BLACdetroit.com Black Life, Arts & Culture

BLAC 20



Getting Our Piece of the Pie

Keeping up with the reparations debate

plus The best-rated pie shops around town

NOVEMBER 2019 / COMPLIMENTARY

1999 CELEBRATING 20 YEARS 2019



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There's a reason why students from across the street and around the world choose Wayne State University. Our location in the heart of Detroit makes WSU the perfect place to live, learn, work and play.

Even if you've grown up in the area, there's no greater way to experience Detroit than through the eyes of a Wayne State student. The city is an extension of our campus, filled with countless opportunities to expand your horizons. Hop on the QLine, rent a bike or take a walk and explore Midtown. Enjoy the city's acclaimed theatres, galleries and museums. Grab a bite at one of the neighborhood's eclectic eateries. And take advantage of Wayne State's partnerships with renowned businesses, hospitals and law firms, where you'll be part of firsthand experiences that prepare you to thrive and service-learning opportunities that make you a part of the city's revitalization.

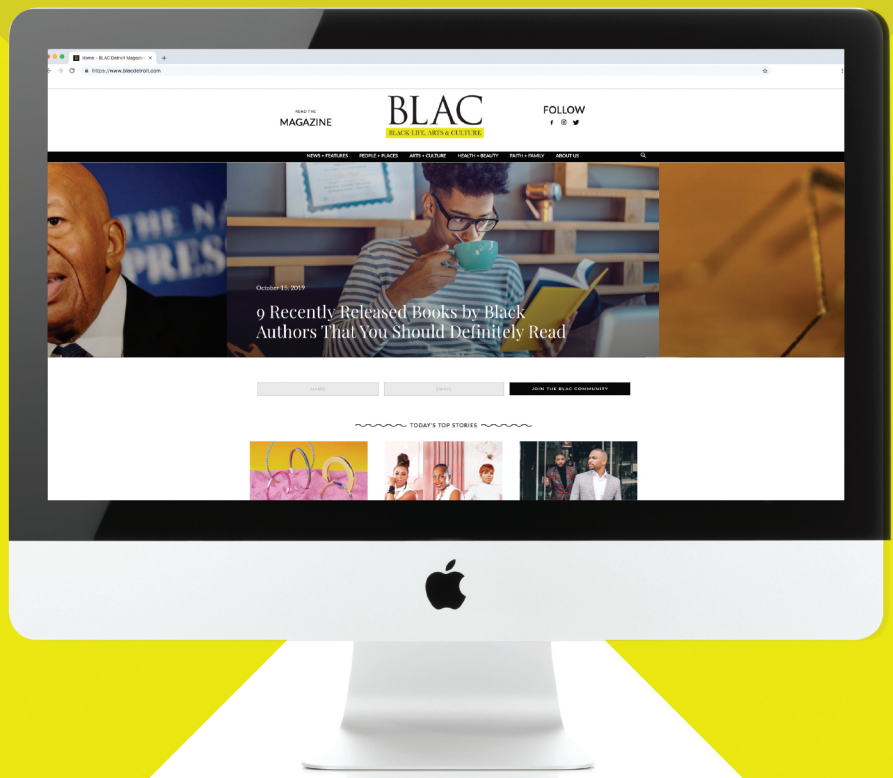
But don't take our word for it — come see it for yourself. There's no better way to discover all Wayne State has to offer than by setting foot on campus and taking in the sights and sounds of Midtown. We can't wait to meet you.

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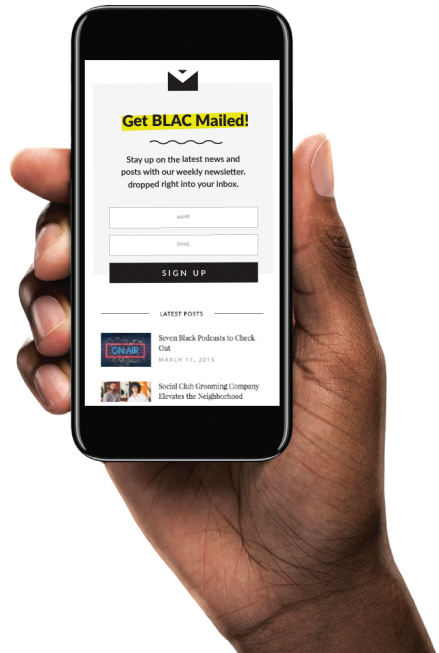


BLAC is Beautiful – Even Online

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.

While you're there, sign up for BLAC Mail, our weekly e-newsletter, to stay in the loop and be the first to know about all things BLAC.



BLAC
BLACK LIFE, ARTS & CULTURE



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Photo by Lauren Jeziorski

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The Power of 20

It's our 20th anniversary, and we're celebrating all year long with special articles and projects in print and online at BLACdetroit.com/ThePowerof20.

And we've got swag! Rock a BLAC T-shirt or hoodie and remind everyone everywhere that you honor Black Life, Arts and Culture. Available in men's and women's cuts and sizes.

For two decades, BLAC has empowered and amplified the voice of the community, taking care to spotlight those oft-forgotten corners. The party can't stop, won't stop.

BLACDETROIT.COM/THEPOWEROF20

Get BLAC Mail. Sign up for our weekly newsletter at BLACdetroit.com/BLACmail



Online in November

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



November Happenings

Browse the expanded version of our Access Detroit calendar.



Watch the Throne

Southfield native Chanel Johnson named Miss Michigan USA.



Plug Your Event

Visit 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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"Rejoice greatly o' fans of reinvention! The Baroque era meets blues, gospel and jazz!"
–Detroit Free Press

TOO HOT TO HANDEL

THE JAZZ-GOSPEL *MESSIAH*
A hand-clapping, soul-stirring holiday celebration!
ONE SHOW ONLY!
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This presentation is supported by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts



DIA DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

DETROIT COLLECTS

SELECTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ART FROM PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

November 12, 2019 – March 1, 2020

Visit the Detroit Institute of Arts as we celebrate Detroit's rich history as a center for African American art and artists. Explore the stories of motivation and passion that drive local collectors to acquire works by the renowned African American artists in this exhibition.

Detroit Collects: Selections of African American Art from Private Collections is organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts. Major support has been generously provided by Masco Corporation and the DTE Foundation. Additional funding is contributed by Quicken Loans Community Fund, the Ford Motor Company Fund, and Dickinson Wright PLLC.

Ancestors By The Water's Edge (detail), 1989, Brenda Dendy Stroud, American; collage, mixed media, pen and ink. Maureen and Roy Roberts.

Ford Motor Company Fund

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

Driving Community

Sponsored by Ford Motor Company Fund



Monica Lewis-Patrick, President and CEO, We the People of Detroit

This Tennessean turned Detroiter spent much of her life fighting for human rights, so when she saw Detroiters struggling with water access she stood up for them.

Monica Lewis-Patrick has been an activist since she was around 12 years old, when her school in her hometown of Kingsport, Tennessee was set to remove black literature from the curriculum. "In my small town, the African American population was less that 2%, but I wanted to take that class." She and a few friends organized students to resist the school board's decision – and they won. "That was the first time I was able to change policy," she says. But it would not be not the last.

Lewis-Patrick – who holds a bachelor's in sociology and a master's in both criminology and public administration from East Tennessee State University – advocated all through her college years, too. "I was very vocal that the Klan had marched through the campus (of historic Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina) and I was very much an advocate for students," she explains. When she saw that kids with special needs weren't getting all of the services they qualified for, she fought to make sure they got those services and even spent time managing an emergency crisis unit that serviced children in eight counties of northern Tennessee.

She moved to Detroit after grad school, a divorce and other life changes, but the city wasn't unfamiliar to Lewis-Patrick. Her grandparents lived in Detroit and she spent a lot of time visiting with them in her youth. "I always tell folks that I'm not a native Detroit, but I'm an adopted Detroiter," she says. Once in Detroit, Lewis-Patrick would continue her advocacy work and when talks of emergency management started in the late 2000s, she'd join forces with other parents and grandparents who were concerned about public education and wanted to make sure the people of Detroit had a voice.

"We gathered around a kitchen table and saw the work that needed to be done around the community and started more conversations driven by the community rather (than) the political voice doing the decision-making," she says. In 2009, this group of concerned citizens

would become We the People of Detroit, a community-based nonprofit that aims to educate and empower Detroit residents on important civil rights issues.

Water access has been one of We the People's biggest fights. "(Water access) is a daily struggle and part of that struggle is (that) there's not enough information about water access. Water rates have increased 120% and that makes it unaffordable," she says. "On top of that storm, there's little empathy and compassion for those persons, so some of the work that we've done is to bring more validity to the voice of the communities impacted by the water shut-offs."

In one year, Lewis-Patrick – known as the Water Warrior – and the We the People of Detroit team were able to save 800 homes from water debt foreclosure, and in 2014, she became president and CEO. "I was unanimously selected and elected by our board and I think it was also a true vote of confidence in me as a young leader," she says. "Our oldest leader is 89 and she set up the first methadone clinic under Mayor Young. So, to sit with this caliber of women that I'm speaking of, to be the youngest among them and for them to see me as a mentee, to know they saw something in me (is an honor)."

Lewis-Patrick says, "We're committed to building transformative work that our young people can build off. There's always some struggle but we don't have to have the same struggles. We don't have to just accept that things are just bad. We have the opportunity to really make this an equitable and compassionate and fair community we all can live in."









