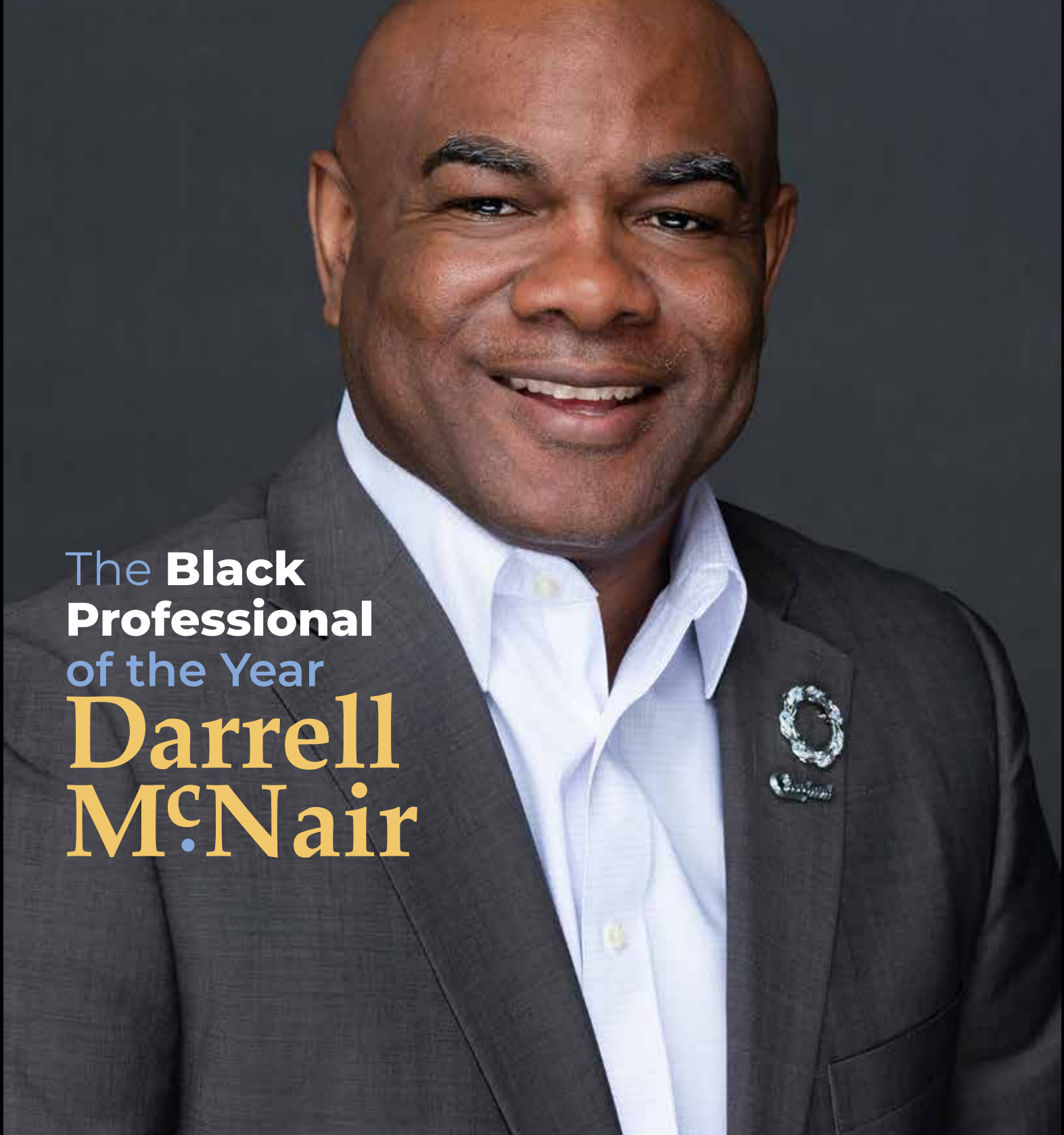


The **Black** Professional

A GUIDE TO BUILDING THE VILLAGE!

The **Black**
Professional
of the Year

Darrell
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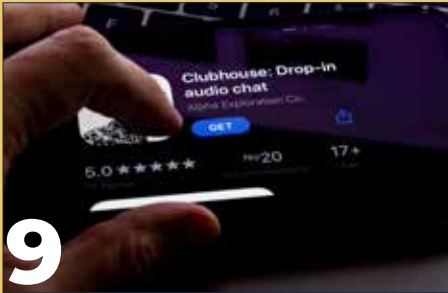
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Finding New Ways to Engage, Inform and Connect: Celebrating our Black Excellence!

Dear Friends, Family and Supporters,

It is with great pride, that the Board of Trustees of the Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation (BPACF) announces its new magazine, **The BLACK Professional: A Guide to Building the Village!**

For over 40 years, BPACF has been a champion for education, scholarship, and black excellence. We have also advocated feverishly for Black leaders and supporting non-profit organizations that deliver quality services and programs. BPACF's rich history of saluting black professional excellence, celebrating the accomplishments of trendsetters and visionaries, and preparing the next generation of business and civic champions within Northeast Ohio's Black Community is the premise of this publication.

Black men and women have long been denied access and opportunity to be included in mainstream career and leadership development programs that could significantly impact their readiness to lead and build organizations and their communities. **The BLACK Professional** magazine will expose you to relevant storytelling, regular columns, profiles of successful minority entrepreneurs, black executives and talented civic leaders. We are confident that our readers and advertisers will embrace our new publication with enthusiasm and excitement.

We are indeed living in uncertain times! BPACF stands ready for the charge of being a catalyst that prepares and develops emerging professionals, celebrates distinguished leaders and elevates our community.

It is our hope that you will choose to take this journey with us. You can advertise, subscribe or even submit stories for our review and consideration. Feel free to share the magazine with friends, family and colleagues in your network via email or social media and encourage them to subscribe.

Visit: www.bpacf.org or email us at: magazine@bpacf.org for more information and to sign up for your free digital copied delivered to your email inbox. We promise, you will be inspired and motivated!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meltrice D. Sharp". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Meltrice D. Sharp, CPA
President, Board of Trustees, BPACF

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EDITOR

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



I've always had an admiration and respect for entrepreneurs.

My first taste of business ownership was Prewitt's Cleaners. It was my uncle Duward's ("Uncle D") family business. Though he worked full time at a chemical plant, he managed to also run a

dry cleaning business with help from his wife, sons, and dedicated employees.

Prewitt's Cleaners was located at 127th & Kinsman Ave. I spent a lot of time there, listening to the whirring sounds of the machines, taking in the scents, playing in the garments and watching my family clean, press, sort and distribute clothes. His dry cleaning establishment was also a gathering place. Often, when people from the neighborhood stopped in, they parked themselves on the huge windowsill bench to chat a while about the events of the day, their families, and just "shoot the breeze."

My father owned a business in Puerto Rico. Visits there were awe-inspiring. His was a manufacturing warehouse with big, heavy drums, loud machines and people yelling above the noise in a language I didn't understand.

Then there's Selmer Prewitt, another one of my mother's brothers, who operated Prewitt Realty, located at 8869 Cedar Ave. I often heard stories from my mother about how well my uncle was doing and how much he enjoyed his job.

In those early years, before even thinking of a career, I always knew that business ownership would be part of it. I didn't hear the word "entrepreneur," but I understood what it meant to own a business.

This premier issue of The Black Professional magazine brings it home for me. We have an opportunity

to celebrate our Black professionals, giving them encouragement and inspiration in the stories and articles we share.

Take our cover article on Darrell McNair, the Black Professional of The Year. His is a story of vision, faith, tenacity, risk-taking and philanthropy. In my interview with him I sensed his authenticity and genuineness. Tina Cargill, his executive assistant said, "When planning his schedule, he's the first person who said, 'No, not on that day. Ronna [his wife] has something on that day.' He remembered his wife, and I could not schedule him for anything. That's the caliber of man he is."

Throughout the pages are professionals who embody those qualities. Some stories and faces are familiar. Others are not. Our goal is to uplift our Black professionals so that we can leave our communities better and brighter.

It's also an opportunity to shine the light on our student scholars. We're proud of their educational journeys and look forward to hearing great things as they pay it forward.

Our immediate goal is to produce this magazine three times this year. As Editor, I assist the team in developing content. Please reach out to me with ideas, recommendations, concerns and stories. We're always looking for contributors. You can reach me at editor@bpacf.org.

Please enjoy our Premier Issue. Stay encouraged on your professional journey and congratulations again to Darrell McNair, our Black Professional of the Year.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Montrie Rucker Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Montrie Rucker Adams, APR
Editor, *The Black Professional*
and

Chief Visibility Officer, Visibility Marketing Inc.

