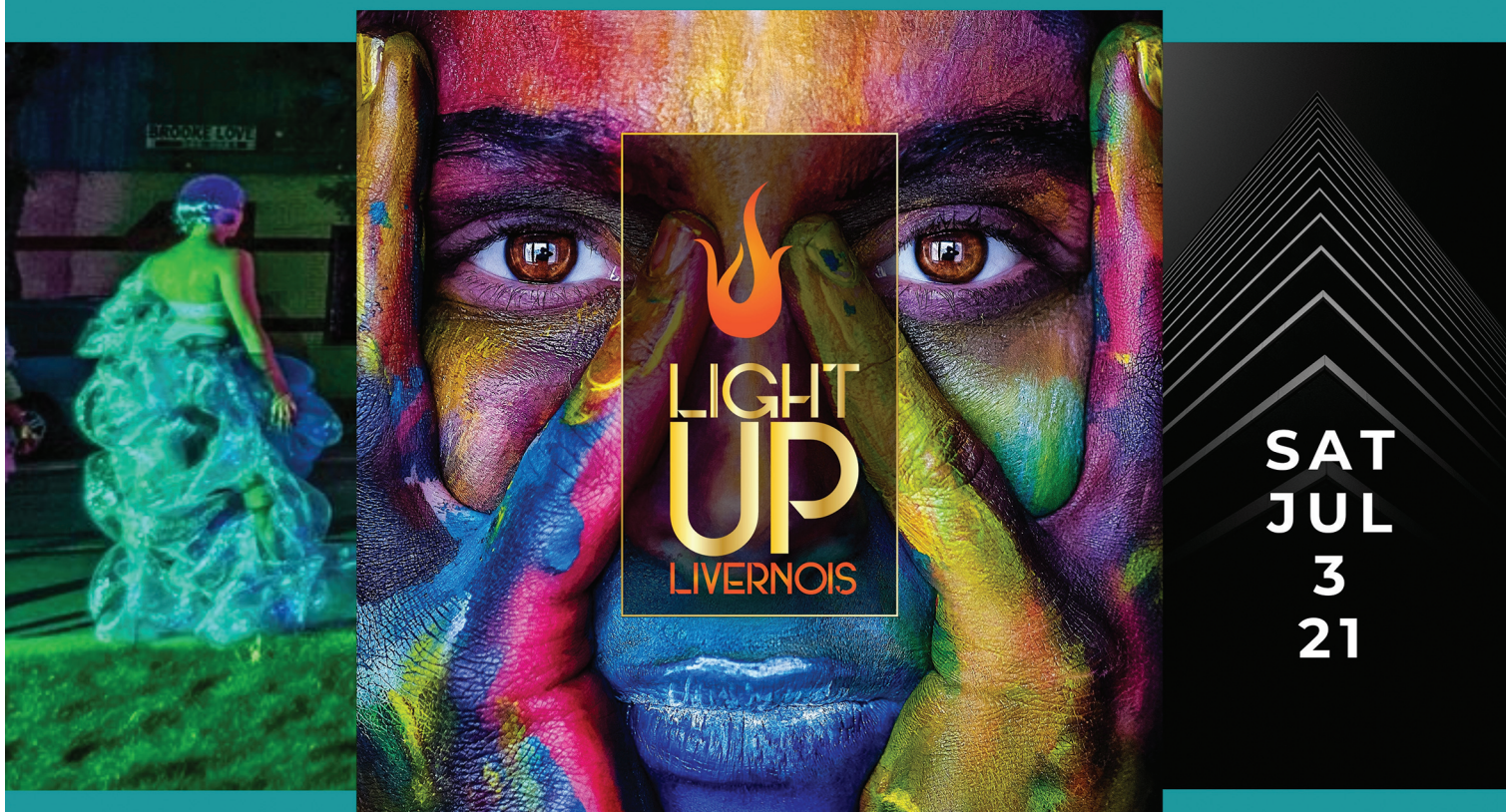
This series stars Thuso Mbedu and follows Cora, a young enslaved girl who embarks on an intense journey to freedom while being pursued by a dangerous slave catcher, Ridgeway, based on the book by Colson Whitehead (Amazon Prime). Along the way, Cora discovers a mysterious subterranean railroad and truths that still hold about what it means to be Black in America. Release date: May 14



● **Fatherhood**

Kevin Hart gets serious in this dramatic film based on the book *Two Kisses for Maddy: A Memoir of Loss & Love* by Matthew Logelin (Netflix via licensing). Directed by Paul Weitz, it follows the true story of a father who brings up his baby girl as a single dad when his wife unexpectedly dies one day after giving birth. Release date: June 18 **B**

