

APRIL 2023

URBAN X-PRESSIONS NEWSMAG

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DR. DESHAWNDA WILLIAMS PROPOSES MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE TO \$20HR



**CITY COUNCIL AT-LARGE CANDIDATE- DR DESHAWNDA WILLIAMS
PENNSYLVANIA'S PRIMARY ELECTION WILL BE HELD TUESDAY, MAY 16**



**20TH ANNIVERSARY OF
PHILADELPHIA FREEWAY:
A NIGHT OF NON-STOP
LOVE AND HIP-HOP LEGENDS**



**FROM INDIE LABEL TO MOGUL:
REMINISCING OVER
JAY Z'S JOURNEY WITH
URBAN X-PRESSIONS**

DR. DESHAWNDA WILLIAMS FOR CITY COUNCIL-AT-LARGE

**VOTE
MAY 16TH**



Vision

- Increase Mental Health Access
- Education Awareness
- Environmental Changes Through Economic Development

**LET'S DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT AND
LET'S DO IT TOGETHER.**



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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



What's up, my Urban People!

I am writing this letter to express my sincere gratitude to all of you who have sup-

ported our inaugural issue of Urban X-pressions in March. Your overwhelming support and love for our brand have been truly remarkable, and we could not

have achieved this success without you. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the sponsors, advertisers, family, and friends who have played a significant

role in making our first issue a grand success.

I would also like to take this opportunity to request each of you to please take a look at the ads and support the businesses that have advertised with us. Let them know that Urban X-pressions sent you. Your support can go a long way in helping these businesses grow and thrive.

For those who are wondering where to get the latest issue of Urban X-pressions, it is available at various Sunoco gas stations and Shoprites in Cheltenham, as well as Lotus Beauty Spa. You can also download a copy from our website, urbanxpressions.com.

As we move forward, I invite all of our followers to become members of Urban X-pressions. By becoming a member for just \$48 a year, you can support our brand and gain access to all of our exciting new offerings. Plus, your membership fee is tax-

deductible, so it's a win-win situation for all.

Finally, I would like to thank you once again for your continued support of Urban X-pressions. Follow us on Instagram @urbanxpressions, and listen to Urbanxpressionsradio.com. We have big plans for the future, and we look forward to sharing our vision with you. Let's continue to work together and make our community stronger.

Best regards,
Shelly Shell Williams
#PhillysOprah

Executive Producer of Urban X-pressions





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Dr. DeShawnda Williams #7 Proposes Minimum Wage Increase to \$20+



By Shelly Shell

Vote for #7, Dr. Deshawnda Williams, and join the movement for a livable wage, better mental health access, education awareness, and environmental changes through economic development in our city!

#7 Dr. Deshawnda Williams is the change we need for our next City Council at Large, with her proposal to increase the minimum wage to \$20+ per hour. Let's make a difference together!"

As I sit down to write this column, I can't help but feel excited to share with you all about my great friend, Dr. Deshawnda Williams, who is running for City Council at Large and whose unwavering compassion for the community has left a lasting impression on me.

Shelly Shell: What inspired you to run for City Council At-Large, and what do you hope to achieve if elected?

Dr. Deshawnda Williams: I am inspired to run for City Council At-Large because I have been a strong advocate for the least, the last, the lost and the left behind, and it's time for them to be heard legislatively. If elected, it's my hope to achieve creating legislation that will increase the quality of life for each Philadelphian. Restoring hope, healing, and trust again.

Shelly Shell: What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing your city, and how do you plan to address them if elected to City Council?

Dr. Deshawnda Wil-

liams: Lack of Safety for our residents, challenges within the school district, lack of funding for libraries, homelessness, mental health services, parks, and recreation, price gouging in certain neighborhoods, poor access to capital funding for small businesses, and lack of resources for those who have disabilities. If elected to City Council, I will strongly advocate for appropriate funding that will need to address each of these issues. The appropriate funding funneled in each of these areas mitigates the problems we now face astronomically. Bills put in place ensures that this is possible.

Shelly Shell: Can you explain how you plan to implement a minimum wage increase to \$20+ in the city and what steps you'll take to ensure that small busi-

nesses aren't negatively impacted?

Dr. Deshawnda Williams: Bring awareness to the reality that \$15.00 is not enough to live in Philadelphia. The cost of living and the economic conditions of Philadelphia is fragmented. Affordable housing is not affordable when it cost \$100,000 to live in the poorest big city in America, which has a poverty rate of 23%. That doesn't make sense. The steps I will take to ensure that small businesses aren't negatively impacted is to advocate that with this upcoming fiscal year, each of these small businesses has access to increased capital funding. That they, too, get a piece of the pie and have the opportunities to gain access to economic development and growth without limitations and barriers.

Shelly Shell: Your platform includes a focus on improving mental health access, education awareness, and environmental changes through economic development. Can you provide specific examples of how you plan to achieve these goals?

Dr. Deshawnda Williams: Yes, most certainly, mental health access: I constantly hear that we don't have enough resources or mental health provider agencies to help meet the needs of Philadelphians. That's not true. The ratio of mental health providers to Philadelphians is 470:1. I am advocating for 2.7 billion dollars in funding to be allocated to providers to have the continuum of resources be provided across the entire city. We need funding for the recruitment and retention of employees. There are people who need mental health services right now who have been wait-

ing more than two months to 2 years just to see a therapist. Homeless shelters like Project Home and Good Sheppard need adequate funding as they embrace a homeless population of individuals who have mental health and substance abuse challenges but not enough continued financial assistance to meet the needs of these people. We are in a public health crisis, and we need to ensure the safety and security of our city. Addressing mental health and gaining appropriate access to funding is one of the contributing factors that can lead to reducing the violence in our city.

Education awareness: 225,000 people in 2019 could not read or write in Philadelphia, and this number has doubled since then. We have a literacy epidemic, and it needs to be addressed. Martin Luther King Jr. High School is one of the largest high schools on the east coast and is the largest in the city out of the 65 schools listed as CTE (career and technical education). They currently have an entire wing/floor in their building that is CTE-ready but is not being used at all. Why? It's my goal to bring awareness to Philadelphians and educate them of what's "REALLY" happening, work collaboratively with the residents who want to see change, and bring solutions to these issues.

Environmental changes through economic development: When you change the environment, you change the behavior. Beautifying our neighborhoods brings jobs, and research has shown that it decreases violence. Revitalization and remodeling projects that target abandon buildings/houses can create jobs, decreases

homelessness, and afford opportunities for small business to thrive in communities that are changing. This is what my platform stands on, and it's my focus to legislatively make policies and resolutions to address these issues.

Shelly Shell: Your proposed environmental changes are also a key part of your platform. Can you explain how you plan to reduce the city's carbon footprint and promote sustainable development, and what specific steps you'll take to achieve these goals?

Dr. Deshawnda Williams: Imagine if we can create communities that are foot-oriented and green-friendly buildings. I

propose that we put businesses and homes within proximity. Create a community where our daily needs are close at hand. I propose that we simultaneously look at going green when rehabbing/expanding the existing homes and storefronts in the neighborhood. Philadelphia is not hurting at all for properties. There are over 15,000 underutilized properties that could be renovated/rehabbed to provide sustainability for more people and businesses. I propose that we put bills and resolutions in place legislatively that cry out for the implementation of an eco-friendly community that consists of our parks, entertainment, asbestos/lead-free schools, grocery stores, libraries, rec centers, etc.

Why you?

For over twenty years, I have served as a clinical social worker, pastor, social activist, mental health therapist, and educator to the least, the last, the lost and left behind residents of Philadelphia. As a mental health therapist, I walked side by side with a single mother who lost not one son, not two sons but three sons to gun violence. As a clinical social worker, I sat beside a single father with tears in his eyes because he felt less of a man and father because he couldn't afford food on the table and a roof over his children's heads because affordable housing is not affordable and minimum wage is just that minimal. As an educator, I fought

for students who were being left behind in an education system that was not fair and equitable. I have experienced going from the playground to the burial grounds where I Funeralize 20 of my classmates who became victims of gun violence. I preached the sermon, sang the songs, and I prayed the prayers. For over two and half years, I have seen over 200 plus murders as I was a first responder to help co-victims of homicide realize that they will need the appropriate resources to help them cope for the rest of their lives. Why not me? I have lived experience. My own Godson was murdered, and gun downed in Kensington.