COMMUNITY STRONG

For more information on We the People of Detroit and the advocacy work they do for their communities, including details for their international water access meeting, Jan. 23-24, 2020, visit **wethepeopleofdetroit.com.**

"It takes a village to raise a child – but just one person to change a community."

Ford salutes longtime activist Monica Lewis-Patrick for her passion to make change. Monica has made it her personal mission as an educator, entrepreneur and human rights activist to ensure her peers and the community have a voice and access to critical resources. At Ford Motor Company, we understand the importance of developing and investing in programs that provide access to basic needs and services.

Ford Motor Company's partnership with Gleaners Community Food Bank helps to fight hunger and food insecurity in our region. Our support of Cass Community Social Services helps provide housing to previously homeless members of our community. And at our Ford Resource and Engagement Centers, we provide thousands of families with services such as free tax services and legal assistance.

Ford proudly commends Monica Lewis-Patrick for her advocacy efforts to not only find a way to make change on a broad scale but, most importantly, to make a difference in the daily lives of the people within the community.

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





DETROIT HEALTH DEPARTMENT OFFERS IMMUNIZATIONS FOR ALL AGES

Immunizations are a key part of keeping a community healthy and the Detroit Health Department keeps families covered through their immunization program. Christina Clark

Are you and your children up-to-date on your immunizations? If the answer is "no" or "I don't know," you're not alone. It's easy for busy parents to fall behind on the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) recommend vaccination schedule for their children and themselves – especially if money is a factor. The good news? You can get your entire family the vaccines they need to keep preventable diseases at bay through the Detroit Health Department's Immunization Clinic.

This walk-in clinic, located inside of the Samaritan Center on the city's east side, covers all community members, especially children, against 16 diseases including measles, meningitis and whooping cough by administering vaccinations regardless of a person's ability to pay.

"All community members need access to health care, including vaccination coverage for preventable diseases," says Teia Hill, RN, clinical operations manager for the immunization program. "The Vaccines for Children program is a fully-funded for those that are uninsured, under







"We try to make as many connections to the community as possible because the more people we vaccinate; the greater the chance of reducing the risk of communicable disease."

– Teia Hill, RN, clinical operations manager for the immunization program

insured or Medicaid eligible, and a portion of the adult program is funded through the Michigan Adult Vaccine Program, so there's no fee for those that qualify."

In addition, the Detroit Health Department also provides vaccinations to those who come in with private insurance and provide outreach in the community through schools, homeless shelters and transition housing, and they work with other organizations to vaccinate those who may not have the means or the ability to get to their primary care provider or the Samaritan Center.

"We try to make as many connections as we can to as many community members as possible. The more people we are able to vaccinate, the less issue we'll have with communicable disease, like chicken pox," Hill adds. "For our children, we do the complete CDC-recommended child immunization schedule, across the lifespan including babies, children, teens, adults and seniors. Annually, we provide the flu vaccines for all ages."

This breadth of coverage is especially important, because it only takes one person to spread disease.

"Many diseases have been greatly reduced or even eradicated, but earlier this year, the community recently experienced an outbreak of measles with more cases than we've seen a while – approximately 40 confirmed cases in southeast Michigan – and a few cases were traced and connect to traveling abroad," Hill says. "The great thing about being vaccinated is that you're protected wherever you go, here at home and your travels. The goal of the Detroit Health Department, in regard to immunizations, is protection and prevention."

And prevention is one of the reasons Detroit resident Makeyba Malone, who uses several other Detroit Health Department programs including SisterFriends and WIC, chose to get her 6-month-old daughter vaccinated. "What if your baby gets sick and something happens because you didn't get your baby vaccinated? I grew up not vaccinated, but she'll get everything she's supposed to get. She's going to get it until she decides she doesn't want to get it – but as long as she's in my care, she's getting (her vaccinations)," Malone says.

THE DETROIT HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S IMMUNIZATION CLINIC IS LOCATED INSIDE OF THE SAMARITAN CENTER AT

5555 CONNER ST., DETROIT

IMMUNIZATIONS ARE GIVEN ON A WALK-IN BASIS DURING REGULAR OPERATING HOURS

- **8 A.M.-5 P.M. MONDAY-TUESDAY & THURSDAY-FRIDAY**
- **9 A.M.-6 P.M., WEDNESDAY**
- **10 A.M.-4 P.M. SATURDAY**

313-876-IMMS (4667)

CITY OF DETROIT HEALTH Department

FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICES

In an effort to offer resources and education for mothers, fathers, extended family members and caregivers, the Detroit Health Department and Family Community Health Division focuses on offering family-centered services that not only engage moms, but also resonates with fathers and nontraditional family units. Some of the services include: immunizations, safe sleep classes, lead testing, WIC, iDecide Detroit Teen Health Center, SisterFriends Detroit.

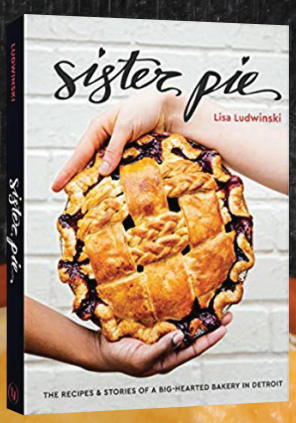
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE IMMUNIZATION CLINIC OR OTHER FAMILY HEALTH OFFERINGS PROVIDED BY THE DETROIT HEALTH DEPARTMENT, VISIT

DETROITMI.GOV/HEALTH

By Paris Giles

FLAKY Goodness

Whether you're all about the filling or you point your fork straight toward the piece with the butteriest looking crust, we can all agree that few desserts are as humble and delicious as the pie. Flaky crust, decadent filling and oh so pretty – need we say more? Simple as it may seem, nailing the perfect pie can be deceptively tricky. So, this Thanksgiving, skip the headache and instead snag a pie from one of these black- and women-owned shops. That way you can focus on getting that bird just right.



Rather DIY but need a little inspiration? Get *Sister Pie: The Recipes and Stories of a Big-Hearted Bakery in Detroit* on Amazon.



1 SWEET POTATO SENSATIONS

This family-owned bakery has garnered an almost cult following among sweet potato lovers. More than just pies, they serve up a menu of desserts and savory dishes. Catch that Sweet Potato Pecan Pie on our cover?

sweet review

"I got a no-added-sugar personal-sized sweet potato pie with whipped cream. Wow! It was autumn in every bite! Everything was A+. The pie was amazing. Service was friendly and attentive. Will surely be returning!" *via Google*

17337 Lahser Road, Detroit
sweetpotatosensations.com

2 LUSH YUMMIES PIE CO.

Even if you haven't stopped into their Eastern Market setup, you've probably seen those cute personal pies at grocery stores around town. Well treat yo' family and yo' self to a whole Lemon Butta Pie this holiday.

sweet review

"Lemon Butta Pie is freaking AMAZING!!!" *via Google*

2939 Russell St., Detroit
lushyummiespie.co

3 LOVE'S CUSTARD PIE

Go sweet or savory. Chocolate chess or chicken pot. Grab a slice from their Eastern Market spot or preorder the whole shebang. Either way, their slogan encourages you to "say yes to pie."

sweet review

"Chess pie is like a taste of the South. Sweet goodness all the way through." *via Facebook*

2934 Russell St., Detroit
lovescustardpie.com

4 SISTER PIE

This adorable woman-run bakery lives up the hype. Order a whole pie, a slice of Apple Butter Custard, a cookie or something savory for breakfast.

sweet review

"Salted Maple Pie is amazingly delicious and has become a staple in our home. I will continue to support this business despite the 30-minute drive. Can't wait to order holiday pies!" *via Google*

8066 Kercheval Ave., Detroit
sisterpie.com

By Arianna Smith

POWER *DRESSING*



BLACME CEO and founder TeShayla Coates says her clothing line is much more than just that – it's a movement and a revolution in itself. "The word 'black' itself is used as a negative term to mean an absence of light and good things. With the educational movement that is BLACME, we're reclaiming the word and using it to mean something all positive," says Coates.

Coates, who also owns the digital marketing agency Coates Communications, launched BLACME on Sept. 16. Products currently available on the site include graphic tees and hoodies as well as drinkware, jewelry, luggage accessories and makeup pouches.

Every item in the BLACME collection is printed with a pro-black, encouraging message so wearers can stand proud in their heritage. Coates says that she created the line as a response to what she calls the "African American identity crisis."

She says, "The media portrays Africa as this horrible diseased place, so we feel like we don't fit in there, but we don't fit in in America, either. 2019 marks 400 years exactly since the first Africans were brought to America. Slavery is over, but we still have a lot of work to do when it comes to how we're seen in this country."

Coates says she draws strength and encouragement from her Christian faith. "BLACME is an online presence right now, but I'd love to take it global and educate the diaspora at large."

For the brand's second phase, Coates hopes to introduce dresses and legwear and expand BLACME's presence to include speaking engagements, and increase activism.

blacme.com

A CUT ABOVE



Saginaw native Dawn Sanford learned the building blocks of running a business under the tutelage of her grandmother, who owned a diner called Chili Mac's. "Coming up around the restaurant and the property my parents owned instilled a good work ethic in me. I was a people person and I knew I'd own something someday," Sanford says. When she found out she was pregnant, she dropped the traditional desk job route, picked up the barbershop trade and never looked back.