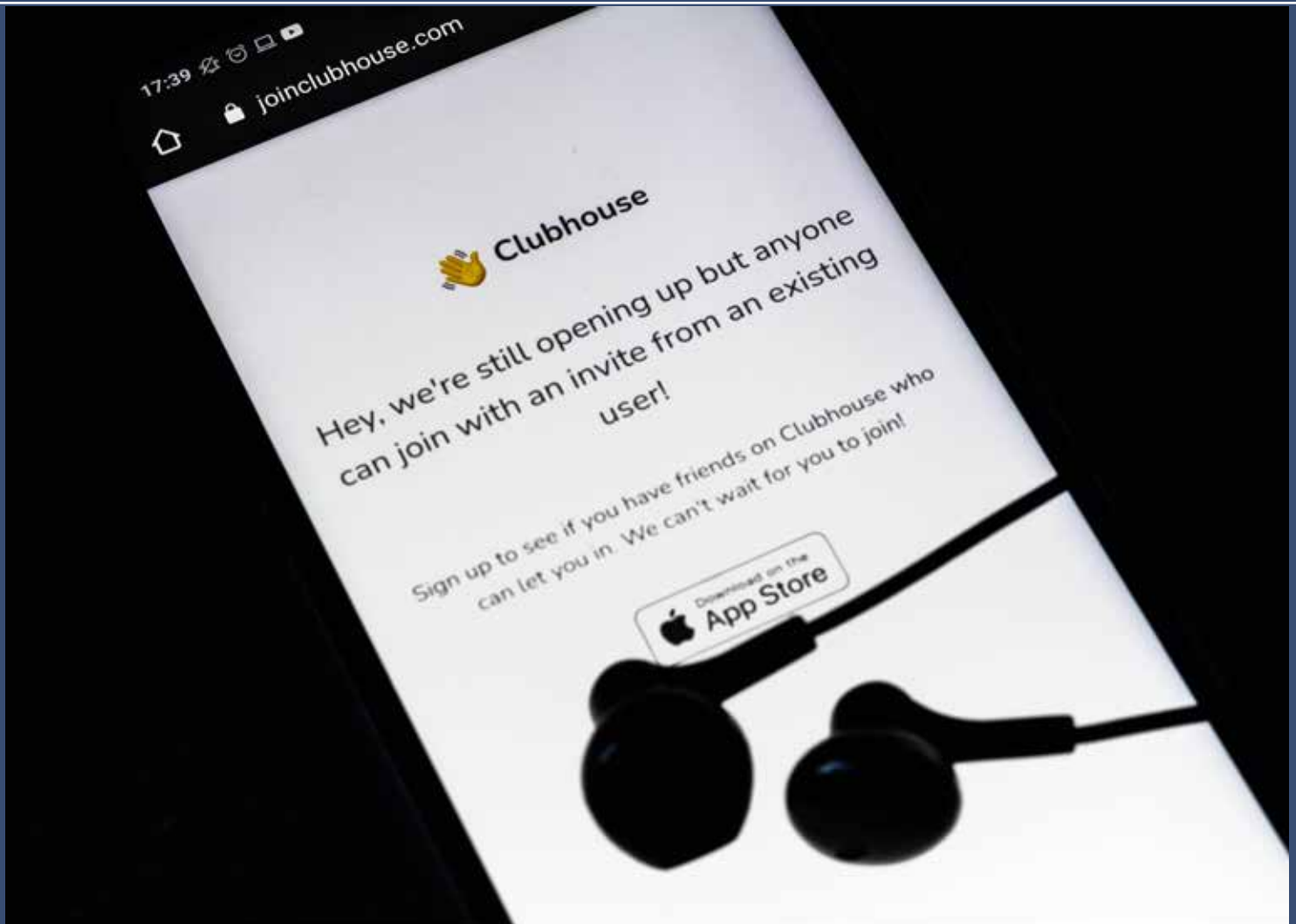
A chef in a white uniform and black hat is smiling and looking down at a dish he is preparing. He is in a kitchen setting with a brick oven visible in the background. The chef is wearing a white chef's coat and a black apron. He is holding a small white bowl and appears to be adding something to a larger white bowl containing a salad of shredded green and orange vegetables. The background shows a kitchen with white tiled walls and a brick oven.

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7 Ways to Use **Clubhouse** *to Grow* *Your Business*

by **TerDawn DeBoe**

Clubhouse is the new app in town.

I can admit that the hype surrounding the app is worth it. After using it for just a few weeks, entrepreneurs, digital marketers, influencers, speakers, coaches, you name it... have seen outcomes they didn't think were possible.

For example, I've collaborated with some of the biggest names in the digital industry. Clubhouse can have a tremendous impact on your networks, connections, and business in general.

But, before we look at the seven ways to use Clubhouse to grow your business, let's understand how the app works.

How Does Clubhouse Work?

Clubhouse is an exclusive audio-only app which allows users to move around virtual rooms and listen actively or discuss various topics. Think of it as a never-ending virtual convention where you can walk from one room to another. Currently, the app operates on an invite-only basis, and it is available for iPhone users.

You can join Clubhouse through:

- A personal invitation from a person already using Clubhouse.
- Exclusive side-door which requires you to visit the Clubhouse website, download the app from App Store, and reserve your name as you await an invitation.

Like any other social media platform, Clubhouse requires you to set up a profile and add a bio. Your profile should strictly define who you are and what you do. Also, ensure you add a nice profile picture. This photo will be used throughout the entire app. Therefore, a clear image will work to your advantage.

The app allows you to add only to your Twitter and Instagram profiles. However, you are free to post additional links on your bio.

Here are some main features you should know about the Clubhouse app:

1

Clubhouse Hallway

Instead of having a feed, the Clubhouse has a hallway. This is where active chat rooms are displayed. If you followed any scheduled rooms or joined any clubs, they will be listed at the top of the hallway.

2

Clubhouse Rooms

Clubhouse rooms are where all the conversations and discussions are held. When you're in the hallway, you can scroll down the different rooms, pop in, look at the title of the room, the people currently in the conversation, and opt to join or not.

You can also create your private room and invite one or two connections to have a private chat.

3

Listener, Moderator & Speaker

In the rooms, there is a listener, moderator, and speaker. When you join a room for the first time,

you're a listener. Anyone can become a speaker. Once you get caught up in the conversation, you can tap on any speaker and share your insight on the topic by clicking on the microphone.

A moderator ensures discussions run smoothly. Some of their tasks include inviting people to speak, promoting a regular speaker to a moderator, turning on/off the audience's ability to raise their hands, mute speakers, send speakers back to the audience etc.

One phrase you'll commonly hear in the rooms is PTR. This stands for pull to refresh. When the moderator says PTR, pull down your screen to see people who have left or joined the room recently and so on.

4

Clubhouse Clubs

These clubs are communities within Clubhouse. A club can either be private or public. It has a founder, an administrator, members, and followers. To become a founder of a club, the platform requires you to host one recurrent conversation.

5

Clubhouse Stages

The room owner, moderator, and speakers are in the stage area in the room. The best part about Clubhouse is, you can see people who have interacted with the speaker under the 'followed by the speaker' icon and maybe open your connections.

Now, let's take a look at how you can use Clubhouse to grow your business.

PS: I have used some of these techniques myself, and they have proven to work.



Step 1 – LISTEN

When you join a room, don't just be a listener, be a keen listener. Don't be in a rush to contribute to the topic being discussed. Instead, take your time to listen to the speakers, analyze the questions asked, and take note of the responses given.

Your target audience is in rooms asking questions, and you should write them down so you can create content, tools, rooms, and classes around the pain points they ask about the most.

Step 2 – VALUE FIRST

Clubhouse is an app that is all about community. People are seeking good conversations that educate, ignite ideas, inspire, and entertain.

Some people are also looking for experts to help them solve their biggest problems.

Come to the stage to be of service to others instead of just looking for an opportunity to promote yourself.

When you are truly helping to educate, solve problems, and add value; people will line up to work with you. (Ask me how; I know)

Step 3 – DON'T FAKE IT

The Number One Rule I subscribe to while using Clubhouse is: Don't be a know-it-all. You're not in competition to seem smarter or more knowledgeable than others.

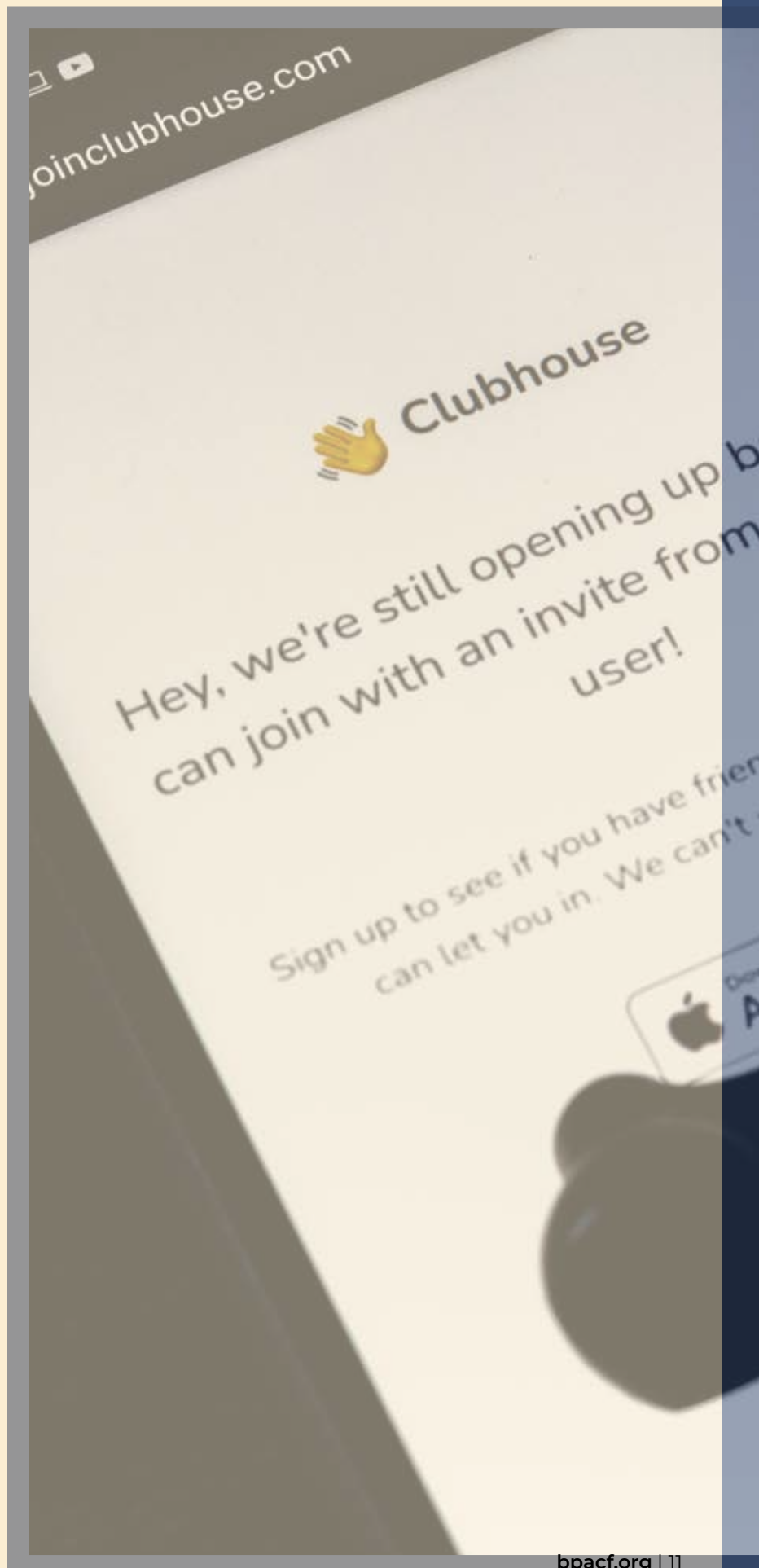
Therefore, acknowledge and add value in the areas that you are indeed an expert. Don't try to fake it by giving out information that you don't know. Not only does it hurt the people that don't know the difference, but it also kills your credibility.