When civil unrest roamed

the streets of our city in response to the George Floyd tragedy, I participated in leading more than 400 people to march down Board street to pray, bring a voice of reason and understanding to individuals that there are other ways to share their voice and be heard without having to destroy our local businesses and community. I understand the importance of having someone in the City Council-At-Large that gets it. I have the skill sets and the ability to articulate the pain that Philadelphians experience to create those bills and legislation that will become law to help change the quality of life for every Philadelphian.

UX NEXT GENERATION

CELEBRATING URBAN X-PRESSIONS: A SHOWCASE OF YOUTH ATHLETICS AND FAMILY SUPPORT



When we think of young people in urban areas, we often hear about the negative things they do. However, we don't often hear about the many positive things they do to stay active and

thrive. This is why it's important to highlight events like the PACSAC All-Star Game, where middle school students from Christian schools in the Philadelphia area come together to show-

case their skills and teamwork.

The stands were packed with families and supporters, all cheering on the players. It was especially heart-

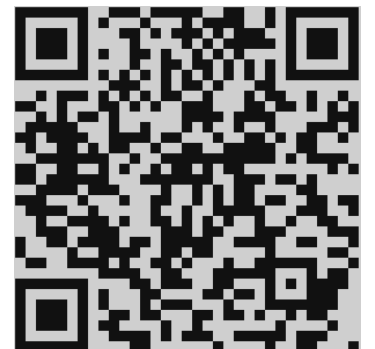
warming to see both boys and girls playing on the same team, a testament to the inclusivity and diversity of the event. Each team was made up of four players from their respective schools, chosen as the best of the best.

The game was intense and exciting, with the winning team not missing a single basket. My niece, DeMya, was one of the players chosen from her school, Gospel of Grace Christian School in Cheltenham, PA. Her position was Power Forward, and she played her heart out on the court.

But what really struck me was the strong family support that DeMya and her fellow players received. Her parents, sister, grandparents, and other family members were all in attendance, cheering her on and showing their love and pride. It was a beautiful sight to see and a reminder of the importance of family support in the lives of young people. The PACSAC All-Star Game is just one example of the many ways that urban youth are expressing themselves through athletics and

receiving support from their families and communities. Let's celebrate these young people and the positive impact they are making on their world.

Congratulations to all the players who participated, and kudos to the families who supported them. Special thanks to the PACSAC President, Willette Whitaker, Secretary Kenyatta Rush, and Basketball Commissioner Eric Moore for making this event possible.



REMINISCE = JAY Z

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I REMINISCE FOR A SPELL, OR SHALL I SAY, THINK BACK – CELEBRATING URBAN X-PRESSIONS



Contributing Writers: Shelly Shelly Williams and Keith from up da block

"From Indie Label to Mogul: Reminiscing Over Jay Z's Journey with Urban X-pressions"

As the Executive Producer of Urban X-pressions, I have had the pleasure of encountering some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry. However, reminiscing over the times we encountered Jay Z has a special place in my heart. From being a slightly-known New York MC with a dedicated indie label to becoming one of the most successful and influential rappers of our time, Jay's journey has been nothing short of inspiring.

Keith from up da block recently shared a 35mm HQ version of a pic of him and Jay Z taken many years ago. Photo credit to Deejay StashMoney. It's incredible how a single picture can bring back a flood of memories. Keith from up da block, reminiscing about

our journey with Jay Z.

Jay Z was always an artist who gave time and interviews to Urban X-pressions, the TV show I hosted for 10 years, and what a lot of people from Philly know me from. Our relationship with Jay started back in 1996 when UX supported the first or second official Rocafella/Priority Single "DEAD PRESIDENTS" with the B-Side "Aint No Nigga." This song would go on to be included on The Nutty Professor Soundtrack, connect Rocafella Records with DEF JAM, and become Jay Z's first major breakout hit.

Jay and Dame had been producing their own units and videos like "I Can't Get With That" and "Feeling It." While shopping for deals, they hit up Philly and connected with Ed Brunson to promote Jay's early work. Since '96, UX and Rocafella had a great relationship, and I remember Shelly Shell Williams getting into a HUGE debate with HOVA over a lyric in his song "AINT NO NIGGA" and telling him he should promote safe sex practices.

I eventually opened Jay's hangar Tour in Philly surprisingly by myself after DEF JAM placed a call to Shelly Shell Williams through Brock, who felt that I was the best man for the job. For 45 minutes, I did parodies jokes, and hosted for a sold-out crowd, and then introduced the greatest rapper alive. This pic was taken years prior to that concert at The Opening of The Black Roc Store on South Street. I had just poked my head in and was shocked that Jay had remembered me.

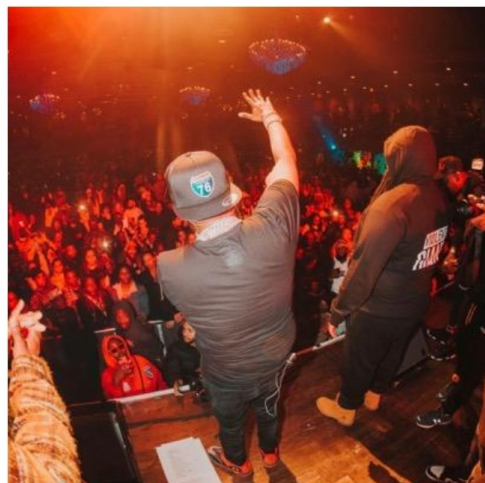
Weeks earlier, Urban X-pressions (Shelly, Keith, Dawn, Gadiel) actually hung out inside of Jay's Trailer because Beans invited us to cover The "Remember Them Days" video shoot. IMO Beanie Sigel inviting us to that shoot in N.Y. gave us the co-sign we needed to do the best interviews with the hottest artists for the next few years. If Sigel, Jay, and Roc-a-fella held us in high regard, who could say no? Pictures included are from our day in New York with Shelly Shell with Jay Z and the Urban X-pressions team with Beanie Sigel.

This pic means a lot to me because Me, Howard Polo Gilliam Jr, Monica Gladney, Scoe Tia Moore, Shelly Shell, Shephatiah Harvey, and Ed Brunson all witnessed Jay go from being a slightly known New York MC with a dedicated indie label to who and what he is now. There are times I feel like quitting, but then I remember how hard he worked and how it definitely didn't happen overnight. #Hardwork Pays Off. #Salute Thanks STASH MONEY!!!

Reminiscing over our en-



FREEWAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY



in the room was electric. It was dope to see Suzann Christine take the stage as the only female performer of the night. She absolutely killed it, delivering a high-energy performance that left the crowd cheering for more. And then, the moment we had all been waiting for – Mina Say What brought out Freeway himself, along with the entire State Property crew. It was an incredible sight to see – Beanie Sigel, Freeway, Peedi Crakk, Oschino Vasquez, and Omillio Sparks all on stage together, bringing down the house. But the surprises didn't stop there – the duo Young Gunz (Young Chris and Neef Buck) also took the stage, and the crowd went wild. It was clear that everyone in attendance was feeling the love and appreciation for Freeway and State Property, and the energy in the room was infectious.

As the night went on, more and more of the Philly elite came through, including Gilie, Dutchie Man, Ms Jade, Mike Knox, Danny Garcia, his sisters, SiAngie Twins, Jakk Frost, and Simon "One Punch" Carr, along with countless others.

Sold out with lots of love filling the building. it was an incredible night, and Urban X-pressions NewsMag was honored to be a part of it. The 20th Anniversary of Philadelphia Freeway was a celebration of not only Freeway's incredible talent and legacy but also of the entire State Property crew and the many other performers who came out to show their support.

Congratulations to Freeway and everyone involved in making this event such a huge success – we can't wait to see what the next 20 years will bring.