"I was scared of having a child in the '70s, but my mother told me that I couldn't walk away from it like a man could. My family was my driving factor," she says. "Women didn't cut hair, but I did." This August, Sanford opened the doors to Shears & Shaves on the Avenue of Fashion, a culmination of years of study at the Michigan Barber School and half a lifetime of travel and experience.

Shears & Shaves is a high-quality, guest-oriented salon and spa offering a mix of services that blend nostalgia and the new school, from hot lather shaves and shoe shining to paraffin treatments and aromatherapy massages.

"I learned about dopamine and sweet smells and all that, because I want my shop to be the place in the community where anyone can come get everything done – and walk out feeling comfortable and refreshed," Sanford says.

Shears & Shaves is inclusive and mindful, double-sided for men and women and designed with care and style. Men and boys can play chess while getting loc touch-ups in the custom-designed chairs while ladies enjoy pedicures in spa recliners with disposable jets.

20202 Livernois Ave., Detroit • shearsandshaves.com

FEEDING FRENZY

As the commercial renaissance explodes downtown, neighborhood-centered organizations like Brilliant Detroit and the Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association work to ensure that every family, not just the ones within a few miles of the RiverWalk, can share a bright future.

Last month, Brilliant Detroit and BMBFA joined forces with Evenflo Feeding and installed designated breastfeeding spaces at all seven of Brilliant Detroit's "home-based hubs" across the city.

According to Brilliant Detroit's website, the hubs now offer "safe, judgment-free breastfeeding zones and new programs to provide moms the resources, tools and support they need to have a successful breastfeeding journey," and they're continuing to offer family enrichment services like tutoring and free activities.

"We don't just want our kids and our families to be taken care of, we want them to be enriched and uplifted every step of the way. A partnership with BMBFA was a match made in heaven," says Brilliant Detroit CEO Cindy Eggleton.

Brilliant Detroit's "belly to 8" philosophy contends that the time between infancy and age 8 are the most pivotal years in a child's life, which lines up perfectly with BMBFA's mission to strengthen maternal and community ties by reintroducing black mothers to the health and emotional benefits of breastfeeding and postpartum assistance.

BMBFA founder and executive director Kidadda Green says, "I was overjoyed with the relationship I built with my newborn through breastfeeding." She says she wants other moms and babies to have an opportunity to build similar bonds.

She says, "Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Club is not just about supporting breastfeeding. It's also about transforming lives and activating the social capital inherent in all African American communities for improved health and vitality of all infants."

brilliantdetroit.org
blackmothersbreastfeeding.org



DID YOU KNOW? ...

- Only 25% of infants are exclusively breastfed until at least 6 months old, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization.
- Black infants are 15% less likely to have ever been breastfed than white infants.
- Low rates of breastfeeding add more than $3 billion a year to medical costs for mom and baby in the United States.
- Breastfeeding can help lower a mother's risk of high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, ovarian cancer, breast cancer and postpartum depression.
- Infants who are breastfed have reduced risks of asthma, obesity, ear and respiratory infections, sudden infant death syndrome and gastrointestinal infections.
- When mothers exclusively breastfeed, their bodies naturally stop ovulating, preventing pregnancy at a 98% success rate for the first six months.
- Breast milk is more than 80% water and, therefore, breastfed babies do not need water before 6 months old – even in a hot climate.
- If all babies were exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life, an estimated 800,000 children would be saved every year.

Sources: CDC, World Health Organization, Planned Parenthood, World Vision International

WALK TALL

The third and final stage of The Corner Ballpark restoration wrapped last month with the completion of the Hank Greenberg Walk of Heroes exhibit, a permanent celebratory display of exceptional talent and Michigan's long athletic history.

Walk of Heroes is a collaboration of funding and effort from the Greenberg family, the William Davidson Foundation and Detroit PAL. According to the ballpark's website, the walk features 12 highlighted figures who "displayed exceptional character, innovation and trailblazing spirit in the sports field and the community at large," such as Will Robinson, Anne Doyle and good ol' Norman "Turkey" Stearnes.

The family of Daedra Charles-Furlow attended the debut on Oct. 3 and gave an emotional dedication. Charles-Furlow was a Women's Basketball Hall of Fame inductee and 1992 Olympic bronze medalist who died in her hometown of Detroit last year. She's among the first set of highlighted figures in the exhibit; they'll be rotated periodically. Jamerson says the goal for the Walk of Heroes is to make it as engaging and challenging as possible.

Features were chosen through a process that involved the PAL board, the community and Detroit youth. Detroit PAL CEO Robert Jamerson played PAL football himself as a kid, and he says the focus for the organization now is broadening horizons.

"The main thing we hope the walk exhibits is that sports is a great mental and physical dedication, but it can also be a facilitator to other things," he says. "Look at Jemele Hill killing it in sports journalism. With the values and lessons that sports and sports education gives you, the resources and avenues are endless."

detroitpal.org



Compiled by Paris Giles



Nichole Yvette Jenkins-Shepard and Lance Martin Hay Sr.

Nichole is director of human resources at The Siren Hotel in Detroit and Lance is a journeyman millwright for DTE. The couple lives in Woodhaven and honeymooned in California, cruising along the Pacific coast in a convertible Mustang. Here, they share details from their classic wedding day.

THE PROPOSAL

"It was so unexpected. We were shopping and we stopped off at Fred Meyer Jewelers in December 2017. Lance asked me what I liked and, of course, I love diamonds. I picked a beautiful ring figuring that he was making notes for future reference, but he asked me right then to marry him! I say 'yes' and he proceeded to settle the transaction."

THE DRESS

"I wore an ivory- and champagne-colored gown from David's Bridal. The bodice was strapless and adorned with stunning, floral metallic lace appliques that also cascaded down the skirt for a dramatic look. I accentuated my waistline with a beautiful and dainty beaded satin sash that added just the right amount of charm."

THE CAKE

"After dinner, we cut a delicious three-tiered cake, each layer accented with tan ribbons. The top tier was a lemon cake with a lemon mousse filling, the middle was a marble cake with chocolate mousse and the bottom layer was a decadent red velvet with raspberry mousse filling."

SOMETHING SPECIAL

"My eldest sister passed away on Sept. 12, 2018 unexpectedly at the age of 50, and the day before her death, we spoke about me running off and eloping since I've been married before. She encouraged me to have a wedding and wanted to help me plan it. I did all of this for Colette Dionne Jenkins Lackey. She only wanted the best for me, and I wanted to show her my gratitude by fulfilling her wishes. Her daughter was my junior bride, and a frame with her name set at my head table to recognize her absence." B

Date: July 20, 2019

Ceremony and reception: Portofino Restaurant & Banquet in Wyandotte

First dance: "Why I Love You" by MAJOR.

Photographer: Rick Dews Pictures

BLAC wants to help celebrate your nuptials. If you've gotten married recently and would like to be considered for our monthly matrimony feature, email a few of your best wedding photos to info@BLACdetroit.com. Put "WEDDING" in the subject line. Be sure to include your phone number. BLAC reserves the right to publish or omit photos.

By Arianna Smith



Born to Be Wild

Delorean "Delo" Brown wears a lot of hats, but she wants to make one thing clear: She is, first and foremost, an actual stand-up comedian.

"I'll say I'm a comedian and people will ask me for my Instagram, or ask me how many followers I have. I have to go, 'No sis, I go up on stage for 40 minutes, I have sets. I do stand-up!' It just goes to show you how media and the industry is changing," she says.

Brown, a Renaissance High School graduate and self-proclaimed "Six Mile girl," is a Detroiter through and through. She's currently living between Los Angeles and the Motor City, juggling an entertainment career that evolves by the second. You may have caught her onstage with B. Simone and D.C. Young Fly during Michigan State University's homecoming weekend.

"The comedy scene is smaller in Detroit. I didn't have much competition and I could carve my own lane a little. Here in LA, it's a big change. It's exciting to adapt. When people ask what I do, I tell them I do everything," Brown says.

Her plate is never empty. In addition to appearing in Diddy's *Funny AF* on REVOLT TV, she's been cast in an upcoming feature film *Sisters* by director Jahmar Hill, which recently started production.

And since January, she's been a traveling content creator for *College CurlFriends*, a web series for young black girls that glorifies natural hair in a comedic, healthy way. In May, London-based natural hair care brand Aunt Jackie's Curls and Coils asked Brown to represent the brand and *College CurlFriends* at its natural hair expo, Afro Hair & Beauty Live. "I'm an international bad bitch now!" Brown laughs. "Going to London for Aunt Jackie's Curls and Coils was an amazing experience. Seeing all those black people overseas (and) the artistry at the hair expo, and representing the show was great."

Brown says she realized she had a gift for creating giggles as a kid when someone else pointed out her potential star power. "It came natural to me, like I had an energy that gravitated people towards me. In middle school, we had an awards ceremony, and afterwards, a guy came up to me and suggested I should be a comedian. I always knew I would be something," she says.

"When I'm onstage, I'm a vessel to inspire others to live fearlessly and chase their dreams, even if they started a little late."

Even after that, comedy was never Brown's Plan A. She chose the career path later in life after realizing that what she was doing wasn't at all what she loved. "I worked as a college advisor at (Michigan State University). When I graduated, I tried law school," she says. "I even went for a master's in higher education. But none of it felt like me. I would work long shifts and come home drained and uninspired, and I knew I had a talent I wanted to share."

She says when she told her parents about her decision, they were "totally supportive."