SAVE THE DATE



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DETROIT

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SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY, JULY 3, 2021

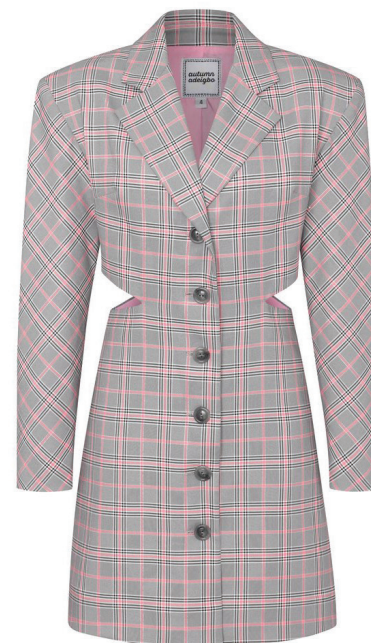
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A MEANS TO

Motherhood

Childless women can substantiate. Do some shopping or take a walk on Mother's Day and you'll inevitably hear 'happy Mother's Day!' tossed out from well-meaning folk. For those among us who are childless by choice, it's no big deal. Maybe you don't even bother with the awkward correction and instead offer up a smile and a nod. But for women who desperately want to be mothers but are having trouble conceiving, that would-be pleasantry can feel like a punch to the gut. This year, while we honor the already mothers, we want to also remember the hopeful mothers-to-be who may be considering assisted reproductive technology, especially in vitro fertilization.

BY **KAYE BYRD**





other's Day can evoke the sweetest happiness. We see the joy splashed across social media, television, advertisements and billboards – it is impossible to miss. While it is a much-deserved celebration of mothers, women struggling with fertility are managing grief and sadness on that same Sunday in May. They are silently waiting for the celebrations to pass so their world can ease back to normal while simultaneously yearning for their own Mother's Day.

We want to take a moment and highlight a potential option that may bring hope to those women who desire to be a parent but are having difficulty conceiving. We talked with Dr. Karen Wheeler, a reproductive endocrinologist who specializes in optimizing in vitro fertilization outcomes at Reproductive Medicine Associates of Michigan. She guides us through important information about the science of IVF. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, infertility is defined as not being able to conceive after one year (six months if older than 35) of having unprotected sex.

The History

British scientist Robert Edwards made history in 1978 when the first "test tube baby," Louise Brown, was born in England. It was a revolutionary procedure that Edwards had tried and tested for more than 10 years before baby Louise's groundbreaking arrival. Before the United States would share in this innovation, England and Australia would

welcome 14 babies using the technique. But, in 1981, Elizabeth Carr was born using the IVF process putting the U.S. on the map, led by doctors Howard and Georgeanna Jones who opened an IVF clinic in Eastern Virginia Medical School in 1980. More than 40 years later, the procedure that was once deemed controversial is now the most widely used assisted reproductive technology technique. In 2017, almost 2% of all infants born in the U.S. were conceived with the use of ART.

The Science

IVF is an assisted reproductive technology that fertilizes a woman's egg with sperm in a lab as an alternative to the process that typically happens naturally inside the body after sex. This science-based intervention has been helping women overcome medical causes that may prevent this process. Wheeler and her team recommend a precise diagnosis to determine what types of issues may be at work, and it generally starts with a few questions:

- Are you ovulating normally?
- Are your fallopian tubes functioning?
- Are your partner's sperm normal and functioning?

Ovulation is needed to release an egg. Functioning fallopian tubes are needed for an egg to be fertilized. And sperm is needed for fertilization. When a woman's fallopian tubes are blocked or absent, or if a man has a low sperm count, IVF gives that couple a chance to conceive. Without fertility drugs, the science doesn't work. According to the Reproductive Medicine Associates website, some of the medications required for the IVF process include those that:

- Help produce a greater number of high-quality eggs during a treatment cycle
- Help stop eggs from being released too early – giving them time to grow properly
- Help to prepare eggs for retrieval

The process of IVF can be consuming so being organized and fully present in the process is important. "(We) talk them through all of the next steps because it is a pretty intensive process that involves a lot of things that the patients and couples do at home," Wheeler says. For instance, they may be asked to "administer medications for themselves and mix all the medications correctly." ►

The Process

INITIAL COMPREHENSIVE SCREENING AND PREPARATION

Wheeler says that diagnostic testing can take anywhere from a couple weeks to a month in order to assess a woman's eggs supply, make sure that the inside of her uterus is ready to receive an embryo, and to do an analysis on her partner. In the case of same-sex couples or single women, this may include obtaining sperm from a donor. You may also be prescribed birth control pills or estrogen.