Contributing Writers: Hennesy Kev and Son of the 215

Yo, check it out! Philly Freeway's Sold Out 20th-anniversary celebration was straight-up lit, no cap! Hennesy Kev and Son of the 215 both agree that it was one for the books. Beanie Sigel and Oschino even hugged it out on stage, showing love and unity for the city. And when Just Blaze and Bink hit the stage together for the first time

since the Roc-A-Fella days, the crowd went wild. Freeway is the real deal; he knows how to bring the whole city together. That's why they call him the people's champ, cuz he's got love and respect from everyone.

#philadelphiafreeway was in full display that night, from the music to the energy and the heavy hitters that came out to show love and support. What a true salute to 20 years in the game. Said

Hennesy Kev "Epic!!! Seeing my Big bro get his flowers, I got to perform with him and the rest of State prop, Jadakiss, and more!! The whole Philly came out!! A Night that will always be remembered #FreedomThinkersAcademy " ~ said Son of the 215

Urban X-pressions 20 years ago, we had the honor of being a part of the rise of Philadelphia Freeway and State Property, and we were thrilled to have a backstage

pass to all the behind-the-scenes video shoots, performances, and more. It was incredible to witness the 20th Anniversary of Philadelphia Freeway. It was a historical event, and I'm excited to share my firsthand account.

The night was full of non-stop love, with an amazing lineup of performers taking the stage to celebrate Freeway's 20-year anniversary. The crowd was buzzing with excitement, and the energy

FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM: HOW STACIE TEAL-LOCUST EMPOWERS FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS TO TAKE THE LEAP!



Meet Stacie Teal-Locust, the Baltimore Real Estate expert. With unparalleled industry knowledge, experience, and local expertise, She is the Baltimore Real Estate expert you've been looking for. Whether you're buying or selling, she can help you get the best deal. Stacie L. Teal-Locust is the owner of The Real Estate Store of Maryland.

The Real Estate Store of Maryland, A Limited Liability Company, was established in October 2007. They are an established local brokerage that is double minority-owned. Stacie L. Teal-Locust, a TRIPPLE Multi-Million Dollar Producer with weathered experience

in Residential & Commercial Real Estate, is the Broker of record.

“I've learned that time is a marvelous thing- One must dare not assume you'll always have enough of it. All "time" deserves a sense of urgency. It seems to be one of those things that there is not much of.” Said Stacie Teal-Locust.

Shelly Shell: How did you become interested in the real estate industry, and what inspired you to become a broker?

Stacie Teal-Locust: Well, I've always wanted to be a lawyer, and at the time, I believed that law school was not an option for me because I had just started

a family. During the process of buying my 1st home, I did not have a REALTOR representing me. I had a consultant that really took advantage of me. I didn't know at the time you had to have a license to sell real estate and collect a commission. Needless to say, as I investigated my situation and then discovered the details of my transaction and where it was lacking ... I fell in love with contracts and the art of negotiations that are required in real estate as it is valued in the courtroom.

Shelly Shell: What are the first steps in buying a home?

Stacie Teal-Locust: Know your “WHY.” This will empower you to go on the course that will lead you to home ownership. It will not be easy. It will not be free; It will not happen in 30 days. For you, IT MUST BE WORTH THE WORK AND the WAIT.

Shelly Shell: How do you help your clients overcome their fears and hesitations when it comes to purchasing a home?

Stacie Teal-Locust: Never lie to them or fluff things as we move along. Sometimes the truth hurts, but accepting certain truths is rewarding. I specifically believe in being upfront.

I have a “steps to a smooth settlement” class that

EVERY new client must have, details, step by step, every facet of buying the home. It discloses all costs upfront. It gives hints to emotional gauges at certain phases. It's best when people understand what is happening now and what will happen next.

Shelly Shell: Can you tell us about a time when you helped someone find the courage to purchase a house?

Stacie Teal-Locust: Yes, It was very hurtful to me. By reflection, years ago - I was once asked what the best way to save a person who was drowning? Option (a) do you jump in to save them, or Option (b) do you cast a rope and yell to them to swim to the rope, and you can pull them into safety?

Well, I was the type of person - that would execute option (a). I believed I would

jump in and try to rescue them, but from experience, that is not the best course of action. As explained by a 1st responder, In many cases, when people are anxious or fearing for their life, they are not rational, and by themselves fighting to survive, they fight against the person attempting to save their life. Many people have to find the courage on their own - similarly, like the person drowning - financial stability can be a sink-or-swim situation.

Shelly Shell: What are some common fears or obstacles that you see people facing when considering buying a house, and how do you help them overcome those fears?

Stacie Teal-Locust: The overall encompassing fear is **THE FEAR OF REJECTION.** Fearing the loan will be denied, the offer to purchase will be denied, finding the perfect home will be denied, and my friends and family will deny my right to be happy with buying a home. My boyfriend or cousin won't like it. And then there is self-fear - will I lose my job or a whole bunch of negative what-ifs... I always advise my clients that the experts that they select to help them - work for them. If you get responses that are not favorable from the bank - like your loan was denied, that denial comes with an explanation - which is rewarding. At that point, you know what you need to do to move forward. Never be afraid of a "No"- if there is an opportunity to try again if you have to. Nothing can keep you from it, and you'll learn valuable lessons and meet amazing people along the way. **That's a guarantee.**

Shelly Shell: How do you approach working with clients who come from backgrounds where buying a house was not common or encouraged practice?

Stacie Teal-Locust: As there is generational wealth, there too is generational poverty. I'm no GURU to greatness, for you are correct - these mindsets do exist. The sorrow lies in the fact that in many cases, those who have not received support or permission (one might say) to do things differently-THEY never approach me, and from afar, they stay stuck or blame others (Im no judge, just making an observation). But still - IF they approach me- I immediately welcome the multitude of questions and swiftly offer

opportunities to try at least and see what buying power the person holds.

Shelly Shell: How does your team at The Real Estate Store of Maryland work to create a welcoming and supportive environment for clients who are new to the home-buying process?

Stacie Teal-Locust: We listen and serve. We have curated an intimate space where clients feel comfortable speaking freely and are eager to state what their desires truly are. We have developed trusting relationships with other experts in the field that have pledged to be upright and honest in their dealings. It's a great time, and as they say ...

Its a vibe! Home Ownership Happens Here - for sure!

Shelly Shell: What role do you think courage plays in the home-buying process, and how do you help clients develop that courage?

Stacie Teal-Locust: When I state courage, I really mean the willingness to fight for what you want. I think that means everything - especially if you want to buy. You must accept that there are rules in place. Once you learn the rules and agree to play by those rules - you can then and only then win !!!

Shelly Shell: Can you share a success story of a client who overcame their fears and purchased a home with

your guidance?

Stacie Teal-Locust: Mrs. W was a referral from another client - She came to me telling me the horror story she had with some other firm. Yes - she had a lot of challenges. To put it plainly - she had to organize her financials. And she did. she came back to me in 60 days. Everything was cleaned up. It was CRAZY.

But Mrs. W. Never quit - she said, Im gonna get this house. She knew her why- at 50 years old, she was not gonna sleep on her mother's couch another night. It was worth it to Mrs. W. Needless to say, 12 months went by; she got a call from the lender that she was approved. She is now a

proud home Owner and working towards buying an investment property. It was worth the work for her - She never quit!

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PLAY MUSIC CONFERENCE: REIGNITING THE MUSIC SCENE IN PHILADELPHIA



Contributing Writer: Rob Schwartz & Shelly Shell Williams

I recently attended the Play Music Conference, and it was a blast from the past! It was so refreshing to see a place where artists could get answers to their music questions and actually speak to the greats that came before them. Despite having social media, being around the experts in person was truly amazing.

One of the highlights of the conference was being a part of the Mentor Session, where each artist had the opportunity to ask me whatever questions they wanted. It was a great way to get personalized advice and feedback from experienced industry professionals. The conference sparked and confirmed many things

for my company, Urban Xpressions, and it was also a reunion of sorts for some of us.

I was thrilled to see my mentor, Walt Reeder Jr., as well as Carvin Haggins, Suzann Christine, Dwayne McClary, and so many more talented artists and industry professionals. The connections and new friendships built at the conference were truly amazing, and I can't wait to attend again in the future. Overall, the Play Music Conference was a wonderful opportunity to learn, connect, and be inspired in the world of music.