"My parents are one of my biggest blessings," Brown says. "They were with me from the beginning and a lot of people don't have that support. It only took my mom two shows to warm up to the idea completely." She says that her position in the industry as a black woman comic is a constantly changing one.

"Attitudes are shifting, you know – slowly but surely. People used to cringe at the idea of a female comic because they prejudge us and our topics and stories, but things like *A Black (Lady) Sketch Show* are making more avenues for us," she says. "Funny black girls are blowing up right now!"

Brown describes her comedy as "raw, but not vulgar." In her sets, she talks openly about aspects of her life like her weight, relationships, family, friends and anything else that comes to mind.

"I draw a lot of inspiration from comics like Sommore and Monique," Brown says. "I especially like the way Mike Epps can turn pain and struggle into silliness the way he does." She says that she was tagged to do *Funny AF* within months of moving to Los Angeles. She marvels at the speed with which everything is happening, but she's not surprised.

"This new movie role (in *Sisters*) is so different from what I usually do and I'm still having a ball. Now that I'm getting started, I'm not being shy about anything. I plan to sell out the Garden one day."

Her comedy is for her, she says, but she hasn't forgotten the people watching. "My career is bigger than me," Brown says. "When I'm onstage, I'm a vessel to inspire others to live fearlessly and chase their dreams, even if they started a little late." B

Managing the Triple Threat of Being Black, Queer and a Senior



BY DESIREE COOPER

It's that special season when we often think about those in need. But year after year, there is one group that is easily overlooked by the spirit of giving: our elderly neighbors, especially LGBTQ seniors of color.

To be sure, it isn't easy to age in this society, no matter who you are. As seniors live longer, they often outlive their own resources – and the financial and emotional resources of their families to care for them.

But LGBTQ seniors face even more complicated challenges. Because many came of age before their unions were recognized by law in some states, they don't have access to partner benefits. Often their life partners are excluded from everything from medical decision-making to inheritance, and some nursing homes refuse to allow same-sex partners to room together. Some LGBTQ seniors find themselves going back into the closet in order to avoid rampant homophobia in the health care and senior care systems.

Those who came out when they were younger may have been rejected by family and friends, forcing them to create new families with their peers. These chosen families, however, may lack intergenerational relationships. As LGBTQ seniors age, the friends that they've relied upon for years are aging, too.

Whatever issues LGTBQ seniors face, they are multiplied when applied to a person of color. According to Dr. Karen Fredriksen Goldsen, lead researcher on the 2019 "Aging With Pride: National Health, Aging and Sexuality/Gender Study," blacks experience the highest levels of lifetime LGBTQ-related discrimination and lower levels of household income, education, affirmation of their identities and social support compared to non-Hispanic white LGBTQ seniors.

Keisha Watkins-Dukhie runs SAGE Metro Detroit's Friendly Caller Program, which helps aging LGBTQ seniors overcome these obstacles. SAGE is a national organization founded in 1978 to advocate for and support LGBTQ elders. Since 2015, SAGE Metro Detroit has been serving Macomb, Wayne, Washtenaw and Oakland counties from its offices at Affirmations in Ferndale and the Hannan Center in Detroit.

Through the Friendly Caller Program, trained volunteers agree to call their clients three times a week and chat for at least 15 minutes. Once a connection is made, the pair can talk as often and for as long they'd like.

"There are an estimated 60,000 LGBT adults over the age of 65 in Michigan," Watkins-Dukhie says. "The Friendly Caller Program can't reach all of them, but for the ones we reach, it really helps ease the feelings of abandonment and isolation."

Sam is a 61-year-old gay man and retired autoworker. Although his family stood by him after he came out, he has lost many family members over the years. A shy person who was never prone to joining groups or going to clubs, he became increasingly isolated as he aged.

Some LGBTQ seniors find themselves going back into the closet in order to avoid rampant homophobia in the health care and senior care systems.

"A lot of times I'm bored and home by myself," says Sam, who found out about the Friendly Caller Program through another senior. "We talk about anything – how are we doing, how are my doctor's appointments. It's just nice to hear someone's voice to call and say hello."

While a few phone calls a week may not be the sole cure for chronic isolation, connection is a powerful antidote to depression. A 2016 survey of the policy needs of LGBTQ seniors conducted by the UCLA School of Law revealed that social support among sexual minorities is associated with better health, reduced stigma, decreased depression and a higher quality of life.

"One person called us around the holidays last year," Watkins-Dukhie says. "With no contact with his family, it's sadder for him around that time. When we started checking in on him, he wasn't going out and participating in anything. By May, he was going to groups and getting outside. We've seen a (180) in his demeanor. Now he's a caller in the program."

During this season of giving and as we approach the holidays, it can be important to give your resources to help others in need. "But to make a real impact on our seniors, all we need is a little bit of your time," she says.

To volunteer for the SAGE Metro Detroit's Friendly Caller Program, call 248-567-2363 or email kwdukhie@sagemetrodetroit.org. B

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

BALANCE OWED

BY SHANNON SHELTON • PHOTO BY LAUREN JEZIORSKI

When enslaved Africans Americans were freed, they were promised 40 acres of land and a mule to help tend their newly acquired ground. But as power shifted, we got lost in the shuffle and a promise went unrealized. Instead, the only people ever compensated for the abolishment of that most peculiar of peculiar institutions were former slave owners – and, in the 154 years since, we've seen the racial wealth gap steadily widen and our children fall further behind. As we prepare for another transition of power, the conversation around reparations has been reignited and many are once again asking ... ▸


BALANCE
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...
When will we
finally get our
piece of the pie?



Near the end of the Civil War in 1865, Union Army General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, calling for the redistribution of confiscated southern coastal lands to newly freed slaves. Under the order, a family of four would receive 40 acres of former Confederate territory to help usher them into their new lives as freedmen, which included reaping the financial benefits of their labor.

It was a radical idea for its time, one developed with input from black leaders, white abolitionists and white Radical Republicans in Congress. And it was a plan that would never come to fruition, as President Andrew Johnson – who took office after Abraham Lincoln was assassinated – nullified the order, letting the land return to those who had taken up arms against the United States.

But the dream of reparations never died among black Americans. For decades, activists continued the conversation, scholars wrote treatises and organizations continued to beat the reparations drum despite gaining minimal support outside majority black circles. Until now.

In 2014, The Atlantic published "The Case for Reparations," a 15,000-word piece by acclaimed writer Ta-Nehisi Coates, launching the reparations discussion back into the public arena. Five years later, Coates would testify during a Congressional committee hearing convened to address H.R.40, the bill that would authorize the federal government to develop reparations proposals for African Americans.

The topic has emerged in presidential debates, and multiple Democratic candidates have publicly expressed support for reparations outright – or for further study on the issue. Whether or not the issue gains enough momentum to lead to tangible action, nearly all supporters agree that 2019 has been a watershed moment – providing the most forward motion toward making reparations a reality since 1865.

"I predict that the revised H.R.40 bill, currently sponsored by Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) will be successfully enacted," says JoAnn Watson, a pastor, activist and former Detroit councilwoman. Watson serves on the board of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA). "Currently," she says, "there are a record number of co-sponsors and a surge of support never before witnessed."

DETROIT'S PIECE

While Coates' essay helped revive the national discussion, many groups and scholars have been working tirelessly for decades to further the reparations cause – and much of that work has local roots. "It was Detroit that catalyzed the first introduction of H.R.40, which started as a 'study' bill and has now evolved into a bill to remedy the well-documented repair required after 400 years," Watson says.

Former U.S. Rep. John Conyers (D-Michigan) introduced H.R.40 in every Congressional session since 1989 until his resignation in 2017. Watson, who once served as public liaison for Conyers, said she has been involved with reparations advocacy for 50 years. Now 68, she credits her introduction to the issue to leaders such as Imari Obadele, Rev. Milton Henry and "Reparations Ray" Jenkins, a Detroit-based activist whom Watson nicknamed herself on her radio talk show for his tireless advocacy. It was Jenkins, Watson said, who first encouraged Conyers to sponsor H.R.40.

"It's not $500 billion in financial assistance. It's (a) $200-$500 billion payment of a debt that is owed."

In June 2019, Detroit hosted two national reparations conferences in the same week – one from the city-based Reparations Labor Union and the other from N'COBRA. In July, not long after the Congressional hearings for H.R.40, a group of 2020 presidential candidates discussed reparations during the annual NAACP convention at TCF Center and tackled questions related to reparations during two days of Democratic debates in Detroit.

During those debates, a national viewing audience heard Beto O'Rourke, the former Congressman from El Paso, Texas speak in support of reparations, saying he would sign H.R.40 into law if he becomes president. But it was spiritual leader and motivational speaker Marianne Williamson – who once led Warren-based Church of Today, now known as Renaissance Unity – who perhaps showed the strongest support of cash compensation. "It's not $500 billion in financial assistance," the presidential candidate said in response to the question posed by CNN's Don Lemon. "It's (a) $200-$500 billion payment of a debt that is owed."

Watson thinks it's fitting that Detroit has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the reparations movement, considering that the city birthed many national black organizations and businesses, and long had the highest rates of black homeownership in the United States.

UP FROM 40

From the arrival of the first Africans to Jamestown in 1619 to the end of the Civil War in 1865 to the ratification of the 13th Amendment, Africans and their descendants contributed significantly to the growth of the American economy through forced labor.

The United States seemed open to the idea of reparations for slaves immediately after the end of the Civil War. Sherman, the Union Army general, promised 40 acres of land to freed slave families after the war, and he suggested that the Army lend them a mule to tend their new land.