Remember, it's okay to not know everything.

Step 4 – HAVE A CALL TO ACTION

Find a way to continue the conversation by giving a call to action for people to follow.

Whether it's hopping in your DM on Instagram or Twitter account or creating a valuable free resource that you can give people in exchange for their information (email or text), make sure there is a follow up.



The best tools are the ones that complement your discussions while you are on stage speaking.

Etiquette tip: ASK for permission to share your resource with the audience if it is not your room.

Step 5 – PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD WITH YOUR BIO

Your bio is the way you introduce yourself before you speak. Make sure it stands out with:

- A few sentences of your compelling story and why you do what you do.
- Your intent for being on Clubhouse.
- How you help people.
- Topics you like to talk about.
- How you are open to connecting with people.
- Connecting to your social media.

Also, use keywords in your bio to increase your visibility and rank highly among members' searches.

Step 6 – COLLABORATE

Collaboration truly is "king" on Clubhouse.

You can find connections by listening into the rooms and gravitating toward the people with whom you resonate.

Reach out to them and come correct!

Let them know your idea for collaboration and make it easy for them to partner with you on adding value to a room.

Collaboration is also an excellent way to form connections and learn something new. Always collaborate with someone who compliments your area of expertise.

Step 7 – ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE

Above everything, have fun and enjoy the experience!

As I mentioned earlier, Clubhouse is like a virtual convention. Therefore, have fun visiting one room after another.

Don't be in a rush to seem knowledgeable or an expert. After all, it's new for everyone, and there is a learning curve. If we all continue to help one another, we can ensure that Clubhouse is a place to come together and do great things.

Clubhouse is the new application in town. This means there is a lot to be learned. Before jumping on the Clubhouse train, start by understanding how the app truly works. You can download the app and see the stages, hallway, rooms, and clubs for yourself.

After you've grasped the app's basic functioning, go ahead and start using it to grow your venture. Remember, the key is to be patient, listen keenly and attentively, collaborate, be real, focus on adding value, and most importantly, have fun!

TerDawn DeBoe is a digital marketing expert and founder of Creative Thought Solutions which helps entrepreneurs build and scale their businesses.



Save the Date

PLEASE SAVE THIS VERY IMPORTANT DATE!

The Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation
is proud to announce that
Mr. Darrell McNair, President & CEO, MVP Plastics Corporation
is the 2021 Black Professional of the Year!

The 2021 Gala "LIVE" Event honoring Mr. McNair will be held

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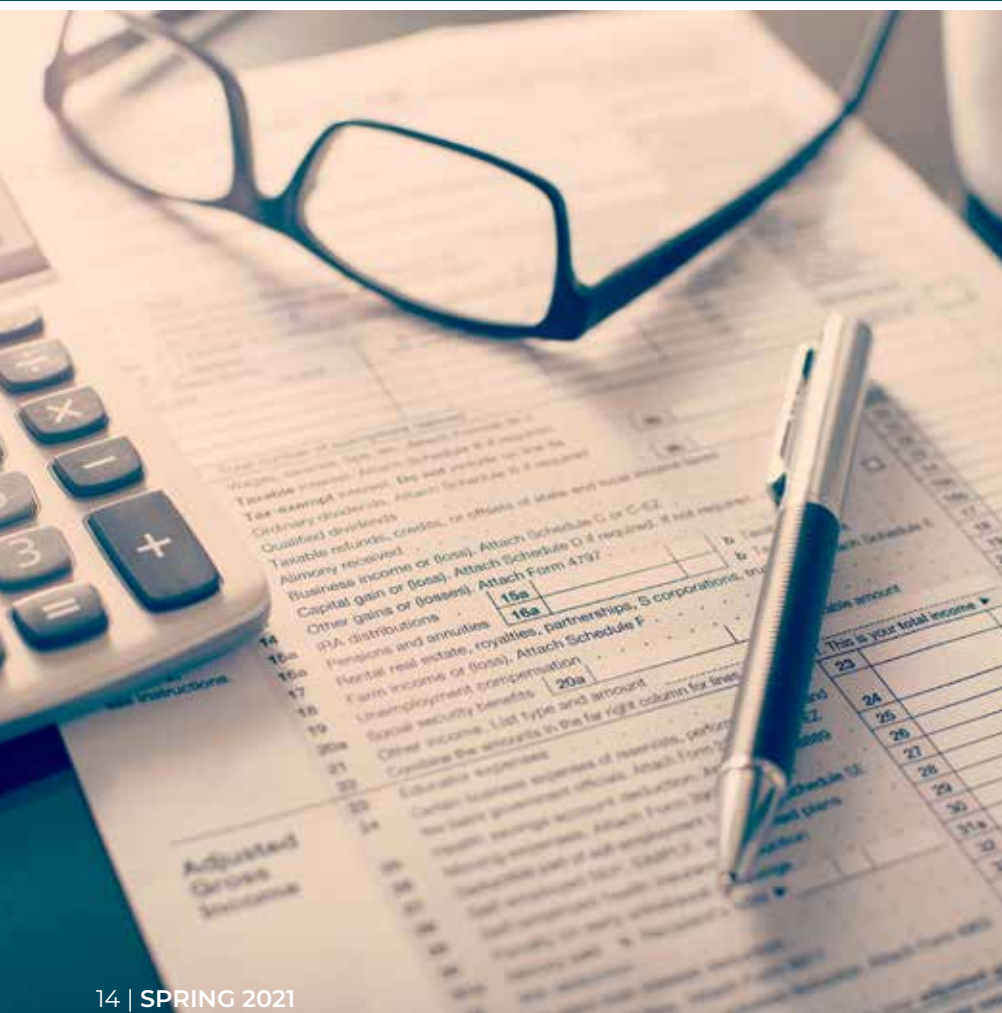
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How the Pandemic Affects the 2021 Tax Season



by LaRese Purnell, MBA

To start, these are the main points you need to understand for the 2021 tax season:

- The IRS extended the deadline for all federal tax returns and payments to May 17, 2021.
- The standard deduction for 2020 increased to \$12,400 for single filers and \$24,800 for married couples filing jointly.
- Income tax brackets increased in 2020 to account for inflation.

The Impact of Coronavirus on your taxes:

- Stimulus checks will not count as taxable income. Instead, it's being treated like a refundable tax credit for 2020. Your stimulus check is an advance on money you would have received anyway as part of your tax refund in 2021.
- The CARES Act offered Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. As long as these loans were used on specific business expenses, they were designed to be "forgiven." In December 2020, the IRS announced that any eligible expenses you paid with money from those PPP loans can be deducted from your taxable income. You'll have to get your loan forgiveness application approved by the Small Business Administration (SBA) before the amount you borrowed is forgiven.



- With the passing of President Biden's Coronavirus Relief package, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) in March, the first \$10,200 of unemployment benefits is tax-free if your annual household income is less than \$150,000. Which means that you're probably going to owe less than you thought on taxes. However, if your unemployment benefits exceeded \$10,200, you'll still need to report the excess as taxable income. If your household income is over \$150,000, you'll need to report all of your unemployment benefits just as you would have before the passing of the ARP.

If you are one of the 70 percent of taxpayers receiving a tax refund, spend that money wisely. With an average refund amount of up to \$3,000, the possibilities may be abundant when you imagine all that you need to do with the funds. However, \$3,000 can go just as quickly as it arrives. So let's make a list:

1. The first thing you must do this year to make your tax refund work for you, is **PRIORITIZE!** Make a list of ways in which your money would best be used. No one but you knows your finances or your budget. So think smart when prioritizing your financial needs. Understand the difference between needs and wants and start the journey to make your money work.

2. As you are creating this list of financial needs, determine what on the list will impact your financial situation most in the long-term. Which means you should also pull your full credit report. This helps you in your decision to stand firm! Avoid financial decisions that feel good for the moment but have no impact on your credit, savings or debt cancellation.

3. Pay yourself! Don't look back at the refund in 30-60 days and have no emergency fund to show for it. Kick start your savings if it best meets your needs. Or add to an already thriving savings account. If you have no savings, \$1000 is a great amount to hold you firm in an emergency situation. If you're adding to an already established savings account, visit your local financial institution and make sure you're earning the most for and on your money.

4. Knock out smaller debts that have been holding you back and hanging over your head. I'm sure you've gotten enough phone calls asking for payment for money you don't have. Well, now is the time to get those debts paid off. If they've been lingering for a while, they've probably been charged off. Especially if some of the debt is credit card related. So, don't just call and pay the full amount. Negotiate a settlement. Get the most bang for your buck. Note any medical bills or other miscellaneous debt that may be pulling down your credit score and get it knocked out.