PLAY Music Conference was the first major music conference to happen in Philadelphia in over 20 years. Three music power players in the Philadelphia area came together for one

of the most successful events in years. Rob Schwartz (WHO?MAG Distribution and Multimedia), Brian Cronin (Mirror Image/ThatMag), and Jim Logrando (Craft Services) did an exceptional job bringing this to fruition.

The event kicked off at a packed Milkboy on Chestnut by giving away four awards (Dyana Williams, Mayoral Candidate David Oh, David Ivory, and John Harris). There were also live performances by Serene Salinas, Em, MaroD'elo, Jack Fanselau, and Mona Mee.

The panels took place both Friday and Saturday during the day on Broad Street at the Levitt Auditorium at Gershman Hall. Over 1,000 people came to the panels over the 2-day span

that had over 70 speakers. With panels that covered topics like Music Biz U, Touring, Web3/NFTs, Networking, Collecting Royalties, Getting in Front of Music Supervisors, Creative Financing, The Power of Radio, Legacies, Music Videos, Marketing, Music Production, and Teamwork, the amount of knowledge shared was immense! Speakers flew in from all over the US, including Los Angeles (Noble Drakoln, Chris Wetherall, and Rotten Rollin), Phoenix (Jen Costello), Nashville (Raleigh Bershback), Orlando (Peter Harvey), Kentucky (Jeff Hammer), Charlotte (Dustin Edelhertz), plus performing artists from San Francisco (Clowette), Kentucky (Native Sons&Slokill) and Boston (Test Human). There was also a speed-mentoring room which was filled throughout the conference from the speakers and other industry execs for the artists to take advantage of.

Speakers came from companies like The Orchard (SONY), The MLC, BMI, The Grammys, SONY Publishing, Band NFT, Digiwaxx, and Tune.FM, Feedia, Upliftful, Music Managers Forum, Sentric Publishing, JC3 Publishing, Sync Summit, Northwestern Mutual, Kickstarter, RoyFi, WXP, MYXT, MusicXray, The Bloom Effect, and many more. There were also lots of music supervisors, producers, music video promoters, radio promoters, financial experts, film directors/producers, publishing experts, Web3 experts, booking agents, university/college music professors, and a legacy panel that features a lot of music legends and icons including Khalil Lundy (Force MD's), Rotten Rollin (CrazyTown), Shawn Rivera (AZ Yet),

Cozmo D (Newcleus), and Mikey D (Main Source).

Also, both Friday and Saturday nights were incredible, with a terrific line up of bands, singers, and rappers at various venues on South Street, including His & Hers Lounge, Milkboy South, REEF Lounge, and O'Neils Pub. I ended up going to REEF Friday night to watch the R&B and Hip Hop showcase with R&B diva Clowette, Fire Nation Flamez and her Mill of Fire team, OthaWorldMuzik Group, 5 Management (DreArtist and CL Sounds), All Bout Business, Katherine Swain, and Supreem Da Rezarekta'. Saturday night, I went to His & Hers Lounge to watch one of the rock showcases with Mob Rock Records (Test Human, Rottin Rollin, Slokill, RAH NRG, and Talmadge Pearsall) as well as Native Sons, Sick Century, Shame Penguins, Big Fat Meanies, and Mystik Fool.

Overall it was a high-paced event with lots of knowledge being shared and amazing performances. I met a lot of new friends and made a lot of major music business relationships. I can't wait until PLAY Music Conference 2.



CHECK OUT THE NATURALLYNEAT CLEANING HACKS

NaturallyNeat, LLC is a premier eco-friendly cleaning company that prioritizes health and wellness, quality cleaning solutions, and pristine cleaning services.

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- ✓ Steam Cleaning



THE SILENCE ENDS NOW: A.B. BRACEWELL'S URGENT CALL TO ADDRESS SEXUAL MISEDUCATION OF BLACK MEN IN AMERICA



For over the past 12 years, A.B. Bracewell has dedicated his life to helping families, couples, and singles with building healthy relationships through his work as a family-based therapist, school-based clinician, psychotherapist, and clinical supervisor in the mental health field.

A.B. Bracewell has taken his dedication to helping to another level by writing **“THE SEXUAL MISEDUCATION OF BLACK MEN IN AMERICA”**

in America? Can you share a little about your personal journey in understanding and addressing the issue of sexual conditioning in the Black community?

Adam B. Bracewell: I believe that much of what we have been taught about sex has been completely wrong, toxic, and destructive to our communities, our female counterparts, our children, and ourselves. I wanted to explore and explain the psychological, emotional, behavioral, and relational im-

pact that sexual conditioning has had on us as Black men. This book is designed to break the cycle of unhealthy sexual patterns for future and current generations.

My parents never talked to me about sex during my childhood. I never had a responsible and reliable man teach me about sexuality. My first exposure to and lessons about sex came from watching pornographic movies, finding X-rated magazines, listening to old-

er boys in my neighborhood, and music and music videos. None of these teachers were qualified to teach me about sex, relationships, or women. In order to address the issue, I first had to explore the effects that my sexual miseducation has had on my understanding of manhood. I had to study how it reflects on my self-esteem. I examined the pain that my sexual miseducation has caused inside of me, as well as the pain it has made me create in the lives of others.

Shelly Shell: How do you define "sexual miseducation," and what are some of the most harmful myths and stereotypes that Black men are taught about sex and relationships?

Adam B. Bracewell: I define sexual miseducation as the unhealthy and destructive lessons that we learned about sex. The lessons we are taught contribute to the toxification of our community. Whether it is fatherless homes, a decrease in the birth rate in the black community, supplying the school-to-prison pipeline, the misuse of women, or the abandonment of our children, the sexual miseducation system plays a part in all of it. From a young age, we are taught that sex is casual and meaningless, sowing our wild oats. It is created just to satisfy our hominess, put on a performance, and establish our manhood. We are never taught to care about how these behaviors impact oth-

Shelly Shell: What are some of the highlights of your **THE SEXUAL MISEDUCATION OF BLACK MEN IN AMERICA** book launch event?

Adam B. Bracewell: The book was officially released on March 18th. At the launch, we had an all-male panel speaking about the how, what, when, and who taught them about sex growing up. They discussed their sexual miseducation influences and how their conditioning impacted their view on sex, relationships, and themselves. We also had the brothers from Omega Si Phi Incorporated, and young men from Greater Exodus Mime ministry perform at the book launch.

Shelly Shell: What inspired you to write *The Sexual Miseducation of Black Men*

ers and ourselves in a negative way.

Shelly Shell: What do you hope readers will take away from your book? How do you envision it contributing to a larger conversation around healthy sexuality and relationships in the Black community?

Adam B. Bracewell: I hope that readers will explore the impact that their sexual mis-education has had on every aspect of their lives as Black men. I want to re-educate the next generation of men on how to value themselves by teaching them real ways to measure their manhood and combating the notion that manhood is based on the number of women that they sleep with or how well they perform in the bedroom. I hope this will help parents of our community understand what it will take to grow their prince into that position of king. I also hope that this book will assist Black men with overcoming one of our biggest struggles, the temptation of casual and meaningless sex. I believe that this alone has stopped millions of us from living up to our full potential.

Shelly Shell: In your opinion, what are some of the biggest challenges facing Black men in their efforts to unlearn negative sexual conditioning and build fulfilling relationships?

Adam B. Bracewell: The biggest challenge is that negative sexual conditioning has been ingrained in us for so long. There is not a race or ethnic group that has had an experience that even comes close to what Black men in America have been entangled with. There are no other groups of men that have had the type of sexual history tied to the land. There is no record of any other men who have experienced the mental, physical, and systematic castration that Black men have experienced in America. Unlearning these behaviors and counter-conditioning our mindset is a huge task that I

am willing to take on.

Shelly Shell: You mention the importance of re-educating the next generation of Black men. What advice do you have for parents or mentors who want to support young men in developing healthy attitudes toward sex and relationships?

Adam B. Bracewell: First, open up the lines of communication. Seek to understand what your boys are experiencing. Gone are the days of telling boys to “leave those fast girls alone,” “wrap it up,” or “don’t bring no babies in this house.” Real conversations about sex in Black homes are still very taboo. Also, we must educate ourselves and practice the prop-

er ways of managing our sexuality before we can re-educate the next generation of men. This book will be a great resource for getting that conversation started.