Johnson's nixing of the order effectively ended the federal reparations discussion for more than 150 years. But the 40-acres-and-a-mule idea never died in the minds of the black collective, and a colloquial understanding of the phrase exists among many black Americans today. Filmmaker Spike Lee might have made the most public homage to the idea of a promise unfulfilled, naming his production company 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks.

Reparations proponents point to the wealth gap between black descendants of U.S. slaves that started with centuries of forced, uncompensated labor and continued through the decades of Jim Crow laws, segregation, real estate redlining and other regulations that limited or restricted African Americans' access to property ownership and higher wages. Without the ability to collect and build generational wealth, black wealth and earnings have lagged far behind those of whites, ▸

BALANCE
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contributing to disproportionate rates of poverty among black Americans today.

The Federal Reserve's 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances reported that the median wealth of black households is $16,000 – compared with $163,000 for whites. Such themes have been articulated for decades in academic texts and activist work, but Coates' 2014 essay represented a breakthrough. Earlier this year, Rep. Jackson Lee again introduced H.R.40 – as she has done since Conyers' departure – and 2020 presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-New Jersey) introduced a companion bill, S.1083, marking the first time a reparations bill emerged post-Reconstruction.

The Senate bill has 12 co-sponsors, including 2020 presidential candidates Sen. Kamala Harris (D-California), Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Massachusetts), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota). Another co-sponsor, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-New York), ended her presidential campaign in late August. In June, a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee sponsored hearings for H.R.40, marking the first time in the bill's 30-year history that members of Congress chose to move it to a hearing.

A subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee held a three-and-a-half-hour session on the bill on June 19, with testimony taking place before a packed audience and three overflow rooms filled with observers who came to Capitol Hill to be a part of history. Speakers included Coates, economist and former Bennett College president Julianne Malveaux and actor Danny Glover.

A New York Times article noted the symbolism of the entire process. The hearing took place on June 19 – Juneteenth – and the numeral in H.R 40 had long been selected in reference to the 40 acres and a mule promised to freed black slaves in 1865.

As of late October, the bill has 119 co-sponsors, and at least 11 Democratic presidential candidates for 2020 have gone on record in support of immediate reparations or the launch of an exploratory commission. "The superb scholarly work of Ta-Nehisi Coates, as represented in The Atlantic, and in his statement before the U.S. House of Representatives' reparations hearing on June 19 generated a huge boost for the reparations movement worldwide," Watson says.

DEBTS SETTLED

Reparations supporters point to the fact that the United States has paid financial compensation for those wronged by federal government policies, notably to Japanese Americans sent to internment camps during World War II. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act, which issued $20,000 to each surviving victim of the internment camps. More than 82,000 survivors were alive at the time of the bill's passage.

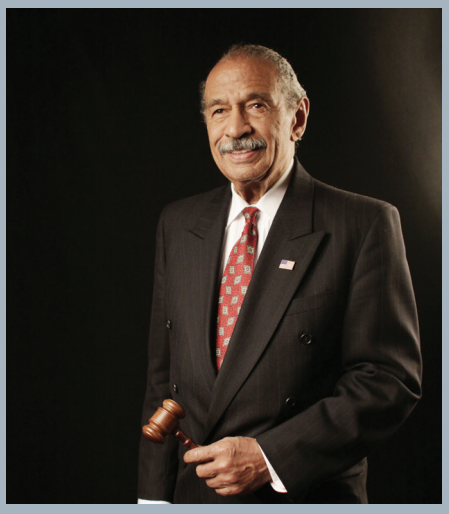
Other western nations have also provided cash compensation to address government wrongdoing. Germany has paid more than $70 billion in reparations to Israel and to Jewish organizations for its killing and forced labor of Jews during the Holocaust. Critics of reparations for African Americans say the difference in this instance is that no former slaves are still living, and determining who would be considered eligible for reparations could prove daunting. Supporters counter by noting that the legacy of Jim Crow and segregation – which persisted through much of the 20th century – still affects black Americans today, including many who lived through it.

There's also the question of how reparations would be paid. Cash payments? Free college tuition? Zero-interest loans for homes? A variety of scholars, politicians and economists have proposed myriad possibilities.

For all the interest on the Democratic side of the aisle, any reparations measure would struggle in the Republican-controlled Senate. "I don't think reparations for something that happened 150 years ago for whom none of us currently living are responsible is a good idea," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) said to news outlets a day before the House committee hearing in June.

But the 2020 elections could dramatically change the face of Congress and the presidency. And if a reparations-friendly president enters the Oval Office with the support of Congress, the long-denied dream of 40 acres and a mule could finally come to fruition. B

SHANNON SHELTON IS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST AND DETROIT NATIVE.



IN MEMORIAM:

JOHN CONYERS

May 16, 1929-Oct. 27, 2019

U.S. Rep. John Conyers died on died Oct. 27 at age 90, a day before this issue went to press. A representative for 53 years, Conyers was the longest-serving African American in Congressional history. As highlighted in this piece, Conyers introduced the H.R.40 bill in every Congressional session from 1989 until he resigned in 2017. The bill established the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans, charged with examining slavery and discrimination against black Americans from 1619 to present and recommending appropriate remedies.

Conyers was elected in 1964 and, throughout his career, he'd prove one of the House's most liberal members. He was an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War, and when Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968, Conyers headed the charge to make Dr. King's birthday a national holiday. Of course, Conyers succeeded in garnering a victory for King – and for all of us – when, in 1983, it was declared that the third Monday of every January would be Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Conyers was also a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus, established in 1971 and comprised of mostly black members of Congress committed to advocating for African American and other marginalized communities, fighting for criminal justice reform, combatting voter suppression and the like. Conyers resigned in 2017 amidst accusations by two women of unwelcome sexual advances. He and his lawyers fiercely denied the allegations; still, he was forced to step down. Controversy notwithstanding, Conyers' legacy of determination and fortitude stands sturdy.



BLAC LEGENDS

Conversations with longtime leaders and difference makers

THORNETTA DAVIS

Detroit's Queen of Blues talks barriers to access, her Kresge fellowship and the power of social media. ▸

By Paris Giles • Photos by Lauren Jeziorski

Less than 48 hours back from Berlin, Thornetta Davis agrees to meet us at Norma G's in Jefferson Chalmers on a sunny afternoon in late October. Detroit's Queen of Blues arrives fashionably late, but that's understandable. Jetlag aside, a drip this strong takes time. She's covered in black sequins head-to-toe, from the tank down to the cowboy boots. A colorful beaded and embroidered floor-length shawl of sorts, designed for her by an English woman, drapes overtop and jibes perfectly with the equally vibrant Caribbean eatery. As we prepare to chat, we're interrupted by two restaurant employees who apparently had no idea that when they came to work on a would-be normal Thursday they'd find thee Thornetta Davis. The ladies swarm and gush. One takes Davis' hand and gives a little bow, closing her eyes and shaking her head in the way that says more than words ever could.

As the fanfare settles, I notice that Davis is welling up. Husband James brings her a Norma G's cocktail napkin to dab her eyes, and she tells me that she grew up in this neighborhood, so to get showered with that much love this close to home is especially hefty. It's an extraordinary moment when you consider that Davis has been singing professionally for over 30 years and still, humble as ever, a fan interaction has the power to make her weep. Her soulful voice, down-to-earth spirit and relatable songs have endeared her to audiences worldwide, but she'll forever be a hometown sweetheart.

Davis' most recent album, *Honest Woman*, was released independently in 2016 to critical acclaim, garnering eight Detroit Music Awards in 2017. In 2018, she was named a Kresge Artist Fellow. As she finishes the last of the rum punch that owner Lester Gouvia whipped up for her, and as backpack-slung kids walk past the front window in steady waves, Davis and I talk an evolving industry, vibing with her audience and singing the blues.

You've been at this for over three decades. How has your work evolved from those first songs to what you do now?

I think, me being honest. Because I can't even sing a song if I don't relate to it. So, I'm very honest in my music. I always say, 'I'm telling my business, not yours.' And I feel that people relate to the things that I'm saying. The album *Honest Woman* took me 20 years. I had been writing songs throughout the whole 20-year process. Between *Sunday Morning Music* and *Honest Woman*, I released a covers CD, because I was performing at this club on Wednesdays and it got to be a real hot spot – Music Menu – and (I was) doing all cover tunes and everybody was like, 'You really need to record this' and I did, and that did well for me. But I always knew I needed to record another original album. When I turned 50, I went into the studio and it still took me three years to finish (*Honest Woman*), but I'm so thankful that I didn't let somebody else produce me. A lot of songs on this album were therapeutic for me. It got me over a really bad relationship, and I feel like that's the reason I was in that relationship: So I could write these songs. God gave me something out of it. And then the last song that I wrote was "Set Me Free," and I was praying for God to just release me from my fears, release me from all the negativity that I feel holds me back, and it's one of my favorite songs on the album.

It seems that with the rise of social media, signing to a big label is no longer the golden ticket that it used to be. Independent artists are making their own way and rules. What do you think of this shift?

I think it's beautiful. I look at the young people and you guys are busy taking care of business, going for what you want. People in my age bracket, we were always told to 'stay back there' and 'stay in your place,' and I wasn't raised in a family that was really confident in themselves. I had to bust through all those walls of being insecure and not believing that I could do it, because I wanted to sing so badly. So, when social media came about, I had to embrace it, too. I was trying not to do any of it, but I knew if I wanted to stay in this game, I had to be a part of all of this. So, I'm constantly on my phone, taking pictures, doing video, blah blah blah. I'm still not doing it as much as a lot of folks out there are doing it, which means I need to hire someone to do it, but that's the part I can't give up.