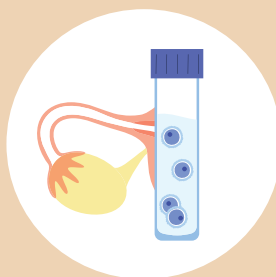
OVARIAN STIMULATION

"We use medications to grow multiple follicles in the ovaries," Wheeler says. The medications are used for about eight to 12 days to stimulate the ovaries. "Once all of the follicles look like they are a big enough size, then we do a final injection of medication that starts the process of ovulation. But right before ovulation we do an egg retrieval," she explains. "So instead of the eggs being released into the body, we go into

the ovary and place a needle into each of the follicles to remove the eggs." A woman's natural menstrual cycle produces one mature egg. This process generates as many mature eggs as possible depending on the individual and the doses of medications used.

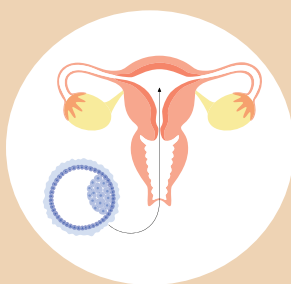
EGG RETRIEVAL

Once enough follicles reach the mature stage, the prospective mother self-administers a human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG) hormone shot and, in about 36 hours, her eggs are retrieved. There is some discomfort and there could be bloating, but, Wheeler says, the average person is able to return to work or other typical activities the day after their egg retrieval process. The culture – or growing of the embryos – takes five or six days, Wheeler says.



EMBRYO TRANSFER

"This step depends on if a couple is planning to do what we call 'a fresh embryo transfer' – meaning that the embryo is being transferred back in the same month or cycle that the egg retrieval happened, or if all the embryos are going to be frozen and then transferred back at a later time," Wheeler says. Other factors considered include whether couples want to have the embryos undergo pre-implantation genetic diagnosis.



INTRACYTOPLASMIC SPERM INJECTION

"In about 30% of couples, there is a male factor to the infertility," Wheeler says. "ICSI is a big advancement in male fertility. In cases where sperm counts are low or where fertilization has failed to occur with a prior IVF attempt, special egg insemination techniques may be used to help the sperm fertilize the egg."

A MEANS TO Motherhood

The Health Prerequisites

Get your body ready. "You want to make sure that a woman is in good health prior to pregnancy, primarily making sure that she is not going to be (at) increased risk during pregnancy," Wheeler says, adding that any preexisting conditions, like diabetes, should be well controlled beforehand. "If there are any medications that she's on that need to be changed so that they are compatible with pregnancy, those are all things that need to occur before pregnancy." Maintaining a healthy weight is also important. Being overweight to start can make it difficult to monitor changes and increase complications during egg retrievals. The Mayo Clinic offers a list of health conditions that could impact a woman's fertility – including uterine fibroids, endometriosis or blocked fallopian tubes – and, for men, the problem could be an infection, hormone imbalances or ejaculation issues.

The Mental Support

"I think women have a lot of emotions tied into their ability to be mothers and can have a lot of guilt or place a lot of blame on themselves for things that are definitely not their fault," Wheeler says. IVF is a very intense process, and issue of fertility is super emotional. In Wheeler's practice, they recommend that patients work with a counselor experienced in dealing with families faced with infertility. She says there are a number of resources to help potential mothers through the IVF process.

- Find a support group or a similar safe space offering education, awareness and support. Wheeler suggests Fertility for Colored Girls for women of color; they provide support and encouragement to African American women and couples. Another great resource, she says, is RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association, a patient advocacy organization that offers support groups in more than 200 communities.

fertilityforcoloredgirls.org // resolve.org

- Try acupuncture, a technique of traditional Chinese medicine that has been around for thousands of years and is well documented for

"There is a lot of self-worth and self-value that women place on themselves if they are having difficulty getting pregnant, and so the IVF process, not only is it stressful putting a lot of pressure on their bodies to be able to perform, but also it can be expensive in a lot of cases, which adds to the stress of the procedure."

its efficacy in treating pain and reducing stress. "Acupuncture is a big adjunct to more traditional fertility treatments that's really shown to be helpful for women," Wheeler says.

"There is a lot of self-worth and self-value that women place on themselves if they are having difficulty getting pregnant, and so the IVF process, not only is it stressful putting a lot of pressure on their bodies to be able to perform, but also it can be expensive in a lot of cases, which adds to the stress of the procedure." The reality is that infertility is a common problem.

- The Department of Health and Human Services says about 6.1 million women in the U.S. ages 15 to 44 have difficulty getting pregnant or staying pregnant.

- RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association says that about one-third of infertility is attributed to the female partner, one-third is attributed to the male partner and one-third is caused by a combination of problems in both partners, or is unexplained.