Shelly Shell: Can you speak to the ways in which toxic masculinity and patriarchal norms intersect with sexual mis-education in the Black community? How can we begin to dismantle these harmful ideologies?

Adam B. Bracewell: Our sexual mis-education helps to intoxicate masculinity by teaching Black boys and men false ways to measure their manhood. It conditions men to believe that their value, status, and existence are based on the size of their genitals, how many women they can sleep with,

and how well they perform in the bedroom. When we combine that dysfunctional way of viewing manhood with the mismanagement of the privilege of being male, we often find ourselves taking advantage of others. The only way to dismantle this ideology is to begin to teach boys real measurements of manhood, with things like honesty, character, integrity, protection, family, and righteousness.

Shelly Shell: Finally, what's next for you and your work in addressing sexual mis-education and promoting healthy masculinity in the Black community? Are there any upcoming projects or initiatives that you're excited about?

Adam B. Bracewell: My

mentorship program is in the grassroots stage. It is called S.M.O.B.M., which stands for Supporting the Maturation Of Black Boys to Manhood. The book was released in March, and the goal is to get the book and its messages to the masses.

For more information, go to <https://www.ready4relationship.com/>



THE SEXUAL MISEDUCATION OF BLACK MEN IN AMERICA

Now Available On **amazon**

SEXUAL_MISEDUCATION_OF_BLK_MEN

Ready 4 Relationship

GOD OR GUNS: THE CONTROVERSIAL NAME FOR A CLOTHING BRAND THAT'S TAKING THE NATION BY STORM

In a world where violence and gun ownership are much-debated topics in which we have to choose between relying on a higher power or arming oneself, it can be a challenging decision. Tyree Lewis, the owner of God or Guns Clothing, has firsthand experience with this dilemma. After his father's murder, he found himself torn between seeking revenge with his guns and following the signs from God. In this thought-provoking interview, Lewis shares his story and the inspiration behind his brand's name and logo. Get ready for a thought-provoking conversation about faith, firearms, and the blurred lines between them.

Shelly Shell: What inspired you to start God or Guns Clothing, and what is the significance of the name and logo?

God or Guns: It's several things that inspired me to create the brand. In 2010, my father was murdered, and when it came out who was responsible, I found myself making a plan to retaliate and have his killers feel the pain that I felt at the moment. I was cleaning my legally purchased guns and was prepared to make headlines the next day with what I was planning to do. I was so sad, angry, hurt, and restless and really needed some sleep, and eventually, I dosed off, and that's when God sent me a dream showing me that if I killed this man, I would be hurting my family and then I woke up. Even with that dream coming to me, I asked myself, do I go with the signs God sent me, or do I use my gun? That kind of brings me to my next point Nas is one of my favorite lyricists, and in one of his songs, he asks the question, "God or Guns, Which is Better Protection?" and that coincided with my thoughts.

With the way things are

right now in the world, I wanted to do something to help this generation find their way; I just happen to be doing it in a non-conventional way of spreading positivity through a fashion line. God or Guns represents the people that believe in God but struggle with their choices. If you take a close look at the logo and the word "God," you'll see that it's spelled out of Faith, Hope, Love, Patience, and Forgiveness, while "Guns" are spelled out Violence, Anger, Struggle, Hurt. So, in a moment of adversity, what are you choosing, God or Guns? Both words are used as metaphors.

Shelly Shell: Can you tell us about your childhood experiences growing up in West Philadelphia and how they influenced your outlook on life?

God or Guns: I grew up on 54th and Wyalusing, where a gang of kids always surrounded the playground, ready for a game of hide-n-seek, manhunt, wall ball, or football. It was tons of fun, and occasional fights would pop off when emotions got too involved. We would throw hands and get right back to playing. I learned that good times can be spoiled when emotions get too involved and not to let anyone take away from your happiness. Plans sometimes get derailed but stay focused and never take your eye off the prize.

Shelly Shell: How did the loss of your brother and other loved ones to gun violence impact you and shape your worldview?

God or Guns: When my brother was murdered, it was pretty scary, you know, because I was only 11 or 12 and only knew of or heard about killings on television or in movies. Not that I was sheltered or anything, but violence just wasn't around

how it is nowadays, where folks are desensitized to the killings. My brother was a college student who loved his family, and then he was gunned down. You know that saying, "the good die young?" Well, I started thinking that I was next, and nerves, along with my anxiety, started getting bad.

However, when my father was murdered, it taught me to spend more time with loved ones and stop putting off today to do something tomorrow. Let me back up... My pop and I had been talking about starting a business and working for ourselves. Well, the night of his death, I had the idea of cleaning carpets since I just did my living room and dining room, and they came out fresh. I wanted to call him and tell him the plan, but it was like 10:00 pm, and I said I would just wait to tell him in the morning, but that moment never came. He was pronounced hours later.

Sad thing is, I was on the same block as his job earlier that day but didn't stop because I wasn't in some new gear, so I kept driving. I get so frustrated thinking about that because I walk around looking unkempt for the most part nowadays, and here I didn't want to stop and say hi because my clothes weren't fresh. How stupid? Needless to say, I stopped giving a shit about my appearance and will do whatever needs to be done however I am dressed. I lost my love for shooting pool as that was our sport, but I will serve anyone reading this if challenged (just saying, lol). Lastly, I was reminded that making it home is a blessing and to be mindful of how you end a conversation. Luckily, my last words to my pop were "I love you" as we departed from our family trip to the beach a week prior.

Shelly Shell: You mentioned being raised in the

church but later chose to make decisions that could have led to trouble. Can you talk about that decision-making process and how it led you to where you are now?

God or Guns: It's crazy because I had a lot of mentors growing up, from my mom and dad to my brother and the mentor I had from a school program, but as a typical boy transitioning into adulthood, I wanted to make some of my own decisions and that sometimes went against what was actually being taught. I had friends lose their lives from being involved in the streets, folks that got hooked on drugs, to homies that had sat (in prison) for decades. I'm not built for none of that, so as I watched their lives change, it changed mine too. You got to understand people don't need to be in a classroom to be a great Teacher, so I used life lessons (whether mine or other people's) to mold me and help guide me. I got two degrees, work a solid gig, and have clothing that can change lives, so I think I learned some key things to help me focus. I still struggle with things, but my mom kept us in church every Sunday, and there I learned about the power of prayer. Let me tell you, what I ask for is received in abundance.

Shelly Shell: The name of your company raises a controversial question: "Which Is Better Protection, God or Guns?" How do you respond to those who may see the two as incompatible or even contradictory?

God or Guns: So, I'll set the record straight for anyone that may be confused or even misunderstand the messaging of the brand. I'm not comparing the two because there's no comparison. However, the question is simply making people think about their choices.

When you do that deep dive and look into the words inside of the words, you should have a better understanding that there are options or choices in life. I simply want people to think about their choices before making a decision that could change their lives forever.

Shelly Shell: What are some future plans or goals for God or Guns Clothing, and how do you see the brand evolving over time?

God or Guns: God or Guns will be featured in an upcoming film, "A Complicated Affair" by Jimmy Da-Saint, and we're pretty excited about it. I'm currently working on a documentary, but I can't speak too much on that just yet. However, I am finalizing a mentorship program that creates a safe space community for the youth. I plan on sharing my story and changing lives one day at a time. I plan to see my clothes being sold internationally in various outlets, but for starters, I will continue to make my mark in the states; we have made sales in over 20 states from the east to the west coast. Lastly, I want to see more people speak about going down the wrong but being able to change course and stick around for their loved ones and being the strength that their families need to see. Life's about choices; make the right one, as it could change your life and everyone around you. Be wise.

For more information, please email [in-fo@godorguns.com](mailto:info@godorguns.com) or visit www.godorguns.com





GOD OR GUNS

WHICH IS BETTER PROTECTION?

Belief in a Higher Power, but Struggle With Choices

www.godorguns.com

NA'OLGY BEAUTY -THE [CROWN] KEEPER



most gave up hope until I came across [Na'Ology Beauty's Transformation Haircare Line] owned and created by master hair stylist and serial entrepreneur **Georgina Weston**.