When you take the stage, what are you hoping to communicate to your audiences?

I want people to have fun. I want to uplift, I want to bring some joy in people's lives. I see people out there in the audience sometimes, and the look on their face is like, 'Mmm, prove something to me,' then by the end of the night, they're up dancing and singing. Some of them don't like blues but their friend dragged them along, but I tell them, 'I don't just do blues, I mix in things like R&B and disco.' I might throw a disco in there just to see somebody get up and shake their butt. But I love performing and making people happy. Some people come to me and say, 'You made me cry with that one.' That's emotion that you probably aren't used to expressing, and I love that. Sometimes, we got to get it out. So, whatever emotion I can evoke that makes you feel better, I love that.

And I'd imagine that energy is reciprocal?

Yes! It comes right back. I could be having a hard time and here I've got to go perform, but when I'm on stage performing, whatever I had that made me feel bad that day goes right away. I feel blessed to be able to do this and I feel God gave this to me – it's a mission.

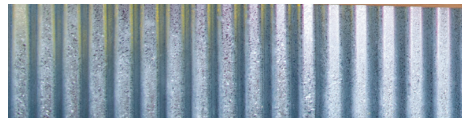
What's it been like for you navigating a mostly male world as a woman?

Well, in the beginning, I was told what to do and why. And that's OK, because I didn't know what to do and I was willing to just stand back. When I'm in charge of doing things, I think people respect you when they see that you mean business. They respect me as

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> *I want to uplift, I want to bring some joy in people's lives. I see people out there in the audience sometimes, and the look on their face is like, 'Mmm, prove something to me,' then by the end of the night, they're up dancing and singing.*

far as I know, and if I'm not afraid to ask for what I want then I'm happy with what I got. The genre of music that I'm in, right now, I'm finding some kind of color barrier thing going on. Coming up from the South, back in the day, black folks didn't want to do anything with blues music. It reminded them too much of hard times, so we put it down. And then white folks fell in love with it and picked it up. When I go down to the blues conferences – down in Memphis is where they hold all that stuff – they actually asked me and several other black people to get up and talk about that. So, they're trying to pull it together down there and the festivals are listening to us and seeing what we're saying. It's like, we're trying to come together, and I think that's what music does: It brings us back together. Now I want to bust into that country scene.

You were a Kresge Artist Fellow in 2018. What did that recognition mean to you?

Oh, my God, to be recognized by Kresge Arts and in my hometown, my city, it was a blessing. And the money was good, too. I bought my tour bus. It came right on time, because at the time we bought the van, I started getting these gigs all over, so we all just jump in the van, head to our gig. Thank you, Kresge.

You released Honest Woman in 2016. Are you working on a new project?

Not right now, physically. I'm writing in my head, thinking about who I want on the next record and reaching out to different artists and saying, 'Hey, I'd love to work with you on the next record.' Some of them go, 'Oh, that sounds great,' but, you know, I've heard that before, so I'm willing to go to their city, knock on their door and say, 'Look, man, I'm here.' But I'm not afraid and I'm not worried, because it took me 20 years for this one and I'm in no hurry, honestly. This other CD is gonna be even bigger, I feel, and it's gonna come right on time.



What has Detroit taught you about singing the blues?

Detroit is the blues, you know. We go through it, up and down, we been through it. If we can survive all of the years of the mess that I've seen in my life in Detroit... I remember when downtown was vibrant as a child, and I remember when it was desolate. You wouldn't want to be caught down there at night. And now it's back again – that's the blues. So, being a part of the blues in the city of Detroit just feels natural to me, to my core. And I feel like God gave me this – it's a gift. We all go through it, and life gives you the blues.

PARIS GILES IS BLAC DETROIT'S SENIOR EDITOR.

Catch Thornetta at The Token Lounge in Westland on Nov. 30 at 8 p.m.

Ask the Expert

HEALTH ADVICE FROM ASCENSION MICHIGAN



Jenese Reynolds-Gibbs, M.D.

What are the early signs of Alzheimer's disease?

Imagine an incurable disease with no known cause. It slowly steals your memory; eventually rendering you unable to speak or perform the most basic daily activities. That's Alzheimer's disease.

"Alzheimer's is a complex disease that includes a gradual disruption in memory and learning skills," says Dr. Jenese Reynolds-Gibbs, M.D., a family physician with Ascension Medical Group. "The age of symptom appearance is usually in the mid-60s. It is not reversible, but some medications and interventions can slow the progression."

According to Emory University's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death for all Americans, and the fourth leading cause of death for older African Americans. Additionally, Emory notes that African American elders are two to three times more likely to have Alzheimer's disease compared to Caucasians.

Researchers at Washington University in St. Louis have developed a blood test that "shows promise" in detecting Alzheimer's at a very early stage. However, it's too soon to know whether the test will be truly effective. In the meantime, observing your loved one is key.

Dr. Reynolds-Gibbs encourages family and friends to be especially alert for any problems with memory and other early warning signs of Alzheimer's.

"Aside from memory issues, early signs of Alzheimer's may include difficulty finding words, impairment of judgment, or being easily distracted when completing familiar tasks," she says.

Not all forgetfulness signals Alzheimer's, though. Dr. Reynolds-Gibbs explains, "Age-related or 'normal' forgetfulness usually occurs periodically. It may happen when the person is preoccupied with other things, but they remember the items or tasks later."

"Family members should be concerned if the memory issues are progressive and include very familiar things like names of loved ones, or if there are personality changes," she adds.

Past medical history plays a large role in developing Alzheimer's disease. "Some risk factors for dementia include diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and obesity. Preventing and/or controlling these conditions can reduce the risk of developing dementia," Dr. Reynolds-Gibbs says.

If you have concerns about an aging loved one, Dr. Reynolds-Gibbs urges an exam with your primary care provider. "Early detection may help slow the process and help the family plan for the future," she says.

Loved ones that refuse to see a doctor, or will not admit there are problems, present a special situation. Dr. Reynolds-Gibbs encourages family members to learn all they can about the disease, then approach the person.

"I recommend expressing those concerns one-on-one with the person. A group approach can be overwhelming or threatening," she says.

Seeing a doctor is vital to rule out other illnesses. "Memory issues and behavioral changes may be due to reversible causes like low thyroid, vitamin deficiencies, depression, brain tumors or medication interactions," Dr. Reynolds-Gibbs says. "It may take several conversations before they are willing to seek medical attention."

If the person absolutely refuses to see their doctor, Dr. Reynolds-Gibbs encourages family members to take advantage of dementia caregiver support groups.

"Family members have to be an advocate for their loved ones," she says. "It is OK to seek another opinion."

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

2012

BLAC's 20th Anniversary Throwback

A year-long series on where we've been ▸

2012



Art and play had a real-deal moment in the pages of BLAC in 2012. We belly danced, got to know the city's most respected independent musicians, discovered how the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy turned the RiverWalk into a hot spot, and we coveted the year's best fashion. In February, we caught up with extras from the remake of the 1976 classic movie *Sparkle*. The 2012 version starred Jordin Sparks, Carmen Ejogo, Tika Sumpter and Whitney Houston, and was set in Detroit during the Motown era. And the BLAC annual calendar made its debut – well, sort of. Technically, the calendar was born in 2011 but as a one-off experiment, a piggyback off of photographer Noah Stephens' The People of Detroit project. As it happened, y'all loved it so much that we brought it back officially in 2012 as a home birthed and bred staple. And in the years since, it's become as expected and sought after as candied yams on Thanksgiving.

Feb '12



Still a Thing

The QLINE can get you from point A to point A1 and Kanye West is a now a religious leader, but these topics featured in BLAC in 2012 were a thing then and are still relevant today:

1. **Environmentally friendly cars**
2. **Voter suppression**
3. **Spiritual guidance**
4. **The art of storytelling**
5. **Travel tips**

High Time

In our September issue, we explored the world of legalized cannabis, particularly medical marijuana. In the wake of the 2009 Medical Marihuana Act, we saw marijuana gardens and hydroponic supply shops pop up across Detroit and beyond, and we noted a shift in attitude towards weed use. We chatted with "bud tenders" and activists like Richard Clement who were fighting for our right to party – and for the ailing's right for relief from chronic pain, PTSD and chemotherapy-induced nausea. Last November, Michigan voted to legalize the use of recreational marijuana. Potheads everywhere sent up jubilant smoke signals in anticipation of what this would mean for the cannabis industry, but many others were slower to celebrate. What happens to the thousands of mostly black people sitting in jail cells on weed charges? Will they and others with marijuana-related felonies be forced out of this booming, legitimized business? The jury's still out.









In '12

President Barack Obama beats Mitt Romney to win a second term

Maine, Maryland and Washington become the first states to **legalize gay marriage**

Gabby Douglas becomes the first U.S. gymnast in history to win both the all-around and team gold medals



"I got bronchitis … ain't nobody got time for that!" – Sweet Brown

Full Spectrum

Writer Amy Kuras sat down with actress Holly Robinson Peete for BLAC's April issue. Peete's son R.J. was diagnosed with autism in 2000, and in the years since, she'd become a fierce advocate for him and for the autism community at large. Ahead of our sister mag Metro Parent's fifth annual Living With Autism Workshop – for which she was the keynote speaker – Peete discussed parenting a teen with autism, available resources and raising awareness in the black community.