The Money

The cost for IVF varies based on the procedure and the required and optional testing. Wheeler says, generally, the cost can range between \$10,000 and \$15,000 for one cycle. In some cases, one cycle of IVF can result in pregnancy, but it is possible to have to undergo multiple IVF cycles before a successful pregnancy. Costs can also vary by state and the procedure may or may not be covered by employer-provided health insurance. "In Michigan, there is usually very limited coverage for fertility," Wheeler says. "There are more and more employers that are offering it as a benefit, but, in general, it's not a requirement for employers in Michigan." Investigate opportunities that could help offset your financial costs. Certain foundations may provide grants and scholarships that help pay for IVF costs, like the Baby Quest Foundation. Do your homework to determine if they are a good fit for you and your family.

babyquestfoundation.org

The Persistence

Most women require more than one cycle of IVF to be successful, but experts say not to get discouraged because many couples achieve success on subsequent IVF cycles. Be sure to ask your doctor the key questions.

What went wrong? You want to have as much information as possible to empower yourself to make decisions about next steps.

Should the fertility drugs be changed? Your specialist may suggest changing the drugs that were used such as the stimulation medications.

By Any

Means

While IVF is the most commonly used assisted reproductive therapy, it's not the only option. A few popular alternatives or co-therapies include:

Intrauterine insemination (IUI)

involves placing sperm directly inside a woman's uterus to increase the number that reach the fallopian tubes, thus increasing the chance of fertilization.

Mature oocyte cryopreservation (egg freezing)

is a method used to save a woman's ability to get pregnant in the future. Eggs are harvested from the ovaries and frozen unfertilized for future use.

Gestational carriers (surrogates)

bear genetically unrelated children for other women or couples. This process typically starts with IVF, but the egg fertilized is not that of the woman who will – it's hoped – get pregnant.

What are my true chances of success? Ask for an honest analysis and for your doctor to be frank with you about your chances of success if you decide to move forward with another cycle.

Should we consider other options? Discuss other infertility treatment alternatives – including surrogacy or adoption – with your doctor. **B**

KAYE BYRD IS A DETROIT-BASED FREELANCE WRITER FOCUSING ON SOCIAL ISSUES.

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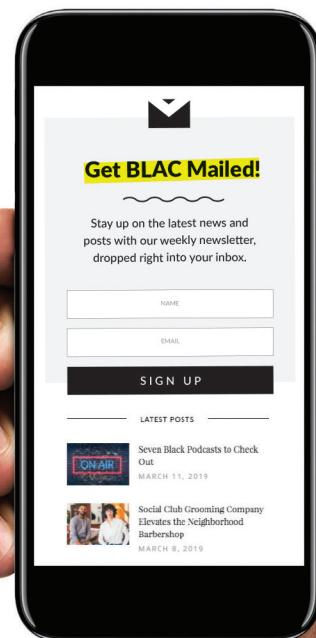


BLAC is Beautiful – Even Online

The BLAC website got a makeover. We know, we know, it was in desperate need of some zjush, but now it's sleeker, cooler and it'll better display the stories you love on your cell or tablet.

Don't take our word for it. Scroll for yourself at BLACdetroit.com where you'll find a daily dose of community happenings, interviews, POVs and resources and advice specific to us.

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BLAC
BLACK LIFE, ARTS & CULTURE



The Detroit Development Fund is proud to have provided access to capital, business assistance and loans to Detroit Black owned businesses and Detroit companies owned by Entrepreneurs of Color for the past 20 years. We have provided over \$65 million dollars in loans to these important Detroit businesses.

Our newest fund, the Entrepreneur of Color Loan Fund, "EOC Fund", a source of business capital and business assistance for Detroit businesses owned by Entrepreneurs of Color has provided greater access to capital for these businesses. Loans range from \$50,000 to \$200,000 and businesses can use the funds to expand finance equipment, address short term capital needs and contractor lines of credit to EOC companies that don't yet qualify for traditional bank financing.

Our Micro Loan Fund - The BizFund can provide loans from \$5,000 to \$50,000

By the end of April DDF EOC Loan Fund will have provided over \$11 million dollars in loans to Detroit EOC companies. 55% were made to EOC women owned companies and 70% of the loans were made to EOC companies located in Detroit neighborhoods outside of downtown proper and Midtown. Thanks to the hard work of our EOC companies this capital has helped create over 900 new jobs for Detroit residents.