*Babyyy when I tell you this line is a **GODSEND**, it has worked wonders for rejuvenating, repairing, and replenishing my crown. Once I started using her five-step system, I began to see results after two weeks. The breakage and shedding stopped. My hair went from unhealthy to healthy very quickly! I'll be using her haircare regimen **FOREVER**, and that's not an exaggeration. The restorative formula does not disappoint! I will add it also helps to book her for regular appointments to keep your hair treated and trimmed. I recommend not waiting to book her either; she fills up fast! Spring/Summer SZN is here; keep your mane managed meticulously.*

Read more below on who I've dubbed [The Crown Keeper].

***Georgina, a.k.a 'Gee'** interest in hair began at age 12. She's been in the industry for over 20 years and is currently working on her next haircare line. Gee was featured in **Essence Magazine's (May/June 2022 issue, pgs. 32-33)** with Mrs. Bo Talley-Williams titled [Gray's Anatomy]. Gee lent her expertise on caring for and managing gray hair for the article. She has a long list of accolades, training, and experience in the hair care industry and was the lead stylist for Philly's first fashion week. If you are seeking one of the best in the business to go from **gone to growth**, Gee is your [go-to hair care specialist] for all hair care needs. Start with a consultation; your crown is one you never take off.*

The Transformation Line

Na'Ology's Transformation Hair Care System is a combination of [Love, Science, and Nature]. The line is specially formulated for clients with thinning hair and alopecia using a combination of nature's best ingredients. All products are dermatologically tested, natural, organic, vegan, sulfate, paraben, and cruelty-free. Products can be purchased individually or as a kit. If you are seeking to level up your layers or gain growth, follow Gee on all social media platforms @naologybeauty. Her website is naologybeauty.com.



Contributing Writer:
Leesa @leesamedia

At 47, I've had my share of woes with damaged hair, shedding, and even hair loss in some spots. My dilemma started about a year and a half ago when I noticed the shampoo and conditioner duo I was using seemed to keep my scalp & hair dry

even though the bottles read as if it would provide moisture to my already limp strands.

I was really at my wit's end. I started using oils and vitamins, changed my diet, and drank more water; literally, nothing HELPED. I was scared. I asked myself, "Can I get my hair back?" I al-

UXNM: LEGACY ARTIST TO WATCH



name that you need to know if you're a fan of soulful, R&B-infused music. With her latest album, "She is," out now, Gamble is quickly becoming a legacy artist to watch in the music industry. Her unique sound and powerful voice have captivated audiences for years, and with this latest release, she is sure to win over even more fans. In this article, we'll delve into Carla Gamble's musical background and discuss why she's poised for greatness in the world of music.

you look up to as sources of inspiration in the music industry?

Carla Gamble: I would say I'm inspired by all of the women doing amazing things in the music and entertainment industry.

Legacy Ent: Could you share with us your current projects and artistic goals for the year 2023?

Carla Gamble: I am currently working on my EP, which will be released in April 2023. I am set to have my EP released at World Café Live on April 28th,

2023, featuring Carol Riddick, the all-female band Black Canvas and DJ Honey. My goal for 2023 is to continue making good, healing, energetic, and loving music. To share my music with people all over the world.



Contributing Writer:
Shamar Ridgeway &
Urban X-pressions

NewsMag

Carla Gamble is a

Legacy Ent: Who do

RASHEENA STEWART'S HAIR MATTERS: TIPS FOR HEALTHY HAIR FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Contributing Writers:
Rasheena Stewart and
Shelly Shell Williams

As a long-time client of hair stylist Rasheena Stewart, I can confidently say that she truly has "growing hands." At first, I wasn't sure what people meant by that phrase, but watching Rasheena in action quickly made it clear to me. She not only possesses incredible skill and talent as a stylist, but she also has a heart for helping her clients understand the importance of healthy hair from the inside

out.

Rasheena, co-owner of Lotus Beauty Spa, believes that the key to healthy hair starts with taking care of your body from within.

"A healthy diet is essential for promoting healthy hair growth from the root." Rasheena drops some quick and easy tips for maintaining healthy hair.

Certain foods, like eggs, fish, avocado, nuts, and berries, contain important nutrients like biotin, protein,

Vitamin C, and Vitamin D that can jumpstart vibrant hair growth. When combined with a regular hair cleansing and conditioning routine, your hair can reach its full potential.

For example, a mix of avocado and coconut oil can make for a fantastic hair conditioning mask, and applying eggs directly to your hair can add a beautiful shine.

Bonus tip: Remember to exercise regularly and drink plenty of water - healthy

hair truly does start from within.

Looking to transform your hair and feel your best self? Look no further than Lotus Beauty Spa! Our expert stylists are here to help you achieve the perfect look, whether you're looking for a bold new cut or a subtle refresh.

And for a limited time only, new customers can enjoy a special offer of 20% off any hair services valued at \$40 or more! Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity

to experience Lotus Beauty Spa at a fraction of the cost.

So why wait? Book your appointment today and take the first step towards the hair of your dreams. Our talented team can't wait to work with you and help you achieve the look you've always wanted. See you soon at Lotus Beauty Spa!





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sode.

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"PRAYER IN THE GARDEN"

Contributing Writer: HELEN WILLIAMS

"ONE AND GOD MAKE A MAJORITY"

"IF THERE IS NO STRUGGLE, THERE IS NO PROGRESS"

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

1818 - 1895

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

1818 - 1895

"ONE AND GOD MAKE A MAJORITY"

"IF THERE IS NO STRUGGLE, THERE IS NO PROGRESS"

PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

Garden Of Gethsemane: The place where olive oil is pressed; A place or occasion of great mental or spiritual suffering; Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane.

"And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible,

let this cup pass from Me: Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

"He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O My Father, If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Matthew 26:39, 42

Jesus prayed the same prayer a third time. Jesus confided in His closest disciples, Peter, James, and John. "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." 26:38. Jesus was committed to fulfilling God's plan of redemption, yet, the burden of its reality

weighed heavily on Him. The hour is at hand, and events are falling into place to put God's plan into motion. In other words, it's becoming real.

Finding the disciples asleep again, Jesus then said to Peter, "...What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" (26:40). His distress was so great that He sweat drops of blood as He prayed. {Lk. 22:44} Knowing the cross lay ahead, the grief of the impending separation from His Father's presence drove Jesus to His knees. (Matt. 27:46) The weight of the sins of the world was pressing down on Him.

Just when Jesus needed His friends to be there with Him, pray with Him... He found His closest companions sleeping. Familiar... God waits for us to recognize and appreciate His daily blessings that we tend to take for granted. God waits for us when we are preoccupied with our own other interests. God waits for us and finds us sleeping instead of praying. Prayer is the antidote for human weakness. (Matt.26:41)

"Prayer at Gethsemane" Perhaps, you haven't expe-

rienced the need for a Gethsemane prayer yet. Keep living... Trials and tribulations, pressure, and suffering are part of the human experience. Christians do not escape. Resurrection day did not happen without the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. The prayer when God said, No... Thank you, God!

Dear God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Hallowed Be Thy Name!

Makers of Heaven and Earth and everything in it... "The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

Thank You! For all the No's in our lives... Jesus warned us that in this world, there will be trials and tribulations, "But, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "Peace I leave with you, My Peace..." Not the world's peace, "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding."

How, Lord, how, we ask in prayer? Your Word directs us to, Cast all our cares and concerns, our worries and anxieties, on You. Yes!!! "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your re-

quests be made known unto God." Amen! Then tomorrow comes and the world hates us. The adversary, the devil, is roaming around; it's Monday, Lord, the day is at hand.

In the name of Jesus, I pray for all our Mondays. Help us all to be ready to withstand in the days ahead as we face the powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Poverty, hunger, homelessness, danger, illness, persecution, war, and rumors of war, Gethsemane! Help us, Lord, when we come to face our "Garden of Decision," like Jesus. I pray now, help us, guide us, and empower us Holy Spirit, to do the will of God. Strengthen us, Jesus, through Whom we can do all things, That all things done in Your Name, glorify God our Father, as each of us face our "Garden of Decision." Nevertheless ... Thy Perfect Will Be Done. Amen

(P.S. 661 Words - Scriptures used in the prayer: Ps 24:1, Jn.16:33, Jn.14:27, Ph.4:7, Ph.4:6, Ep.6:12, 1Pe.5:7, Ph.4:13).