Your son is 14 now. How are the turbulent teen years affected by his autism?

For us, the hardest things are the social circles – you know, those packs of boys that run wild on a middle school campus. We'd been so fortunate to have a great elementary school that had groups of kids who just embraced him and lifted him up, and now that they are in sixth grade and going on to the next level, things are starting to go a little downhill. That's hard for any teen, but when you are on the spectrum and you have social deficits, it's especially challenging.

What needs to change to make evidence-based care available to all families?

One of the things that doesn't need to change is the definition of autism. We don't need to narrow the scope of who needs what. If anything, we need to broaden our resources, so children all over the spectrum can be treated. More than anything it's empathy. It's the overall theme of empathy for what's going on with these children. Everyone should help, even by spreading the word that autism is treatable and that children with autism have thoughts and feelings. Even if they can't ultimately express that, they're there, they can hear you. If we got started there, we would be doing real well.

Why do you think that the African American community seems to have less awareness about autism?

I think it's twofold. One, there's a cultural stigma in the African American community – not all of us have this in our families, but most African Americans will read this and shake their heads and say, "That's my family." We tend to really look the other way when it comes to mental health or developmental disabilities. It's a shameful thing and can be very embarrassing. Plus, there is less access to diagnosis. There is a lot of disagreement in the autism community, but the one thing every agrees on is that early intervention is key. Those are things I hope we will abolish in the African American community, because minority kids are getting diagnosed two to four years later, and that's not OK.



No Justice, No Peace

A bag of Skittles, an Arizona iced tea and a hoodie was enough for George Zimmerman to stalk and kill Trayvon Martin on Feb. 26, just three weeks after Martin's 17th birthday. Zimmerman was charged with second-degree murder in April and during the three-week trial, his lawyers invoked Florida's now-infamous "stand your ground" law. The jury deliberated for 16 hours and ultimately found Zimmerman not guilty on all charges. Protests ensued and debates about race in America were reignited, a precursor to the Black Lives Matter movement.





Hip-hop princess **Blue Ivy Carter** is born in New York City

Octavia Spencer wins the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for *The Help*



History Highlight

On Sept. 11, terrorists attacked the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, killing U.S. ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other U.S. nationals. President Obama and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were at the forefront of the controversy and subsequent two-year investigation, which faulted the administration for security lapses. B



PARTNERING WITH DETROITERS & ADVANCING THEIR HEALTH PRIORITIES

DETROIT HEALTH DEPARTMENT WELCOMES NEW CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

Denise Fair accepted the role in early September and is already making strides to expand programming to keep every Detroiter healthy.

It takes a village to raise a child. The Detroit Health Department delivers that level of family support with a variety of health care programming that's set to expand under the guidance of new Chief Public Health Officer Denise Fair. She was hired in early September and has since been making strides to improve the health and welfare of all Detroiters.

"My goal was always to sit at the table and make a real difference in the community. The staff here are so passionate and committed to the city of Detroit," Fair says of the Detroit Health Department.

Fair has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Michigan, a master's in public health from the University of California at Berkeley and more than 12 years of leadership experience in the health care field. She's been reviewing the community health assessment, developed with resident feedback prior to her arrival, and working closely with Detroiters and other community stakeholders to understand the city's health care needs and implement policy to improve outcomes.

The community health assessment was an 18-month citywide process involving in-depth research, focus groups, interviews, surveys and data walks with residents, hospitals, community-based organizations and others to develop a vision for health in Detroit, identifying existing assests and setting priorities. The next step is to develop a robust implementation plan to address these priorities over the next three to five years.







SISTERFRIENDS DETROIT

One way Fair is looking to make a difference is through enhancing programming, like SisterFriends, to protect young children and reduce infant mortality rates in the city.

This grassroots initiative, which was launched in August of 2017, aims to "connect pregnant moms and families to existing programs and resources – and to each other" by partnering moms who have parenting experience – "big sisters" – with moms-to-be to act as guiding mentors through the first year of motherhood.

"When a mom is struggling and has no one to support her, she can call on her SisterFriend," she says.

Beyond SisterFriends, the Detroit Health Department also offers education and support for new parents through a safe sleep initiative that teaches new parents the appropriate way for infants to sleep, and distributes free Pack 'n Plays to support safe sleep practices. Eligible familes also have access to WIC services, which ensure that all Detroiters, not just moms, have access to nutritious food.

iDECIDE DETROIT CLINIC

In addition to infant health, Fair and the Detroit Health Department are focusing on the issue of teen pregnancy through the iDecide Detroit Clinic, located in the Butzel Family Recreation Center.

Each year, some 1600 Detroit teens, ages 15-19, become pregnant – a number that's nearly 2.5 times higher than the rest of the state – largely due to a lack of reproductive health education and options.

"The iDecide Detroit Clinic is a safe place for teens to come and talk about their sexual health needs," Fair says. While focused on teens, the center, which is a top priority for the Detroit Health Department, will treat both men and women of all ages and provide condoms; birth control; testing for sexually transmitted infection, including HIV; and pregnancy testing, along with counseling and education on reproductive health.

LEAD PREVENTION & WATER SHUT-OFF PILOTS

And the offerings at the Detroit Health Department don't stop with teens either. Residents in need of immunizations, hearing and vision services, and animal welfare services can find support, as can those who need their children tested for lead. The Detroit Health Department recommends all children under 6 get tested for lead each year, especially if the family home was built prior to 1978 and contains old paint.

Through the Detroit Health Department's Lead Prevention Pilot program, made possible by a $1.2-million city investment, lead advocates visit homes in the top 5 zip codes where the highest levels of childhood lead poisoning have been found. Advocates provide door-to-door outreach and in-home lead testing – plus education on how families can protect themselves from lead along with lead-based cleaning kits. This program is set to expand thanks to a partnership with the city's Housing and Revitalization Department and a $9.7-million HUD grant.

In collaboration with the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, the Detroit Health Department has also developed a Water Shut-Off Pilot, which took the best practices from around the country to prevent water shut-offs and brought them to some of the most at-risk areas in the city. This pilot runs on a three-step process that involves telephone and door-to-door outreach to develop a plan of action that is designed to address the reasons behind a late water bill.

Fair says she looks forward to her role with the Detroit Health Deparment. "This is not a job for me – it's really a calling," she says. But, she adds, "I can't do this alone. It's going to take an entire city to back me up, and I'm going to back up the city to make a difference and create a healthy environment where everyone can thrive."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE DETROIT HEALTH DEPARTMENT, VISIT **DETROITMI.GOV/HEALTH.**

CITY OF DETROIT
HEALTH Department

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- **IMMUNIZATIONS:** 313-876-4667
- **LEAD SAFE DETROIT AND THE LEAD PREVENTION PROGRAM:** 313-876-0133
- **LEAD OUTREACH PILOT PROGRAM:** 313-876-2029
- **IDECIDE DETROIT:** 833-9-DECIDE
- **SISTERFRIENDS DETROIT:** 313-961-2229
- **ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL:** 313-224-6356
- **VISION AND HEARING:** 313-876-0134
- **WIC:** 313-876-4555
- **CHILDREN'S SPECIAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES:** 313-876-4223
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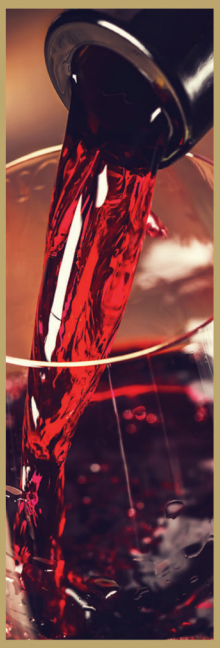
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access

DETROIT | NOVEMBER 2019

Compiled by Paris Giles



24 SUNDAY
ANTHONY HAMILTON

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



8 FRIDAY

A$AP FERG. The Harlem-bred rapper takes the stage. $33-$35. 7 p.m. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. royaloakmusictheatre.com.

BOURON & BOWTIES. Sip bourbon while enjoying Southern cuisine and roaring live jazz, and sample Prohibition-inspired cocktails while getting drunk on Detroit's colorful bootlegging lore and forgotten history during this fundraising event. $75-$125. 7-10 p.m. Dossin Great Lakes Museum, 100 The Strand, Belle Isle, Detroit. detroithistorical.org.

EDDIE GRIFFIN. The legendary actor-comedian takes the stage. $42-$55. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. soundboarddetroit.com.

9 SATURDAY

DETROIT DOLL SHOW. Browse vendors and enjoy a doll lookalike contest, workshops, crafts and more led by children's authors, plus black doll stylists and manufacturers. $5. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Northwest Activities Center, 18100 Meyers Road, Detroit. eventbrite.com.

SAVOR SIP STOMP. Sample wines from Italy, France, Spain and, of course, Michigan to help benefit Detroit Art Initiative. $45-$65. 6:30-10:30 p.m. Royal Oak Farmers Market, 316 E. 11 Mile Road, Royal Oak. sipsavorstomp.com.

10 SUNDAY

FANTASIA. The singer stops through on *The Sketchbook Tour* with special guests Robin Thicke, Tank and The Bonfyre. $48.50-$99.50. 7:30 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com.

ANGELA YEE. *The Breakfast Club* co-host stops in with Angela Yee's Lip Service Live. $48. 8 p.m. The Fillmore, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. thefillmoredetroit.com.