5. This may sound contradictory to the other four points previously made, but I mean it when I say **TREAT YOURSELF!** Don't go crazy. Do not put yourself further in debt. But, you've worked all year and sacrificed to provide for yourself and your family. You owe it to yourself. It doesn't need to be big or extravagant. It could be as simple as a day at the spa...but for many it may be the first time in a while to give something to you for all the hard work you do.

LaRese Purnell, MBA is a Managing Partner at CLE Consulting Firm providing accounting, tax, payroll and professional services.

On Health + Wellness:

Eight Ways to Take Care of Your Spirit, Body, and Mind

by Jennifer Wainwright

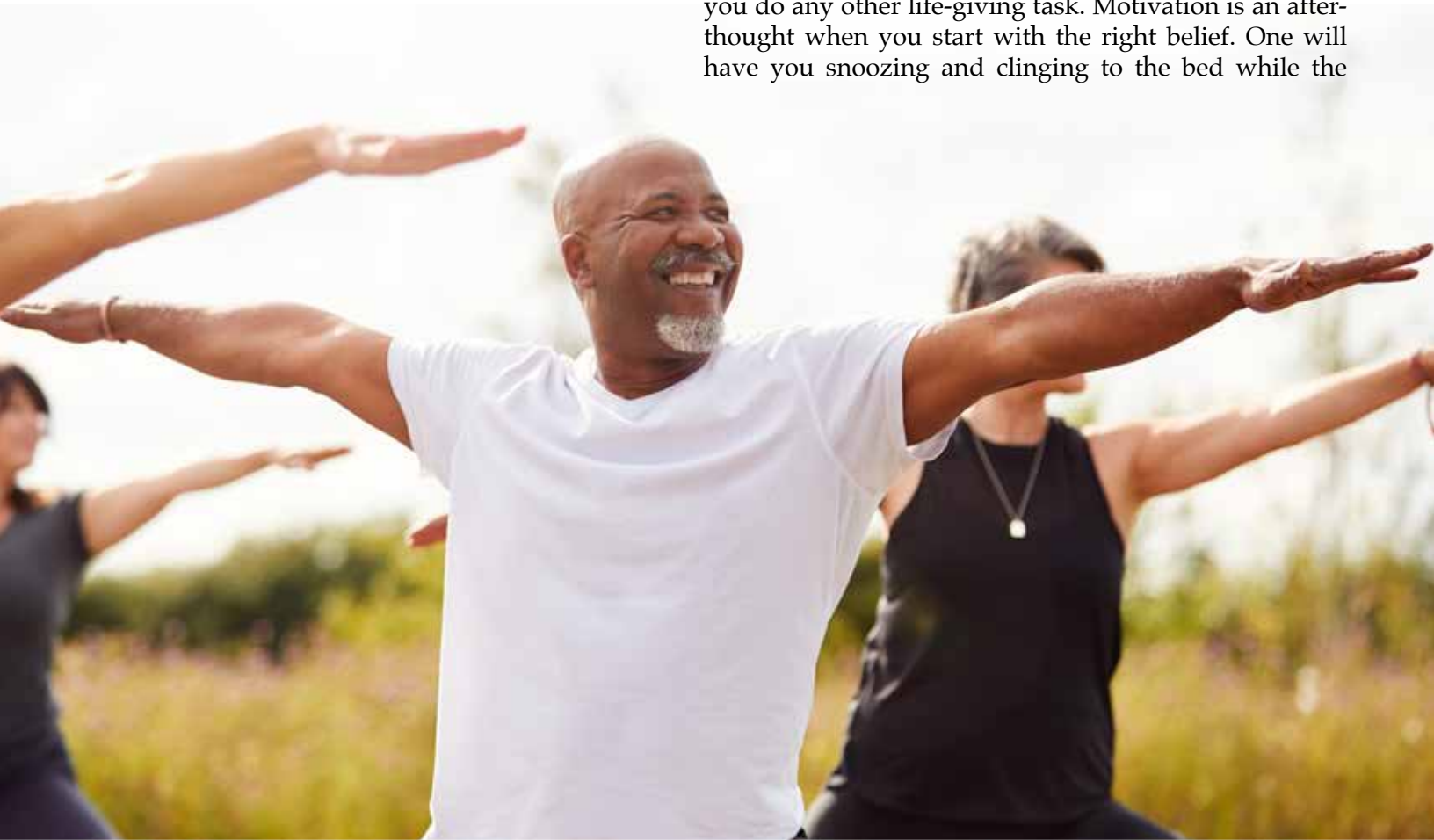
Wellness isn't just what we do, it's also what we believe and what we feel, which is why it's important that we take care to notice what internal personal narratives we're composing and how we're responding to the challenges we face.

Those narratives and responses fertilize the soil of our mental, physical, and emotional health, seeding our perspectives, shaping our choices, and ultimately producing the quality of our lives and relationships.

For example, if you believe you need motivation to work out, you may never start or stick to a routine.

Why? Because motivation needs to be precipitated by a feeling, and feelings are fleeting and unpredictable. As an impetus for a consistent exercise regimen, motivation alone is too fickle to rely on as an incentive.

However, if you believe that working out is an energy elixir, stress-reducer, and joy catalyst, you might anticipate your weekly workouts with as much elation as you do any other life-giving task. Motivation is an afterthought when you start with the right belief. One will have you snoozing and clinging to the bed while the



other will get you up sans alarm and push you out of it.

If you feel overwhelmed, tense, or stressed, these feelings will often show up as physiological maladies, manifesting as headaches, high blood pressure, and heartburn.

We can't simply say, "I won't get stressed," because stress isn't completely avoidable, and some stress is good for us anyway.

So, what should we do to mind our minds, spirits, and bodies well? Here are eight, research-based strategies that I personally ascribe to in tending the garden of my health.

1. Practice Gratitude.

Begin every single day with thanks. The moment I open my eyes, I acknowledge God for the gift of the present, another day, another opportunity to be and do something great. Starting my mornings this way immediately grounds me in gratitude and invites serenity and cheer into my day at first light. Gratitude is a key part of any well-lived life, as being thankful is linked to an increased sense of wellbeing,

2. Drink water first thing in the morning.

Not because it'll speed up your metabolism, decrease your appetite, or rehydrate your body from overnight dehydration. Although you'll find an abundance of articles on the Internet touting these benefits, all three have been largely disputed in other studies.

So, why should you do it then? Because what is indisputable is the fact that drinking plenty of water aids in digestion, helps with weight management, and significantly affects energy levels and brain function.

Starting earlier makes it more likely that you'll get in your recommended amount well before bedtime, thus making sure that you're not interrupted in the middle of the night with the irksome urge to pee.

3. Listen to something inspirational while you're prepping for the day.

This means it's a hard no on the news, unless it's trans-

formative news. When I rise at 5 a.m., it's the Daily Audio Bible podcast for me, followed immediately by hip-hop or some other music characterized by deep bass and an upbeat tempo to get my mind ready for my workout.

For you, it might be an uplifting message from a speaker you enjoy, an audiobook that reminds you to tap into your inner greatness, or an affirmation playlist that fuels your confidence before tackling work.

4. Exercise.

The benefits of exercise are ubiquitous and universal resulting in better sleep, sex, and sapience—yes—even our thinking, judgement, and memory improve when we exercise, to say nothing of a stronger, more robust physique, enhanced immunity, and increased longevity.

There are all sorts of compelling reasons to exercise, but you only need one. Figure out your why, then get to it. You don't need a gym membership, equipment, or even a lot of time. Start with what you have, then spring for accessories once you've proven to yourself that you're in it for the long haul.

5. Go to therapy.

How do you know when you need to go to therapy? My therapist says, "When your life isn't working the way you want it to work, and you don't know what to do about it." Long gone are the stigmas of old about going to see a shrink. In fact, in the age of therapy culture and the reduced costs of online psychotherapy, counseling has become the dernier cri of mental health advocacy and awareness.

It's an increasingly popular trend and the perception that it's just for people who have severe mental issues is grossly inaccurate. If you need to chart a new career path, process the loss of a significant friendship, or figure out why you're unfulfilled even though you seem to "have it all," book a counseling appointment and let a professional help you work through it.

6. Journal your journey.

Wherever you are in life, wherever you want to be,

start writing it down. Externalizing your thoughts, plans, and ideas will help you stay on track with your goals and make it that much easier to discover your patterns—the ones that serve and align with your larger life purpose and the ones that don't. This is important personal feedback as it allows you to see rather than just think about how you're spending your time.

It also gives you a record, a personal history, of what mattered to you at any given point in your life, so that you can examine your journey with hindsight and insight as your judicious traveling companions.

7. Nourish your body with good food.

This might be my favorite one on this list. I love to eat. I started an intermittent fasting practice 405 days ago, and besides helping me drop 40+ pounds and imbuing me with a greater level of discipline, it has taught me to really appreciate the type and quality of food that I eat. When you're only eating one full meal a day, you tend to place a great deal of thought into deciding what you want that meal to be.

So, what do I eat? Lots of vegetables prepared myriad different ways, chopped, spiralized, riced, roasted, broiled, sauteed, grilled, and pressure-cooked. I also love air-fried salmon and pan-seared chicken, baked sweet potatoes, and avocados seasoned with Salad Supreme. My body is healthy and strong. I feel energized, hale and hearty.

While I enjoy cookies and candy as much as the next sweets-lover, the difference in my wellness when I'm indulging in too much junk food is unmistakable and unforgiving.

Before I shifted to filling my plate with more nutritious foods, I could feign ignorance about the havoc my

previous, poorly structured diet was wreaking on my wellbeing, because I didn't have anything to compare it to.