SUPREME GOSPEL ENTERTAINMENT BY SHERRI Y. JOHNSON

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VTV NETWORK INKS DEAL WITH DR. BOBBY JONES



Atlanta-based African American owned streaming television network, VTV, officially inked a deal with the legendary Dr. Bobby Jones to air some of his beloved shows. The Bobby Jones Classics show premieres on the VTV Network on Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023 at 10:00am EST/9:00am CST with a re-

airing at 5pm EST/4pm CST. The weekly show will highlight some of Dr. Jones' most watched episodes that became a cornerstone in the Gospel music community.

VTV's President and CEO, Jerry Adams, says "we are very excited about this awesome opportunity to work with a legend and icon like Dr. Bobby Jones." Mr. Adams believes that having Dr. Jones on VTV Network will only add to its growing viewership. He shared that as VTV continues to expand with more engaging content, there will be more shows submitted for consideration to its audience.

Dr. Bobby Jones is revered as the torchbearer for Gospel music and is one of the most respected legends in the industry. He is an acclaimed singer who has released 14 albums and toured internationally. He won a Grammy Award for his single with Barbara Mandrell, "I'm So Glad I'm Standing Here Today." He also wrote and produced the first black gospel opera, Make a Joyful Noise, which won a Gabriel Award. Dr. Jones founded and continues to lead the Nashville Super Choir. Dr. Jones' "Bobby Jones Gospel" was the highest rated show on Black Entertainment Television (BET) network and became

the longest running show (35 years) in the history of cable television. He has received countless awards and citations, including Dove Award, Stellar Award, BET Bob Johnson Chairman Award, Trumpet Award, Congressman Al Edwards Unsung Hero Award, and Congresswoman Sheila Lee Jackson Outstanding Service Award just to name a few.

VTV Network is committed to creating a cost-effective and cutting-edge entertainment network. We strive to showcase family friendly new talent, live stream media, along with some of your favorite classics. Its

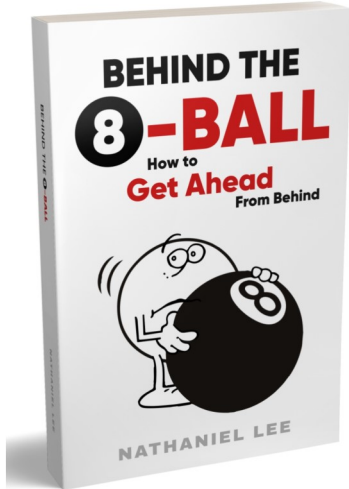
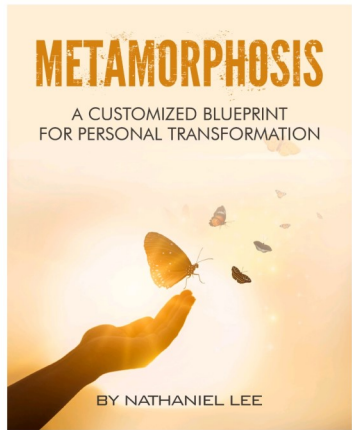
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METAMORPHOSIS: "I AM WE" - RECLAIMING A COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS



Contributing Writer: \ Nathaniel Lee

With crime and safety once again taking the lead as one of the most urgent concerns of residents in most major cities, voters are once again deluged with the promises of would-be politicians and incumbents promising to address these issues and help resolve them if elected to office. Oddly enough, those currently in office have proven they could not solve the problems and would not persist during their terms, and those seeking offices for the first time often fail to do more than repeat sound bites for public consumption that fail to produce any real change if and when they are elected.

The problem of a decayed society has been placed at the feet of our music, movies, and television. Some claim that the violence in our media has eroded the consciousness of the people who, as a result of prolonged exposure to such entertainment, become insensitive to violence and more likely to tolerate or even commit acts of violence themselves. Add to this the problem of poverty in a nation filled with wealth and resources, homelessness where there is no lack of land and property available for habitation, and a growing rate of citizens graduating from school without the ability to read at grade level if they can read at all, despite having very accessible

schools, and significant funds poured into the education system annually.

This is a nation of inconsistencies. Rich in resources with high rates of poverty, lots of fertile land and development with extensive homelessness; an educational system recognized throughout the world yet with an ever-growing number of its citizens functionally illiterate.

Some will blame the education system, others will fault self-serving, power career

politicians and then there are those who will claim that an economic system that favors the have's over the have-nots is at fault – and to some degree, they all make valid points.

However, I think these are symptoms, not causes. The cause, I believe, is rooted in capitalism; it is individualism. I believe at the heart of poverty, homelessness, blight, and other social concerns is individualism.

A person, people, or nation that places their own individual concerns and interests or those of others might do well initially but will eventually erode. "Me, Myself, and I" places the person above the people, the individual, over the concern of the collective, and when this becomes common, moral anarchy becomes likely.

The phrase "doing me" epitomizes this mindset. It's a renunciation of the community. It's a separation from

the collective. It subordinates what is good and best for the group to what is good and best for the person. Taking to the extreme, "Me, myself and I" can mean hoarding resources among a people deprived and in need of such resources, gluttony at the table of those who are famished.

Then there is the principle of Ubuntu, taken from an African concept that simply states that "people are people because there are people". In other words, it takes into account that we aren't the center of the universe but a part of a synergistic system in which the parts joined together to accomplish that which no single part could have accomplished operating on its own and apart from the whole.

"Me, myself, and I" places the individual's needs and wants above those of the people, the planet, and, yes, God, who loves the people

and the planet He created. Under this principle, you can eat unconcerned about the hungry who longingly watch you do so. Ubuntu says the opposite; it practices the principle of "I am we." It sees its success in the success of the whole. It states that I am well only when my people are well.

If "I am we" then the music I create, the words I speak, the movies I produce, the people with whom I associate, and the activities I participate in cannot diminish, minimize, or harm the community in which I am intricately a part of and, as such, my well-being is ultimately tied to its well-being. Something to think about.

Nathaniel Lee is the author of the books 'Metamorphosis: A Customized Blueprint for Personal Transformation' and 'Behind the 8-Ball; How to Get Ahead From Behind'. Both

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HAPPY HEAVENLY BIRTHDAY NOVI JOHNSON: REMEMBERING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF A MENTOR AND ARTIST ADVOCATE



As I sit down to write this article, my heart is heavy with the memory of Novi Johnson on the month of her birthday, April. Novi was born on April 18th, and it is my honor to celebrate her life. She was a true legend and mentor to independent artists. Novi passed away in June of 2022, but her legacy lives on in the hearts and minds of all those who knew and loved her.

I first met Novi she was just starting out in the music industry, and I was immediately struck by her passion for supporting independent artists. Novi was a true friend and supporter. From hiring me to be a judge to sponsoring some of my projects. She founded Noveee Records, an artist management company that quickly gained a reputation for being a front-line representative for independent artists. Novi was a force to be reckoned with, and her impact on the music industry was felt far beyond the borders of Philadelphia.

I remember sitting down with Novi to talk about her latest project, a show that aimed to give indie artists global exposure. When I asked her about her overall goal for the show, she told me that it was to help inde-

pendent artists get the recognition they deserved. Novi knew that there was so much talent out there that was going unnoticed, and she wanted to change that.

At the time, Novi was self-funding the project, but she was actively seeking sponsors to help make it a reality. She had assembled an incredible team to work on the show, including LaCinda Trotter, aka Philly Woman, as the executive producer. They were also working with House of Talent PA as their production team, and the show was quickly gaining traction.

Novi had a way of bringing people together, and her last project, Surviving Philly TV, was a testament to that. She created a family with

her management company, Noveee Records, and with Surviving Philly TV, she birthed another family. The show brought artists from different parts of the city together, creating a sense of togetherness that was sorely needed. Novi and her partner, Philly Wonder Woman, showed the world that no matter what part of the city you come from, you can work together.