12 TUESDAY

K. MICHELLE. The singer brings her *O.S.D. Tour* to town. $32-$67.50. 7 p.m. The Fillmore, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. thefillmoredetroit.com.

14 THURSDAY

FREDDIE GIBBS. The hip-hop artist stops in on his *Album of the Year Tour* with special guests Cousin Stizz and Benny the Butcher. $25-$30. 7 p.m. The Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. majesticdetroit.com.

JURASSIC WORLD. The adventure continues as you join forces with a team of scientists to unravel a corrupt plan and save Jeanie, an all-new dinosaur, from a terrible fate during this family-friendly interactive event. $15-$125. Times vary today-Nov. 17. Little Caesars Arena, 2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com.

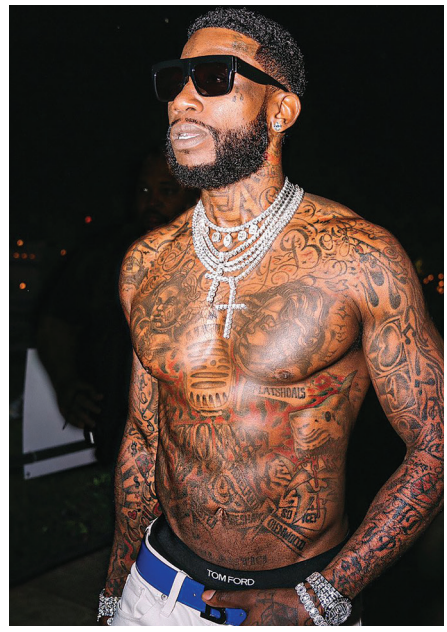
To list an event in Access Detroit, send facts and photos two months prior to calendar@BLACdetroit.com. You also may upload information to BLACdetroit.com/SubmitEvent, fax to 248-399-3970 or mail to Metro Parent Media Group, BLAC Calendar, 22041 Woodward Ave., Ferndale, MI 48220. Submissions may be edited 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.

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10 SUNDAY
FANTASIA



16 SATURDAY
GUCCIE MANE

15 FRIDAY

NEWZIC. WDIV Local 4 News anchor Evrod Cassimy debuts his newest album, *Just Evrod* – featuring Aretha Franklin – and headlines this benefit concert to raise funds for Cass Tech's fine arts department. $20. 6-8:30 p.m. Cass Technical High School, 2501 Second Ave., Detroit. evrodcassimy.com.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT. Watch the beloved interactive game show live and maybe be invited to "come on down." $30-$50. 7:30 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com.

AVANT. The iconic R&B singer takes the stage. $38-$71. 8 p.m. Andiamo Celebrity Showroom, 7096 E. 14 Mile Road, Warren. andiamoitalia.com/showroom.

16 SATURDAY

VODKA ROX. Join this vodka-sampling event and enjoy the best from your favorite brands and up-and-comers, plus a fashion show and entertainment. $22.50-$65. 6:30 p.m. The Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. majesticdetroit.com.

GUCCI MANE. The rapper stops through with Young Dolph, LightSkinKeisha and Trina. $64-$114. 8 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com.

20 WEDNESDAY

THE GRINCH. *Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical* returns. $35-$65. Times vary today-Nov. 23. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com.

21 THURSDAY

BEYOND WOKE. Join the panel discussion *1619-2019: Beyond Woke – 400 Years of Existence and Resistance,* featuring Jamon Jordan of the Black Scroll Network and Dr. Kefentse Chike of Wayne State University. Free. 6-9 p.m. Detroit Historical Museum, 5401 Woodward Ave., Detroit. detroithistorical.org.

J.B. SMOOVE. The actor-comedian brings *The Lollygaggin Tour* to town. $30-$42. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. soundboarddetroit.com.

22 FRIDAY

TREE LIGHTING. Kick off the holiday season by watching the 60-foot Norwegian spruce glow with thousands of lights and ornaments. The ice rink officially opens, too. Free. 5 p.m.-midnight. Campus Martius, 800 Woodward Ave., Detroit. downtowndetroitparks.com.

24 SUNDAY

ANTHONY HAMILTON. The "Charlene" singer takes the stage. $77-$87. 7:30 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. soundboarddetroit.com.

27 WEDNESDAY

SLUMP GOD. Ski Mask the Slump God takes the stage. $32.50-$55. 7 p.m. The Fillmore, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. thefillmoredetroit.com.

SUMMER WALKER. The up-and-coming "Girls Need Love" singer brings *The First and Last Tour* to town with special guest Melii. $39.50-$70. 7:30 p.m. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Detroit. royaloakmusictheatre.com.



28 THURSDAY

THANKSGIVING PARADE. The annual America's Thanksgiving Parade – a holiday tradition that dates back to 1924 – is back with larger-than-life floats, colorful balloons, thunderous marching bands and unique acts. Free. 8:45 a.m. Woodward Ave., Downtown Detroit. theparade.org.

29 FRIDAY

PETE DAVIDSON. The comedian and *SNL* host takes the stage. $45. 7 p.m. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. royaloakmusictheatre.com.

HOLIDAY BAG. The Black Friday Holiday Bag comes through with performances by Megan Thee Stallion, Polo G, YFN Lucci and Calboy. $59-$110. 7 p.m. Masonic Theater, 500 Temple Ave., Detroit. themasonic.com.

30 SATURDAY

THE NUTCRACKER. BalletMet returns with its beloved traditional production of *The Nutcracker,* complete with a live orchestra. $29-$99. 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. today, 2:30 p.m. Dec. 1. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. michiganopera.org.

1 SUNDAY

ERIC B AND RAKIM. The classic hip-hop duo stops through. $42-$55. 7:30 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. soundboarddetroit.com.

5 THURSDAY

POLAR BEERS. Sample more than 60 unique beers from select Michigan craft breweries, live music and exclusive access to the zoo's holiday light display. $45-$85. 6-10 p.m. Detroit Zoo, 8450 W. 10 Mile Road, Royal Oak. detroitzoo.org.

DRU HILL. The '90s R&B group featuring Sisqo, Nokio, Smoke & Black and Color Me Badd perform. $42-$55. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. soundboarddetroit.com.

7 SATURDAY

ALL-STAR COMEDY. The All-Star Comedy Festival returns with Lavell Crawford, Earthquake, Bruce Bruce, Kountry Wayne, D.C. Young Fly and Chico Bean. $59-$105. 8 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com.



Wright Museum Gala Masquerade Ball

Detroit's most prominent African Americans were honored on Oct. 5 at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History's signature fundraiser. Dressed in black-tie and adorned with masquerade masks, patrons enjoyed a night filled with mystery, live entertainment and celebration.

Photos by Sydney Kispert-Bostick



Ysahai Honor-Marie, Dionne Middlebrooks



Lolita Fortenberry, Sydnee Jackson



Leon Richardson, Cheryl Richardson



Taylon Taylor, Amber Baker



Betty Martin



Zenobia Warfield, Robert Warfield



Clarence Rose, Tanya Ros

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AARP® Real Possibilities Michigan

AARP continues the fight to reduce the cost of prescription drugs



By Paula D. Cunningham, State Director of AARP Michigan

Donna of Detroit knows people who have to forgo food to afford their prescription drugs.

Her situation is not that grim, she says. But as the number of prescription pills she needs continues to grow, the burden on her budget gets heavier.

Allergy pills for her eyes, blood pressure medication, estrogen – her outlays for prescription medicine are approaching a car payment.

"The cost of prescriptions is on top of my $400 deductible for medical expenses, and I still have co-pays," she said. "It might interfere with having as much food as I want or maybe not putting gas in my car.

"And I know they're overcharging, way overcharging. It's about greed."

It's especially for those who have to give up groceries to buy the drugs they need, but also for older adults like Donna struggling to afford prescriptions on a fixed income that AARP launched this year a nationwide campaign '**Stop Rx Greed.**'

The goal of AARP's sustained campaign is to help drive down drug prices for Michiganders and all Americans by advocating for a variety of legislative, executive, and regulatory actions at both the federal and state level.

The Michigan Legislature currently is considering bills that would increase transparency of drug pricing; enable importation of lower-cost medications from Canada; and put a cap on the cost of insulin, among others. AARP supports these bills.

Right now, Americans are paying the highest prescription drug prices in the world – often double what other countries pay for the same medicine millions of people depend on.

These outrageously high prices affect all Americans by increasing taxes, insurance premiums, and out of pocket costs.

A RECENT AARP SURVEY TELLS THE STORY:

- **72** % say they are concerned about the cost of their medications.
- **63** % say the cost of prescription drugs is unreasonable.
- **90** % support allowing Medicare to negotiate for lower drug prices.
- **80** % report taking at least one prescription medication.
- Nearly **40**% say they did not fill a prescription provided by their doctor with cost being the most common reason.

Annie Mae of Detroit was initially paying $30 for a blood thinner prescription she needed when a blood clot formed in her leg following ankle surgery.

When she went to the pharmacy to get the prescription filled, she was told the price would be $2,000.

"I can't afford that! I told him I wouldn't pay it," she said. "It made me angry."

Fortunately, Annie Mae consulted with her nurse practitioner, who returned her to the low-dosage $30 prescription she was taking. So her story had a happy ending.

"But what about those people who don't push back, or who don't have an advocate?" she wondered.

AARP continues to be your advocate in this battle against Rx greed.



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