"I feel good," I would tell myself, and for the most part, I did, but that's because I had only known one way of feeling, living, and existing and it was largely rooted in how I was eating. But if I was good then, I'm glowing now.

Treat your body to the gift of healthful eating and you'll also be rewarding yourself with a reduced risk or reversal of disease, a stronger immune system, and a higher quality of living.

8. Meditate to appeal to your light side.

Life is hard and heavy at times. There is no substitute for silence and stillness in the practice of wellness. It is in this place that you can hear, receive, and know. It's where you learn to be gentle with yourself and where you give yourself grace. Value yourself enough to be compassionate when you fall short of your ambition, when you slack off on your goals, when you fail to meet the expectations of yourself or loved ones.

The most important thing to remember in the pursuit of healthy living can be summed up in three words: Love yourself well.

Anchor yourself in the truth that you are enough, trust that you're doing enough, and know that wellness is not a sojourn in the sanctuary of good habits. It's a life-long pilgrimage in the cultivation of wholeness.

Jennifer Wainwright is a writer who is passionate about storytelling, finding the joy in every experience, and encouraging others to do the work to become the best version of themselves.

The **Black Professional** of the Year **Darrell McNair**

by *Montrie Rucker Adams, APR*



To say that Darrell McNair is the quintessential entrepreneur is an understatement. He's worked for, bought, sold, and spearheaded numerous businesses and organizations. He's had stints at IBM and Ford. He ran a community organization funded by the Southeast Michigan Foundation. He's operated a home health care agency, retail shoe stores and even owned a tug boat. In 2000, McNair purchased Nescor Plastics with a private equity partner and after eight years he bought his partner out and rebranded it as MVP Plastics Inc. Since that time, he has purchased a couple other companies, MVP Design and Engineering and All Foam Products and have branded them under The MVP Group of Companies where he is President and CEO.

For these and many other reasons, including philanthropy and student

engagement, McNair is the Black Professional Association Charitable Foundation's (BPACF) 2021 Black Professional of the Year (BPOY).

Being named BPOY is the "highest recognition an African American living in Cleveland can receive," said Alexandria Johnson Boone, Chairwoman and Founder of The Women of Color Foundation and the 1994 BPOY. McNair is the 38th business professional to receive the prestigious recognition since its inception in 1981. He follows prominent trailblazers like the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss Jr., John H. Bustamante, former Mayor Michael R. White, Steven Minter, The Honorable Louis Stokes and the Honorable Stephanie Tubbs Jones.

Each year, an individual is chosen for their professional accomplishments, civic engagement, personal

standards of excellence and community visibility. They are nominated by their peers and selected by the BPACF BPOY committee. The BPACF's mission is to create opportunities for African American youth through scholarship, education and leadership development. High leadership standards are set so that student scholars are exposed to individuals of high caliber and exceptional character. The BPOY sets examples and offers mentoring opportunities for the youth.

Samuel Sanya is a Project Engineer at MVP, and began as an international student intern from Nigeria. "I met him [McNair] in 2013. I was a sophomore engineering student at Cleveland State and he wanted to hire interns for the summer. I was the lucky guy," said Sanya. He remembers not having transportation to get to Middlefield. "He worked



with me to make it happen,” he said.

“I can say unequivocally that he is one of the top three most influential people in my life. He has been involved in every major decision I’ve had to make in the past 10 years. He always encourages an entrepreneurial spirit in young people, especially people of color. He will go out of his way to make sure you’re comfortable and he meets you where you are. I could not ask for more,” offers Sanya.

Sanya mentions that it is because of McNair that he is now a permanent United States resident. “He started the process of petitioning the United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) for me to obtain permanent residency. He helped me get my Green Card. He single-handedly did that. Because of him, I am a permanent resident. I do not have to go back to Nigeria unless it’s on my terms. If a man will do that for a person from another country, I can only imagine what he will do for people of color from his country.”

As the oldest of three and the only son of Dr. Clarence and Janice McNair, McNair saw firsthand what it was like to own and operate a business. His father was a military dentist having joined the Air Force after graduating from The Ohio State University Dental School.

His family moved often. After leaving Columbus, Ohio they moved to Dover, Delaware then to Jacksonville Florida. His father was stationed at Patrick Air Force Base near Cocoa Beach. After ex-

periencing racial harassment and brutality because of his dental practice and civic involvement, Dr. McNair again moved his family across the country to Astoria, Oregon.

“My Dad joined the Peace Corps while in transition after leaving the service,” remembers McNair. “He wanted a specialty degree in dentistry, so he attended the Creighton School of Dentistry at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska to become a Periodontist.” Upon completion, the McNairs’ moved again, but this time to Chicago where Dr. McNair set up his practice.

After completing high school in Downer Grove, IL, McNair attended Kent State University on a wrestling scholarship and completed his BS degree with a focus on Business. He later married Ronna Johnson and they have two adult children, Ariel 29, works in Cleveland at Ernst & Young and Austin, 26 is in graduate school at Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Business.

Who is Darrell McNair?

“He is a visionary with his eye on the big picture,” offers Tina Cargill, McNair’s Executive Assistant. She’s known him for many years and describes him with four words. Intentional. Focused. Visionary. Compassionate. “Which makes him a great leader. He knows what he wants, tells us what he wants and gives us room to complete the task.” Cargill adds that McNair is consistent. “He is the same person he has been throughout the years. What makes Darrell a great leader is that he is intentional in what he



The McNair family: Darrell, wife Ronna, daughter, Ariel, and son Austin; Darrell and Ronna in Costa Rica (right); Golf outing in Arizona (bottom): Darrell McNair, Eddie Taylor, Daryl Laisure, Terry Maynard, Edgar Wright, John Malcolm, Lew Adkins, Greg Lockhart, and Larry Jewett.



does. His team really respects him. He takes great effort in letting everyone know that what we do is appreciated. He is why MVP Plastics is what it is. It starts from the top.”

“He’s a good friend. You can depend on him. He embodies what people think when they think of a man,” said his long-time friend Greg Lockhart. McNair and Lockhart met during their college days at Kent State University. “Darrell is a hardworking, committed, hard playing gentleman who loves his family, loves success and is not afraid of failure. I think he likes it. He learns from it and it allows him to move on to something bigger and better.”

“As far as I’m concerned,” said San-ya “the greatest thing about Darrell is his presence. I’ve never had a conversation with him that he’s not there. No matter what he’s doing he puts down everything to be with you. He has an open-door policy for everyone.”

“There have been multiple students here year in and year out. He helps students progress. Employers expect you to have years of experience when you graduate from college. Darrell helps you navigate the uncertainty of post college life. He connects you to people, going out of his way to help students. He is well connected.”

Leadership requires courage to cling tenaciously to a vision, and toughness to endure the blame for difficulties along the way.

Who is Darrell McNair? Find out in his own words...

What was it like growing up?

My mom is from Cleveland and my dad is from Florida, but he grew

up in Akron, OH. They met at Kent State University. Dad was a military dentist and we moved around a lot. I was born in Columbus, OH, my sister Harriet was born in Dover, Delaware and my youngest sister Jacqueline was born in Jacksonville, Florida. We eventually settled in the Chicago area where I attended junior high and high school. We started on the southside in an area called Pill Hill, where the medical professionals lived. We later moved to the western suburb of Woodridge. I attended school in Downers Grove, IL.

Living in Woodridge was like living in the country and there was only a hand full of black families. I recall riding our bikes into Naperville and it was then for the first time I was scared for my life as I was chased into corn fields by a group of white boys yelling and screaming obscenities. Although most of my friends were white, this was the first time they experienced this type of racism against another person. It was a learning lesson for all and we are true friends to this day.

What was your most memorable high school experience?

Getting an A in Mr. Larson’s Consumer Math class and learning to type were most memorable for me. From those experiences, I learned valuable skills, like balancing a checkbook and keyboarding that have carried me throughout my life. I also graduated at 16 years of age, which was remarkable at that time.

What was your most memorable college experience?

My most memorable experience

was spearheading a trip to Washington, DC through student government where we organized two busloads of students to have our voices heard as the nation was considering legislation to make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday a national holiday. I met Stevie Wonder. [Congressman] John Conyers and [Congressman] Louis Stokes were both there. I was standing at the piano with Stevie Wonder when he sang Happy Birthday. That was the most pivotal and memorable experience and still feels like yesterday.

Did you always want to be an entrepreneur?

When I went to Kent, I thought I wanted to be a NCAA All American Wrestler and dentist like my Dad, then I thought I was going to be a lawyer. I was interested in several fields and thought I could do or be anything. I soon realized that my 4 years was ending and with the



Darrell and son, Austin, in Dubai.



Darrell and son, Austin, astride a camel in Dubai; and Darrell at work at MVP Plastics, Inc. in Middlefield, Ohio.

help of my counselors I ultimately decided on a Bachelors in General Studies with a concentration in Business and Political Science.

I really enjoyed studying business- es as I watched my dad build his professional practice, although they were not called entrepreneurs then, he was an entrepreneur. I ultimately realized that being an entrepreneur was in me. It was emerging all those years, but I never knew what it was called.

How long have you been married?

I met my wife Ronna in Cleveland on my birthday at a mutual friend’s party after we both graduated from college. We were friends first and soon realized we shared similar values and principles. We’ve been married 32 years. We are both close to our families and soon after we were married, a job transfer moved us to Detroit to start our lives together, which allowed us to learn and grow together.

What does it mean to you to be the Black Professional of the Year?

It’s truly a very humbling honor. As I look at past recipients of the award and those who are eligible to be recipients today, I’m truly hon-

ored because there are many people doing great things in Cleveland. It means a lot to be recognized by your peer group, and my friends know that I don’t look for recognition. I just look to get stuff done. For BPACF to acknowledge the work that I’ve done to make a difference in the community is special.

Why is the BPACF’s mission/vision important to you?