DDF is proud to salute the EOC loan customers featured in this issue and in other recent news articles:

The Lip Bar- Melissa Butler
Cooking With Que - Quiana "Que" Broden
Lush Yummies - Jennifer Lyles

Benkari Plumbing - Adrian Bennett
Power Lighting and Technology - Angel Paris

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THE BLAC LIST

Celebrating Detroit's Black Entrepreneurs ▶

By Paris Giles Main photos by Lauren Jeziorski



NAILAH

ELLIS-

BROWN

ELLIS ISLE
(FORMERLY ELLIS
ISLAND TEA)



Perfectly apt, when Nailah Ellis-Brown and I speak by phone in early April, she starts the conversation off by spilling a bit of tea. Her popular beverage company known for its tropically-tanged teas is preparing to announce a major rebranding. By now, you may have heard that what was once Ellis Island Tea is now Ellis Isle. "The reason we took the 'tea' off is because we want to open up ourselves to categories outside of tea. We don't want to be locked into just tea," Ellis-Brown says. One of the drinks, the Caribbean Punch, made from hibiscus, peppermint leaves and cold-pressed sugar cane, has also gotten a name change. It's now called Wet Shuga. "In Jamaica, they call sugar cane juice 'wet sugar.' So, we just put a spin on it, just staying true to our roots. And then we wanted to bring a little culture to it."

That Wet Shuga is the first bottled tea on the global market to be sweetened with cold-pressed sugar cane juice, Ellis-Brown says. The beverage game is a crowded space, but she says it's those natural ingredients that set them apart. "We're using real herbs that we're steeping by hand. So, a lot of tea companies, you'll have what you call 'a tea-flavored drink.' It's not real tea. The most common feedback that we get is that it tastes like real tea. And that's because it is," she says. Hibiscus features prominently in the products, which is what gives the tea its rich, red color. "We have no additives, no food coloring or dye." You'll also detect rose hips, peppermint

leaves and other 100% real ingredients.

In 2019, the company won a \$300,000 investment during the Quicken Loans Detroit Demo Day, and headlines were garnered again last summer when news broke that Kevin Hart had invested in the brand. Ellis-Brown says we'll start to see the fruits of all the behind-the-scenes labor very soon. They've recently switched up their distribution model in a huge way. You won't find them in Walmart any longer, but, effective April 11, you'd be able to grab a bottle or case of Ellis Isle from the shelves of any Target in the country. "We are ecstatic about that because finally we have distribution and the product is accessible. That was the biggest pain point of our fans – or consumers if you will – they couldn't find it anywhere." You can also snag that sweet (or unsweet) island nectar from Amazon Fresh and from the website's traditional marketplace.

As exciting as that deal with Target is, Ellis-Brown reminds that it comes with its own fulfillment challenges. "For a lot of companies, especially Black companies, we have to fight really hard and work 10 times harder than everybody else to gain access and get these types of opportunities. And then when you get it, it's like shit; we don't have a lot of the resources that most companies have. So, we have to scramble and figure it out. It's like, 'Can you handle a national rollout?' And my model for success is: 'Yes' is the answer. What is the question?"

ELLISISLE.COM

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITY HAS SERVED YOU BEST AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

I have been talking a lot about communication lately. And I don't necessarily consider communication a character trait, but knowing how to communicate – which a huge part of communication is listening – that's a huge part of my success up to this point. Communication is everything, like transparent communication and being able to articulate what the need is.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN WRONG?

It's never personal. So, overall, people mean well and when people let you down, it's not personal. Everybody carries their life experiences with them, and they react to things based on the things they've experienced in life, and it's just never personal.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS?

The same advice that I always give, because it really means the world to me: pray like everything depends on God and work like everything depends on you. Period. And strive for love over fear. If you chose love over fear every time, you'll get to your freedom. ▶

DANDY

NELSON

SANDERS

Like most teenagers, it wouldn't be until Nelson Sanders became an adult that he'd truly appreciate what his dad had to say about the importance of presentation and style. Catch him around town and he's probably dressed in a sharply tailored suit – maybe there's even a cane in tow. "The foundation of it starts from my pops and seeing him and things he would do and how he carried himself, and how he took care of the things in his wardrobe," Nelson says. Dandy, his brand of made-to-measure suits, offers customers an elevated alternative to the everyday. What he does is sandwiched somewhere between off-the-rack and bespoke. "My title would be a clothier," he says.

"So, I use a template, let's just say. They're just a blank suit, and I put someone in a jacket and a pant that's closest to their body type, and then, from there, I'll pick the whole thing apart fitwise. And I officially have an app where I can plus and minus these dimensions on the whole jacket and trousers to create a pattern that mimics that person's body." Math notwithstanding, Dandy leans heavily on the personal. Consultations for a custom suit uncover the wardrobe gaps a client is looking to fill. Special occasion or complete closet overhaul? Sanders also offers personal shopping and style consulting. "I try to build real relationships with the clients, because, at the end of the day, definitely before this pandemic, I saw that Detroit was moving. There are going to be bigger suit companies that come to Detroit." When that happens, he hopes his clientele will opt for the homegrown touch.