Novi touched so many lives during her time on this earth, and her impact will never be forgotten. She gave independent artists a platform to showcase their talents and believed in them when no one else did. She was a mentor, a friend, and a legend. As we remember Novi during her birthday month, let us honor her by continuing to support inde-

pendent artists and carrying on her legacy of love and support. Rest in power, Novi.

Novi Johnson knew so many people and touched the lives of many; here are a few kind words from some of the Surviving Philly TV artists.

Philly Wonder Women: Novi and I decided to become partners to bring artists from different parts of the city to create togetherness and, at the same time, show the world no matter what part of the city you come from, you can work together; after all, we are all trying to survive in Philly.

Bonnie Songbird: Novi was a special person that believed in me, and she gave great advice. Her smile and her laugh would make you

feel better when you were feeling down. She will forever be in my heart and missed.

Shatera: It's a lot of things I can say about my sister Novi. But what I will say is that she was definitely a Philly icon and legend in my book. She paved the way for a lot of independent artists in Philly and outside of Philly by giving them their first chance at performing on stage to showcase their talents. And by giving them a chance when no one else believed in them. She created a family with her management company Noveee Records, and gave birth to another family with her last project Surviving Philly Tv. I love you, sis. Keep smiling down on us.

Panamania Prodikal: Novi had an amazing heart and an amazing dream to spotlight the artist from the city. She pulled us together. And we will always remember her. We loved her and always will.



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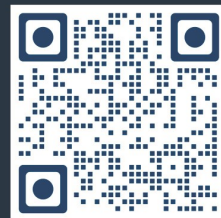
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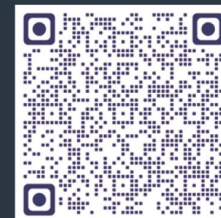
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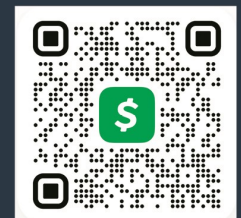
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Red Snapperrr, also known as "The Queen of Philly" and "The Madam of Comedy," is the CEO and founder of the "Chubby Chasers Live" talk show, the #1234&5 talk show in

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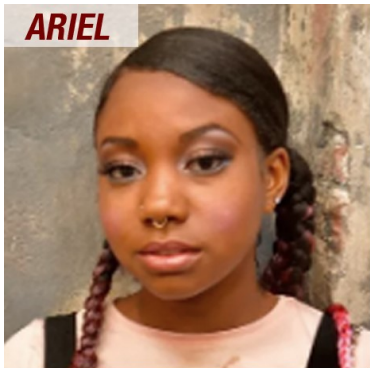
The show covers everything from comedians and musicians to filmmakers, book authors, artists, actors, fashion designers, producers, entrepreneurs, motivational speakers,

and more.

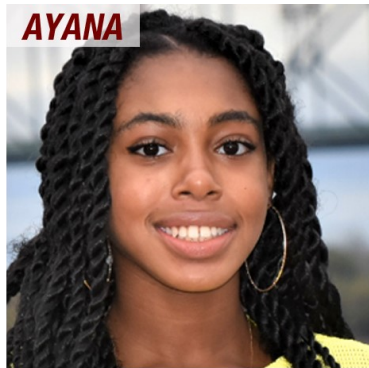
"Chubby Chasers Live" particularly films weekly on Tuesdays from 5-7 PM in front of a live audience at Chuck's Alibi in Philadelphia, PA. The show generally airs on Fridays on major net-

working platforms. Don't miss out on this fun-filled talk show where it's always a vibe with Red Snapperrr at the helm.

THE KINGFISH CAST



ARIEL



AYANA



JORDAN



TAYLOR



BRITT



XAVIER



KERON



OMAR



RONALD



KAVON



JORMAL

ITAL

JUSTIN

THE CAST OF "THE KINGFISH"

Xavier Edwards ("X")

Xavier was the first actor to officially join the cast. He plays the character "X" who is savvy, a video gamer, sneakerhead, is and tied into pop culture and what's "cool." The role is a reflection of who he is in real life. In one scene, X can clearly be seen trying to hold back laughter; the scene remained in the film. He attends the same Philly high school as Britt Starghill.

Britt Starghill ("Flip")

Flip, the second member to join the cast, plays "Flip" who is a genius, but not a nerd. When presented with the character of Flip, he played with it for a while

before molding it and settling in on the character you see in the film today. He and Xavier were the only two cast members who were targeted for roles before the script was written.

Jordan Webber ("Cupcake")

There were 400 applicants for the role of "Cupcake," and Jordan was selected as one of three finalists. During the audition, it was immediately clear that Jordan was "Cupcake." Her good-girl persona and talent were perfect fits for what the producers had in mind for the role, and they were right. Jordan delivers a memorable yet perfectly restrained performance. She attends high school in Philly.

Ariel Soleil ("Penny")

The producers were aware of Ariel's talent before casting her in the role. During the casting process, she was offered a role—not any specific role, just a role as an alternate for "Cupcake" and "Lucy," or as "Penny." After a food ordering incident where she took 40 minutes to decide what she wanted to eat, the script for "Penny" was tailored to that incident. And it turned out to be a perfect choice.

Taylor Myrick ("Bobby")

There were 200 applicants for the "Bobby" role, and Taylor was the last actor standing. What sealed it was his audition reel where the scene he acted out was

exactly what the writers had envisioned for "Bobby." Smart, suave, and level-headed. He is a nice complement to "Flip" (smart, funny) and "X" (freewheeling, cool), as he brings that maturity and complementary cool to the trio. He attends college in Philadelphia.

Keron Morton ("Big Man")

Keron was the last member to join the cast; he got the script two days before filming—while he was out of town. The producers couldn't find anyone who fit the role—an intimidating big guy with a big voice. And then, the Executive Producer (EP) said, "Wait! Keron!" He reached out to Keron with his fingers crossed and Keron agreed to play the role! It was a close call. If he said no, the filming would have had to be postponed.

Omar Long ("Big Homie")

One day while the EP was watching the Ital Tha Ruffian music video "Melodious Thump," he spotted one of the performers and asked Ital, "Who is THAT?!" he thought the guy was perfect for the "Big Homie" role. Ital put the two in touch (on short notice), and Omar agreed to play the role. Off screen, he is actually called "Big Homie Tha OG." A natural fit for the role.

Ronald Shaer ("Kingfish")

The producers found themselves in a tight spot: they needed to find that perfect person to play the menacing "Kingfish." After sorting through 40 applicants for the role, they saw the photo of the 41st applicant and said, "THAT'S The Kingfish!" They contacted Ron immediately—without auditioning him—and offered him the role on the spot. It was an easy choice, because Ron is an accomplished actor.

Kavon Kellam ("Smart Homie")

Kavon was an applicant for another role in the film, but it had already been cast. However, the producers thought he was a versatile

actor who could play many styles: serious, comedic, street, and others, which they believed would be an asset. So, they asked Kavon if he would be interested in a smaller-yet-important role, and he agreed. His scene is one of the most original scenes ever produced on film.

Ital Tha Ruffian ("The Mean Man")

The EP asked popular and highly-respected Philly rapper, Ital Tha Ruffian, to play the role of "The Mean Man." The EP thought it was a great idea because two of Ital's songs were going to be used in the film. Plus, he thought Ital could play a perfect mean guy, and he did. If you haven't seen the film, you have to watch it just to see Ital's gate as he chases Bobby, Flip, and X.

Jormal Edwards

("Bodyguard"), Justin Vasor ("The Distributor"), and Joshua Black ("The Bag Man")

The producers needed a few people to play bit parts, and reached out to some friends to fill the roles. "The Bagman" played by Joshua Black, was created during filming (a script edit) when they realized they needed someone to hand the bag to "X." Josh was on-set, and agreed to play the part.

Ayana Ferguson ("Freddie")

Ayana is the newest member of the leading cast and will play the role of "Freddie" in episode 2. Ayana was one of 3 finalists for a lead female role out of 400 applicants. She is very talented and versatile and will be a great fit with the other leading cast members. During her audition for episode 1, the casting director and EP agreed that she deserved a leading role in the film,, and here she is. She attends high school in New Jersey.



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