It’s important because the mission and vision of BPACF aligns with my personal vision which is uplifting African Americans regardless of where they are, whether they are students, young professionals, emerging entrepreneurs, or individuals deep into their professions or in careers. It is a perfect alignment, evidenced by my body of work including my volunteerism and philanthropy.

Why have you supported the BPACF?

It’s because of the work they do with college students through their mentoring and internship programs. I reached out to BPACF and asked about getting a black engineer who can intern with my company. They found me young lady from North Carolina A&T who was majoring in

chemical engineering. I offered her a summer internship and she did a fantastic job and was appreciative for the opportunity. Having two adult children, I understand how important it is for students to get internships and to gain the experience, allowing them to be relevant and competitive when it’s time for seeking full time employment.

What is your pet peeve?

When I work with people and they do not give 100 percent, whoever it is, myself included. When a task or project is at hand, you have to give it 100 percent.

What is your Superpower?

Faith – that everything is possible. I am a Presbyterian and attend St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church in Beachwood. My activism in the church includes being an Elder, Sunday School teacher, Budget and Finance Chair, and leader of several capital campaigns. St. Marks is our family church, with four generations of family having attended.

You’re active in the community.

Why?

My community service is driven by what I feel is my responsibility as a business owner. I enjoy helping

where I can and feel blessed that I have what I call, “afforded flexibility” where I can flex my schedule while at the same time not neglecting my work responsibilities, which allows me time for community activities. I volunteer on several non-profit boards and committees in the community, e.g. JumpStart, The Presidents’ Council, Crain’s, etc. The community is not going to succeed by itself. If you don’t participate and exercise your voice, things can go in a direction that may be counterproductive.



What challenges did you overcome to get you where you are?

Not having enough money to buy the business I wanted, not getting the grade I deserved certain class, not having the right talent on my team, not being successful winning contracts, being rejected for being a minority. The journey is filled with starts and stops, whether by your own doing or others.

After leaving my career at Ford, I really wanted to own a car dealership and I was accepted into Ford’s Dealership Training Program for minorities. Shortly after my acceptance, the program was put on hiatus as we were in the throes of a recession resulting in a contraction of dealerships and too many people in the pipeline ahead of me. This door was closed but other doors opened and here I am today.

Do you have any insecurities?

I do not feel I have any insecurities, however I am driven by the goal of success and providing for others.

Like many of us, I’ve had my share of setbacks, but I look at each setback as the beginning of the next comeback. I cherish my setbacks as I feel those are learning moments which allow me to preserve to the next level. I enjoy talking about my setbacks and I am proud of every one of them because they have made me who I am today.

What are your hobbies?

I love to golf (his handicap is 7) and taking trips with friends and family.

Are you a member of a fraternity?

I pledged Alpha Phi Alpha as an undergraduate school at Kent State. I’m also a member of Sigma Pi Phi, commonly called “The Boule,” which is a professional Black fraternity. Many people don’t realize that it is the oldest black Greek fraternity. The Alphas were founded in 1906, Sigma Pi Phi was founded in 1904. It was created so Black men with like minds and endeavors could come together, in an effort to strategize on how to uplift their communities.

Where is the most interesting place you’ve traveled and why?

This is a hard question as I’ve had the opportunity to travel around the world to some of the most beautiful and interesting places. I enjoy vacationing in island locations with beaches and golf courses. However, the most interesting adventure I had was traveling to Nicaragua. I had a partnership with a Jamaican friend of mine back in the late 1990s where we owned a fishing boat. We would send our crew out to sea for fresh catch which would either be processed on board of processing ships or brought to local markets. Our boat and crew were seized by the Nicaragua government as they said our boat had entered their waters without permission. My partner and I had to make a trip to Nicaragua to plead our case to the government to

release our boat. Five months later our boat was released with everything stripped from it.

I can also say my trip to Cuba a couple years ago on behalf of the Cleveland Cuyahoga Port Authority was also very memorable. As Chair of the Port Authority, I met with Cuban government officials to sign an unprecedented memorandum of cooperation outlining how our two ports would work together to increase commerce to the extent it was allowed by US and Cuban laws.

Do you speak a second language?

I speak a little Spanish. Our workforce in Texas is 100 percent Spanish speaking, so I'm working to master the language.

Do you think you're funny?

I believe I have a good sense of humor. I love comedy and like to have fun and joke around, which brings levity to stressful days and times. I love to laugh.

What do you like about owning a business?

What gives me great pleasure is the fact that I'm responsible for providing for the livelihoods of many different families. That is what drives me and keeps me going. If I fail, I fail a whole bunch of people who are dependent upon my actions.

What don't you like about owning a business?

I love owning a business, but sometimes you feel like you never get a break.

What is the best business advice you've ever received?

Back in 2008, when I bought my partner out and the economy was tanking during that great financial recession, a gentleman gave me some advice. He said, "You can't

shrink yourself to greatness." I use those words as part of my cornerstones for what drives me and deciding in which business direction I head. During this past year's pandemic, I took those words to heart. My business grew during the pandemic. I knew there were opportunities out there. You must find out where the opportunities are and go after them.

What advice do you have for those interested in business ownership?

Dream and don't quit. Read the poem "Invictus" and it will provide you with the inspiration to keep going.

What do you believe is your life's purpose?

My purpose is what I'm doing today. To succeed in my endeavors while also giving back and bringing others along the way. I liken it to the airplane announcement, 'In the event that cabin pressure drops, put your mask on first and then assist the person next to you.

What keeps you grounded?

The three Fs. Faith, family and friends.

What would you do if you weren't an entrepreneur?

I would probably be a senior executive with a large corporation. I started out working at IBM after undergrad and worked an eight-year stint at Ford.

If you could live on another continent, which would it be? Why?

I'm not sure I would want to live on another continent however I would like to explore the continent of Africa. I recently completed the Ancestry DNA test and my it said my ethnicity is most related to the Cameroon, Congo and Western Bantu region of Africa. I certainly would want to do more exploration

“Finding today's solutions will be more challenging and complex as there are more voices and complex issues to resolve. It is important that as a society we get this right as we are closer today to being a majority-minority society. We must eliminate the structural and institutional barriers that have stalled growth and prosperity for all.”

as it is such a diverse continent. The history, it's Biblical references, the apartheid in South Africa, the Ivory Coast, the slave trade. It's such a fascinating continent and I look forward to spending some time there in the future.

What would you tell your 15 year-old-self?

Read more and study more.

Your 25-year-old self?

Stay focused and true to your goals.

What was a big deal but is no longer?

Rejection or fear of failure. It's not a big deal anymore because I understand that it's part of the development process.

What is your favorite movie?

Trading Places is my favorite with Dan Aykroyd and Eddie Murphy. It just shows that you can be successful if you are put in the right circumstances and given the right tools and opportunity. To me, that is so true to what we are trying to achieve in today's society in providing a level playing field for individuals regardless of who you are.

Book?

My favorite book changes all the time but today I will share *The Big Short* as one of my favorite reads. I'm always intrigued by the financial markets as it is the foundation for world commerce. It's a book that highlights and frames the rise and collapse of the financial markets.

What is your most favorite vacation spot?

You can put me any place in the Caribbean, whether it's Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominican Republic - warm weather with white sand beaches and golf courses.

How do you handle stress?

Through my hobbies, golf and exercise. Both activities allow me to step away for a period and focus on my inner self. This brief period away allows for me to clear mind to process the inputs igniting the stress.

What makes you proud?

When I see others succeed that I've been instrumental in helping in some form or fashion. Whether it's my children, my wife, my mentees, friends... That's what makes me proud.

If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be?

I am who I am.

How are you processing the current (human) climate? (racial/political/environmental)

We are in a pivotal time for this nation's sanctity. It's almost déjà vu to the 1960s when the Civil Rights movement was strong. Similarly, to today where people are fighting for equity and equality. It is 60 years later and it appears we are at the same point, where we took two steps forward only to take two steps back.

What lessons did we learn in the '60s and '70s? Are we going to do better? Are we going to put policies in place from the lessons we learned? We must do better. The obvious difference now versus the Civil Rights movement in the '60s is that today's movement encompasses more than the black community. Today's movement is more about human rights and encompasses all minorities - Latinx, Asian's and the LBGT community. Finding today's solutions will be more challenging and complex as there are more voices and complex issues to resolve. It is important that as a society we get this right as we are closer today to being a majority-minority society.

(Note: The US Census Bureau has projected that by the mid-2040s the number of Americans who describe themselves as non-Hispanic and solely white by race is expected to dip below the 50 percent mark.) We must eliminate the structural and institutional barriers that have stalled growth and prosperity for all.

What is the most valuable advice you received from your parents?

That's easy, it's all about education. All my siblings and children have advanced degrees. My mother was a special needs educator and father a dentist. They taught us to invest in yourself, no one can ever take away from you. Education is your investment.

What is the most valuable advice you've given your children?

We give our kids the same advice that was given to us. Education, and daring then to dream and explore. Do what you think you want to do and at least try something before you say no.

What is the book you have in you?

The book will be called the "Y" in the road. I do have an outline for my book which will focus on my life experiences, going in-depth on the my opportunities, challenges and successes. The book will capture how my life experiences have guided my decision making. For every decision there will always be an alternate decision. How do you know you've made the right decision and how do you respond if you did not make the right decision and how do you define success?

What is your next chapter?

To continue to raise my game and take my business and personal endeavors to the next level. Do more to give more!

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Click the play button to watch the gala on YouTube!



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40th YEAR ANNIVERSARY



BPACF.ORG



THE EDUCATION COST OF THE PANDEMIC

by Dr. Michele Scott Taylor

We have launched this inaugural issue in the most interesting of times.

As we have all experienced the indelible consequences of the global pandemic, it has been particularly traumatic for young people and their families physically, mentally, and emotionally. Across our educational continuum from early childhood education through postsecondary, there is even more urgency to address the educational system that already leaves Black and Brown students well behind their peers.