Dandy is currently set up inside Détroit is the New Black downtown, and to take advantage of that out-of-town foot traffic, they've recently introduced a line of T-shirts, hoodies and beanies, items for casual shoppers. "To be honest with you, I was on the fence about it, because Dandy is a luxury lifestyle brand," he says. "Most of my business comes from appointments, but definitely on the weekends, you get people from X, Y and Z coming here, and they want something they can take. They want something to buy right away. It's like a little add-on." At some point in the future, Sanders says he'll pick up and move that Motor City slickness into its own shop. "When I think Dandy, I think Detroit. Detroiters are bold, boisterous kind of 'we here'-type people."

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITY HAS SERVED YOU BEST AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

I don't have any shame at telling people my weaknesses and my strengths. I'm more of a creative than a businessman, if that makes sense. So, I've kind of forced myself into asking people and reaching out for help in areas that I know I'm weak in.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN WRONG?

I don't think there's anything. I've had a lot of people that are entrepreneurs that have given me insight. There are definitely ups and downs, but it looks like what I thought it was gonna be like.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS?

I think entrepreneurship is great, but honestly, I don't think everybody— It's trendy to be an entrepreneur right now. You should truly love what you're going into entrepreneurship for, because I've worked for some entrepreneurs that I don't think loved what they were doing. I think it's very important to love what you're doing because putting in the work will be easier if you're loving it. But then, you just got to be prepared to put in the work, the extra work. ▶

DANDYDETROIT.COM

THE BLAC LIST





GREGORY JACKSON

JACKSON ASSET MANAGEMENT, JACKSON AUTOMOTIVE MANAGEMENT

Gregory Jackson is the chairman, president and CEO of Jackson Asset Management, a parent company consisting of several entities, including Prestige Automotive Group. Founded in 1993, the multimillion-dollar auto group has owned 18 dealerships, plus a body shop. Prestige Automotive has been named one of Black Enterprise Magazine's top Black-owned companies for 27 years in row. In 2015, Jackson made history by becoming the first African American to lead a dealership group to more than \$1 billion in annual sales.

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITY HAS SERVED YOU BEST AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

Hard work. What I mean by hard work is there's no such thing as No. And there's no such thing as Stop, it's a continual due diligence to sticking to the task. And I think that is the personal quality that defines most entrepreneurs – they don't live by a clock. I've oftentimes said that I'm not always going to be the smartest person in the room. I've met very few people who would outwork me.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN WRONG?

I could probably say several things, but one thing is that money makes all the difference. The answer to that is that it doesn't. The next this is that the smartest person wins the race. That's not true, either. And then the third thing would be that somehow entrepreneurship was going to be easier than just working a job.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS?

I'd say be a student of the game. Whatever your entrepreneurial interest is, immerse yourself in that. Immerse yourself in that industry and learn everything about it.

PRESTIGEAUTOMOTIVE.COM



ASHLEY M. WILLIAMS

RIZZARR

Ashley M. Williams is the founder and CEO of RIZZARR, a tech-enabled content marketplace in which brands can find and work with millennial and Gen Z content creators worldwide. Williams also moderates or speaks around the world for entities such as the U.S. Department of State, traveling to U.S. embassies and consulates. She also hosts a video and podcast series called *The Ripple Effect of You*. Before becoming an entrepreneur, Williams was an award-winning journalist, working for NBC News, WBAL Radio and USA TODAY. She's been recognized by Forbes on its "Next 1000" list, by DBusiness Magazine's "30 in Their Thirties" and by Corp! Magazine with its millennial award.

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITY HAS SERVED YOU BEST AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

Grit. This journey is full of a lot of rejection, a lot of twists and turns, a lot of moments being backed into a corner, a lot of crazy roller coaster rides and a lot of insane fun houses to navigate. At moments, I have found myself beside myself, knocked down or wondering how I could even push forward. In these moments, my grit has always gotten me through. It's allowed me to keep my faith, to keep my belief in myself, to keep my courage and to just keep hanging on.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN WRONG?

The one thing that I thought I knew about entrepreneurship that has been proven wrong was that the experts, serial entrepreneurs, investors and/or just more knowledgeable people have all of the answers and know more than me. I am not saying I know everything. In fact, that is *quite* the contrary. But what I am saying is that I've realized even "experts" get it wrong. No one knows everything and if they all did, then they would all be crazy rich and mega successful.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS?

Know that, yes, entrepreneurship is a crazy ride, but it's also a beautiful one. The impact that you can have on people's lives is so humbling and will inspire your belief in how all things are truly possible. Never give up on yourself. Realize you only have this one life to live. Make it count, make it stand for something. Leave this world a better place.