Since my professional career primarily centers on helping people navigate college and career through higher education, the widening gaps in academic achievement and attainment should be a clarion call for all those who understand and believe in the power of educational attainment. And I am sure that includes you, too!

The City Shut Down. Now What?

Schools closed on March 15, 2020 here in greater Cleveland and in many places across the country. Immediately school systems and community organizations like mine, quickly turned to implementing virtual education programs and activities to mitigate the impact of students not being at school. Immediately, the first hurdle that many urban districts faced was students' and family's access to technology and Internet connectivity.

Impressively, greater Cleveland's philanthropic community rose to the challenge in providing the funding for and coordination of technology and Internet access for students across our community. However, for as much was done, many challenges still loomed. As an example, many families had only one device in homes with multiple children, maintaining monthly billing for Internet service or living in places where students and families could actually "connect" is difficult. We cobbled through the summer only to realize the biggest challenge still ahead of us...engaging students in what now appeared to be an extended shutdown of most schools.

In study after study, the takeaways were clear, Black and Brown students were accessing education at rates significantly lower than their white peers. It makes sense when you consider the state of our communities across all systems in which we engage: health, housing, banking, politics, etc.

The Cost of the Shut Down

The disparities in education were exacerbated by the pandemic. Not only did school closures pose massive challenges for families who were often the front-line workers

in service industries, the ability to problem solve the many logistical challenges related to children not going to schools and families losing income, also prompted some students to leave the public school system altogether. Some may have switched their children to private schools, pandemic pods, or homeschooling. Other children lack that option, and older teens may have dropped out of school altogether opting instead for work opportunities to help support families who needed it.

An NPR survey of more than 60 school districts across 20 states found that kindergarten enrollment is down an average of 16 percent this year, nine with some parents understandably not enrolling their children in preschool and kindergarten (I couldn't imagine kindergarten on Zoom!). There are long-term consequences. It's predicted that students will lose an average nine months of math learning. Black and Brown students of color will see a loss of 11 months or 12 months. Long-term consequences in terms of earning potential are already the subject of many forecasters. McKinsey's June report found that white students would earn \$1,348 a year less (a 1.6 percent reduction) over a 40-year working life, Black students would bring in \$2,186 a year less (a 3.3 percent reduction) and Hispanic students would earn \$1,809 less (3 percent reduction).

Black and Latinx students continue to be more likely to remain remote and are less likely to have access to the prerequisites of learning—devices, Internet access, and live contact with teachers. Left unaddressed, these opportunity gaps will translate into wider achievement gaps.

For my students looking to move into higher education, COVID-19 has also had a negative impact. As an example, community college enrollment decreased year-over-year by 9.5 percent from 2020 to 2021. Large postsecondary enrollment declines were reported during the summer of 2020 among Black students and at community colleges, which traditionally have large minority student populations. Declines have been especially steep for Black men with their enrollment falling 19 percent at community colleges nationally. In Cleveland, Black male enrollments fell 33 percent at Cuyahoga Community College (www.opencampusmedia.org). Additionally, the class of 2020 graduates of high-minority high schools across the nation showed a 9.4 percent decline in fall term college enrollment.

How to Mitigate Learning Loss

One example of "acceleration academies," consists of small groups of eight to 12 students. They would get 50 hours of targeted instruction over two weeks, which would aim to give them back six months of learning.

Many districts in our community are planning extended learning days which are robust summer school programs partnering with community-based organizations integrating social emotional learning opportunities.

There is much to be done and BPACF is well positioned to support opportunities to support students as they navigate what appears to be the most challenging of times.

Dr. Michele Scott Taylor, Ed.D, GCDF, is the Chief Program Officer at College Now Greater Cleveland and CEO and Principal of Global Learning Solutions LLC.

BPACF Scholars: Saluting Our 2020 & 2021 Graduates

Economically disadvantaged, minority youth are often unprepared for college success, unsure of how to navigate the competitive job market and lack exposure to individuals who can mentor them and set a positive example for them to follow. BPACF exists to commit time, talent and resources to developing and retaining students of color in our region by providing scholarships to low and moderate income students from Greater Cleveland, creating unique opportunities for career advancement and shaping the quality of leadership and professionalism.

It was for this reason the Black Professional Association Charitable Foundation was formed.

The goal is simple, but not easy: To establish a charitable foundation, to raise and distribute charitable funds and assure that African Americans from Northeast Ohio with academic and leadership potential have an opportunity to

advance to higher education and join the ranks of our region's outstanding leaders and professionals.

Each year, BPACF selects approximately 50 college students to receive a scholarship of up to \$2,000 per year. These scholars may attend the institution of their choice. They are required to maintain contact with the Foundation once a semester.

Our vision for BPACF over the next few years is to expand our Career Connect Internship Program, increase the quantity and amount of scholarships awarded to deserving students, and create a culture of professional excellence in Greater Cleveland's Black communities. BPACF aspires to promote the many opportunities for professional development and career training in this region, to give our youth a competitive edge in the job market upon college graduation, and to encourage more of our young professionals to remain in Northeast Ohio.




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*We're proud to present
BPACF's graduating
Scholars of 2020 and 2021!*



Austin Bowman is a 2020 graduate of Thiel College in Greenville, PA. He received a B.A. in psychology with a minor in communication sciences & disorders. He plans to attend Ursuline College's masters program in art therapy counseling and psychology.

Iyana Clemente attends Tennessee State University majoring in Aeronautical & Industrial Engineering. She is an Airport Scholar, securing a summer internship with the Air Force Research Lab upon her 2021 graduation.



George Evans, III is an Engineering Technology Management major at Ohio University. He plans to work full time at Hyland Software. George is creating a clothing brand to help motivate, support an encourage youth and young adults.



Mikayla Gary graduates from Cleveland State University in 2021 with a B.A. degree in Regional and Urban Studies. Her plans are to attend the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in Atlanta.



Kaitlyn Howell graduates from Spelman College in 2021 with a B.S. degree in Health Science. She plans to attend graduate school to receive a master's in Biomedical Science. Upon graduation she will attend medical school.



Mariah Hutchins is studying Physical Therapy at the University of Toledo and will be a 2021 graduate. Her plans are to secure employment in physical therapy.



Jahquann Primm is a 2020 graduate of Baldwin-Wallace University with a major in Business Management and minor in Computer Programming. He is an Airport Scholar and an IT technician in the Office of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor.





BPACF PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

The Black Professionals Association (BPA) was founded in 1977 as an organization dedicated to networking, professional growth and career development of Greater Cleveland Black professionals.

To celebrate over 40 years of professional excellence, The BLACK Professional magazine highlights those who embody the tenets of the Black Professional Association Charitable Foundation (BBACF), an outgrowth of BPA

– leadership, professional development, and excellence. Many professionals work diligently behind the scenes, honing their skills, exhibiting excellence and paying it forward to the next generation.

Our profiles include: Allen Boseman, Jennifer Coiley Dial, Rev. Gregory Kendrick, Veranda Rodgers, Michael Russell, Tiwana Scott-Williams, Tony Sias, Tim Tramble, Antoine Washington, and Monique Williams.



F. Allen Boseman Jr.
Co-Owner / Principal
The Sherman Boseman
Legal Group

The Sherman Boseman Legal Group is a law firm specializing in labor and employment, entertainment law, commercial litigation, complex negotiations, and problem solving.

Boseman is an experienced litigator and negotiator who has represented a broad range of clients, from individuals to Fortune 500 Companies, with a singular focus of delivering excellence regardless of the circumstances. He has practiced at some of the largest and most powerful firms in the country, specializing in a variety of areas ranging from Labor & Employment to Complex Commercial Litigation.

What is your Superpower?

My Superpower is my intuition and ability to quickly process the information necessary to reach critical conclusions about people, businesses and circumstances that are crucial to the evaluation of facts and allegations related to my firm’s cases.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with the reader?

There is nothing more important in business than authenticity. Ultimately, individuals and entities do business with people they trust and being authentic in all circumstances will generate more trust than anything you can do or say.



Jennifer Coiley Dial
Owner / Principal
Coy Lee Media, LLC

Coy Lee Media, LLC is a publishing, multimedia, and graphic design firm located in Cleveland, Ohio. The principal designer, Jennifer Coiley Dial, has more than 20 years of experience in design and publishing.

Formerly with the City of Shaker Heights Communications Department, and responsible for the production of *Shaker Life* magazine, Dial is the Creative / Art Director for the Women of Color Foundation, GAP Communications Group, Eshelon, Inc., Culinary Cleveland, Harvest of Ohio, LLC, Grand Architect Real Estate, LLC, this publication, and others.

What is your Superpower?

I’ve got a good eye, and one of my strengths is my ability to retain the writer’s voice in editing projects, especially when I co-wrote, *Clean: From Reggae to Recovery* with David H. Smeltz. I have often been told by clients, “What did you delete?!” They never know because I do a great job at retaining their voice and making the copy tighter and with more impact.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with the reader?

Stay the course. There were many times in the beginning that I wanted to close the doors... I just had to remain patient, and things eventually took off.



Rev. Gregory E. Kendrick Jr.
Pastor
Cory United Methodist Church

Rev. Kendrick is the Executive Director of the Cory-Glenville Community Center, a Missional Strategist for the North Coast District of the UMC, and an Elder in full connection in the West Ohio Conference.

He is an adaptive leader committed to journeying with communities and individuals through life difficulties. Rev. Kendrick is passionate about helping individuals discern vocations and higher education opportunities.

What is your Superpower?

Tenacity

What words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers?

Your journey is your journey. Take it at the pace you need. Appreciate the seasons you will experience. Enjoy the people along the way who may travel for a stint or the full distance.