RIZZARR.COM



THURSTON CAMPBELL

JUNK STARZ

Thurston Campbell had worked in the junk removal industry for about six years for other companies, and four years ago, he decided to start his own operation. Junk Starz services the metro Detroit area. He truly loves the adventurous day-to-day of cleaning up residential and commercial properties, and finding the unknown. It's like a treasure hunt that perfectly fits his personality – a marriage made in junk. He's committed to recycling up to 60% of the material he collects, helping to make the world a cleaner place. Junk Starz recently added a dumpster rental division.

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITY HAS SERVED YOU BEST AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

One personal quality that has served me well as an entrepreneur is my desire to provide above average professionalism. It's one of two things that I stand on firmly: timeliness and professionalism.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN WRONG?

I come from a father who was an entrepreneur so there isn't much I've encountered that I didn't expect. If I had to name one thing, though, it would be the ability to maintain good help. I am fortunate that my company has been able to retain several of our employees, but from speaking to other entrepreneurs, whether one year in business or 10 years, they echo my sentiments.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS?

Your success is only as good as your team. Your team could be made up of family, friends and other entrepreneurs. Confidence is key as well. Believe in your product or service and know its worth. Learn the key components of branding, and don't be afraid to reinvent the wheel or create a new lane. Don't limit yourself! ►

JUNKSTARZ.COM



QUIANA "QUE" BRODEN

THE KITCHEN, BY COOKING WITH QUE

Culinary innovator, executive chef and founder Quiana "Que" Broden delivered Detroit's only demonstration kitchen and culinary shared space, The Kitchen, by Cooking with Que. It serves as a café by day and an event space by night, where Broden offers zestful and earth-conscious dishes that encourages coexistence between vegans and meat eaters. The Kitchen boasts two state-of-the-art kitchens, one for live demos and lunch, and the other to be used as a shared-use rental kitchen for culinary experts without physical brick-and-mortars. The space also offers an intimate 16-seat kitchen classroom where guests can enjoy chef tastings, cooking classes and the like. Broden urges us to eat to live.

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITY HAS SERVED YOU BEST AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

Positivity. I think because I look for the positive in everything it keeps me grounded and protects me from falling into a failed mentality. I think of failures as lessons – falling forward. Even in falling there is a positive. You can get up again.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN WRONG?

I thought all entrepreneurs have it all together. A *whole* lie. We are all striving and thriving to get better each and every day. Understanding that you are continuously learning is kind of the best part.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS?

Stop overthinking and start. We are taught to have everything together to start, and the fact is you will never have it all together! The goal is to start. If you never start you live in Shoulda, Woulda, Coulda land. It sucks there. Just go out and do it. I live by build the boat as I go and figure it out, because it can't be that hard. Oh, and stop accepting every piece of unsolicited advice you get. It's not always for you. Don't ever allow anyone to give you their fears. There is a reason God gave you the vision!

COOKINGWITHQUE.COM

VETRA

STEPHENS

1ST QUALITY MEDZ

As attitudes relax along with legislation, we're anxiously anticipating the future of the cannabis industry. Vetra Stephens will tell you she saw this coming. She's been preaching the medical benefits of the plant for years, while also working behind the scenes to help ensure an equitable place for connoisseurs of color. Stephens was suffering with lupus and her partner with late-stage cancer when she discovered Rick Simpson oil, a cannabis concentrate. "I wanted to know more about this plant, this industry," she says. "I looked into it and found out all of the wonderful properties it had, the healing properties. And I was quite amazed that I had an understanding about cannabis that was completely wrong."

She opened 1st Quality Medz in River Rouge in 2018, the first recreational marijuana dispensary in Wayne County, and the first Black woman-owned one in the state. She'd looked into setting up shop in Detroit initially but tired of the red tape. "We found River Rouge. It had been a thriving city and had taken a hit with their mom and pop shops after the bridge was taken out. So, it was important for us to find a place like that to bring people back to the city and try to build that city back up again," Stephens says. Along with the retail space, she also owns and operates a grow facility, which has allowed them to produce their own strain and keep the prices low, especially important

as we wade through the debris of shutdowns.

Having her own grow spot also ensures that she never runs out, because, of course, she's going to take care of home before distributing to other dispensaries. "There is no middleman. We grew it from seed to sale." When we speak in early April, Stephens is preparing to add a processing facility into the mix and launch a line of products, dubbed The V Affect, leaning on her relationships with area labs to guarantee a safe and pure product. She says, "There are over 300 dispensaries throughout the state of Michigan, and my goal is to have our product line in every one of those stores so that people know that we're here."

Everyone from nurses to lawyers to blue collars visit the shop, some opting for sativa cannabis for the energy and focus, while others look forward to the relaxing effect of indica at the end of a long day. Stephens is passionate about continuing to disrupt the stigmas and myths around weed. She serves on the board of the Great Lakes Cannabis Chamber of Commerce among other efforts to push the industry forward. "I stay in the faces of the powers that be to make sure of a few different things," she says. "One part is to get people to understand that this plant is actually our friend. The other part is letting Black and brown people understand this industry and how to be a part of this industry, on different levels and in different stages." **B**

FIRSTQUALITYMEDS.COM

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITY HAS SERVED YOU BEST AS AN ENTREPRENEUR?

I would say passion and endurance. If you're interested in entrepreneurship, you have to be able to dedicate all that you have in what you want, into that outcome. It takes a lot. Entrepreneurship and ownership is not a life that everyone can withstand. And you have to be able to have that endurance, and that passion and drive. That passion is what makes me stay up all night, you know, late nights and do 12-hour days, 16-hour days. That passion says I can't go on vacation.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN WRONG?

I thought that everyone played the game fairly. And that has been proven wrong time and time again.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS?

My advice would be to know that you want to be in this space. You have to have the passion for whatever direction you're heading. Never chase the dollar – the dollar will come. Chase the passion. That passion will take you to heights that you will never dreamed it would have.

THE
BLAC
LIST



access

DETROIT | MAY 2021

Two new exhibitions settle in at the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Charles H. Wright Museum.

83rd Annual Detroit Public Schools Community District Student Exhibition

Detroit Institute of Arts

This annual exhibition showcases hundreds of imaginative works created by DPSCD students and selected by a jury of art educators and DIA staff. The artworks include ceramics, painting, drawing, fiber, sculpture, photography, digital art, jewelry, mixed-media and video.

Open through May 30
dia.org



ABOVE: "I See You, Too," Shyla Butler, Denby High School, 12th Grade

LEFT: "Solar Flare," A'Liyah Forris, Cass Technical High School, 9th Grade

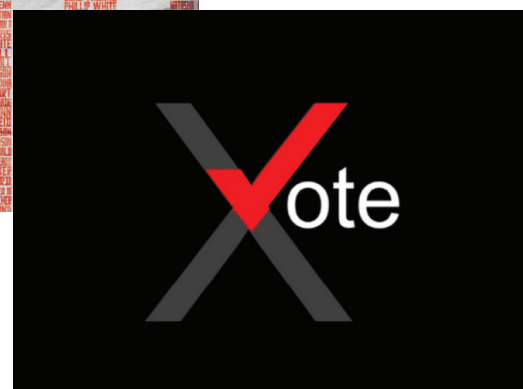
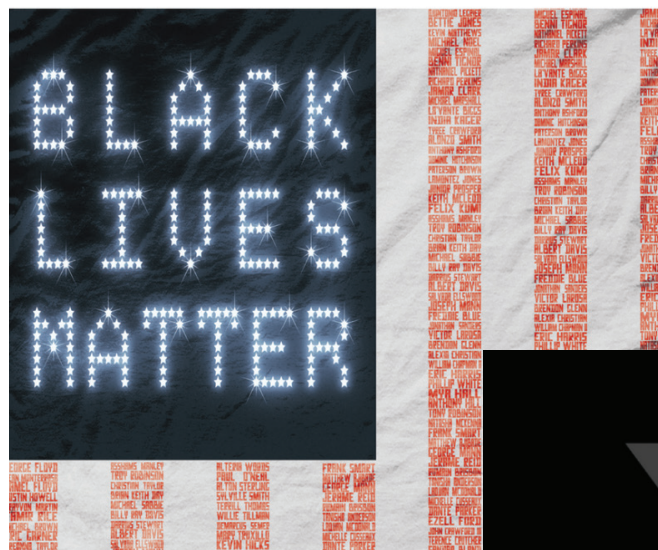
RIGHT: "Angst," Dayquan Butler, Mumford High School, 11th Grade

Posters on Politics

Charles H. Wright Museum

The Wright presents this collection of posters showcasing issues of police brutality, social justice, women's rights and American politics, created by artists and graphic designers from around the world.

Open through June 27
thewright.org





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Detroit Tigers Opening Day

We caught up with baseball fans who came out to watch the Tigers take on the Cleveland Indians and soak in the game day ambiance.



Tracy Brown, Leslie Chetam



Marcellous Love, Ayana Love



Michael Mock, Percy Lewis



Michele Coman, Randall Mosley



Danicka Sims, Justin Sims



Justin Johnson, Lisa Johnson



Judge Craig Strong



Rep. Helena Scott

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