Veranda Rodgers, MBA
Executive Director
Pregnant with Possibilities
Resource Center

The nonprofit organization is dedicated to teen pregnancy prevention, positive birth outcomes among pregnant women and preventing subsequent births to non-equipped women and teenage girls in urban communities.

Veranda Rodgers is a nonprofit guru and development leader with proven fundraising, strategic marketing, and innovation solutions to serve vulnerable populations. She provides culturally competent sexual health education, perinatal support, tools, and techniques that confront the racial disparities in Black women’s maternal health.

What is your Superpower?

My superpower is determination. Throughout life I’ve accomplished things when the odds were stacked against me. I thrive off completing goals and motivating others around me to persist to the end.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers?

Life will always be a journey and it’s extremely important to embrace the process and breath! Never let anyone tell you what you can’t accomplish and remember making great choices in the beginning will allow for a prosperous future sooner.



Michael Russell, II
Co-Founder
Museum of Creative Human
Art (MOCHA)

MOCHA is a non-profit organization that uses a character-based approach to bridge creative expression with education and personal development. They provide a space for underserved youth to learn, connect, create, and share.

The organization’s conceptual framework harmonizes Russell’s ability to inspire and engage others through his love for the arts, while operating in the creative space he uses to incubate ideas and strategies.

What is your Superpower?

The ability to motivate and encourage others.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers?

Sometimes we can live our entire life being or pursuing something we are not.



Tiwanna Scott-Williams
Founder
PearlFlower Catering

PearlFlower is a premiere catering company in the Greater Cleveland area, catering both corporate, non-profit and social events.

Chef Tiwana is a Registered Nurse turned Chef and local and national personal chef for professional athletes and celebrities. She was a participant and winner of the Core City Cleveland Impact program, which is designed to help entrepreneurs transform communities by growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

What is your Superpower?

My Superpower is providing amazing culinary experiences for my clients.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers?

Never compromise quality for quantity.



Tony Sias
President / CEO
Karamu House

Karamu House is recognized as the oldest, producing African American theatre in the nation. Founded in 1915, it is a place of joyful gathering (Swahili meaning of "Karamu"), where people of all economic backgrounds, cultures, races and religions come together through the arts.

Sias is a visionary arts leader who specializes in performing and visual arts, education and community development. His expertise is in team development, strategic partnerships, curriculum design, fundraising and stakeholder relationships. Sias cultivates government, foundation,

corporate and individual donors to support innovative high quality, arts (theatre), community, classroom and after-school programs.

What is your Superpower?

My superpower is Kuumba / creativity. "To always do as much as I can, to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than I inherited it."

What words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers?

"Speak truth and know your history."



Timothy L. Tramble Sr.
President /
Chief Executive Officer
Saint Luke's Foundation

Saint Luke's Foundation funds programs that serve the Woodhill, Buckeye-Shaker, and Mount Pleasant communities. Its mission is to achieve health equity by addressing social determinants of health for people in neighborhoods surrounding Saint Luke's and throughout Cuyahoga County.

Tramble is responsible for overseeing and guiding the work of the foundation to advance the pursuit of health equity in the Saint Luke's neighborhoods and throughout Cuyahoga County. He leads, directs, and coordinates the activities of the Foundation in accordance with the policies, goals, and objectives established by the Board of Trustees and articulated through the

Foundation's strategic plan.

What is your Superpower?

My Superpower is that I see greatness and opportunity in people and places most others don't see.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers?

Success is a journey not a destination. I have such an appreciation for our community and the promise for what it can become that I knew at 18 years old, I would never leave it. Contrary to popular belief, that does not place me or my family at greater risk. Rather, it keeps us grounded. In the words of Rakim, "It ain't where you from, it's where you're at!" I know that we can have more of an impact on our environment than it has on us.



Antwoine Washington
Co-Founder
Museum of Creative Human
Art (MOCHA)

MOCHA is a non-profit organization that uses a character-based approach to bridge creative expression with education and personal development. They provide a space for underserved youth to learn, connect, create, and share.

In 2018, Washington used his art to help navigate the effect of suffering a stroke. He is a 2019 recipient of the Cleveland Arts Prize Verge Fellowship award and teaches graphic design courses at MOCHA.

What is your Superpower?

I have the ability to persevere.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers?

Become the person you needed when you were growing up.



Monique Williams, MSSA
Founder & CEO
The Engagement Group and
Monique Inc.

The Engagement Group helps organizations and leaders create community change through strategy and engagement. Monique Inc. is a consulting and development agency that provides clarity and simplified strategies to organizations and leaders to achieve growth and rise to their next level.

Kelly is passionate about working with people to create change. She was drawn to helping people through nonprofit work 15 years ago, and over the course of her career has had the opportunity to explore multiple forms of social work and community development, most recently leading community engagement work as a senior director at a foundation.

Monique Williams, MSSA, is a proud mother, Growth and Impact Strategist, Speaker, Instructor, CEO & Founder of Monique Inc., as well as the Curator of Make It Happen Mondays. Last year Monique launched Monique Inc., a consulting and development agency that provides clarity and simplified strategies to organizations and leaders to help them achieve growth and RISE

to their next level. The company has two divisions: 1) Monique Inc. helps mid-senior level Black women show up as their full selves and live extraordinary lives, and 2) The Engagement Group, a subdivision of Monique Inc., helps nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, and public entities create community change through strategy and engagement consulting.

What is your Superpower?

My Superpower is strategizing to bring to fruition transformational growth through my gifts to relate, connect with, and uplift people.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with our readers?

You are equipped and capable of living an extraordinary life – making the impact you desire to make; helping the people you are passionate about serving; and caring for the family you have built, but it will only be realized if you learn and operate in the truth of who you are. Living life as your whole and full self is the most courageous, liberating, and rewarding thing you can do for yourself and others.



**COVID-19 VIRUS
DISPROPORTIONATELY
INFECTS AND KILLS
MORE BLACKS
COMPARED TO WHITES**

by Dr. Charles Modlin

We are all living during difficult times given the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic that he negatively impacted not only our nation but the entire world. To date, over 32 million people in the United States have been infected by the COVID-19 virus and over 560,000 have died. However, disturbing data has demonstrated that African Americans (non-Hispanic blacks) compared to white Americans, have suffered disproportionately by having three times the hospitalization rates from COVID-19 and two to three times or higher death rates from the COVID-19 virus compared to whites (data source Centers of Disease Control Statistics).

Why Do Blacks Get Infected and Die More from COVID-19 than White Americans?

Greater Incidence and Burden of Chronic Health Conditions and Health Disparities

Reasons as to why Blacks suffer a higher burden and death from the COVID-19 virus is directly related to the greater incidence and burden in Black populations of a number of chronic health conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Such chronic conditions act to lower the overall immune system of individuals, thereby making them more prone or susceptible to acquiring the COVID-19 virus. Following infection with COVID-19, research has also suggested that the greater morbidity and mortality rates relate to then hyperactive immune responses generated in Black patients, thereby causing more significant organ system damage leading to greater morbidity and mortality rates in Blacks.

Social Determinants of Health, Racism and Personal Choices

Contributing to the greater risk factors leading to development of chronic disease states in Blacks are related to the many social determinants of health negatively impacting minority individuals and communities. Examples of social determinants of health include higher rates of poverty and unemployment and frontlines jobs that do not allow Blacks to work from home.

Many African Americans and other minorities rely on public transportation making social distancing more difficult compared to their white counterparts. Other social determinants of health include lower education rates, less access to healthy foods and health care, unsafe living and working environments and other conditions that collectively contribute to poorer health and lower life expectancies. Included are the effects of chronic stress and racism as recently formally acknowledged by the CDC Director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, as well as by the American Heart Association and other health organizations.

In addition, personal choices and unhealthy behaviors do contribute to health disparities seen in Black populations and historical distrust of the health care system often seen in Black and other minority populations as a result of mistreatment of Blacks at the hands of medical researchers and the health care system, i.e. Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, collectively also contribute to health disparities and chronic disease states in Blacks.

What we must now do to help protect ourselves from COVID-19. Take the VAX.

It is imperative that we Blacks become knowledgeable about the importance and merits of receiving the COVID-19 vaccinations as well as the importance of continued social distancing, mask wearing and proper hand and cough hygiene.

There are currently three different vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson) that have undergone extensive clinical trials and subsequently have been approved by the FDA as safe and effective in affording individuals protection against COVID-19. To date 72.6 million Americans have been fully vaccinated, which represents 22 percent of the U.S. population (CDC statistics). The criteria whereby individuals have been given priority to receive the vaccinations have varied state by state, but in the state of Ohio, Governor Mike DeWine has now authorized that all adults are authorized to register to receive the vaccinations.

National data has shown that African Americans' willingness to accept the vaccines has lagged behind whites and Asians. As of October 2020, the National Foundation for Infectious Disease (NFID) showed that only approximately 49 percent of African Americans indicated a willingness to accept the vaccine, with many indicating a distrust of the safety of the vaccine, that they wanted to wait and see how others respond to the vaccine before they agreed to receive it, or other reasons for refusal.

Due to dedicated efforts by Black physicians and Black community leaders to encourage African Americans to "take the vax" and through concerted efforts to educate African Americans about the facts of the vaccines, and to dispel myths and misconceptions about the vaccinations, a survey in January 2021 indicated that 63 percent of African Americans were willing to receive the vaccine. There are many credible sources of information that people can access to learn more about the vaccines. Such websites include the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the OhioCovid.org.



Many African Americans and other minorities rely on public transportation making social distancing more difficult compared to their white counterparts. Other social determinants of health include lower education rates, less access to healthy foods and health care, unsafe living and working environments and other conditions that collectively contribute to poorer health and lower life expectancies.

For our nation as a whole and for Black people who are more prone to get infected to COVID-19 and die from it, the medical profession and community leaders are encouraging all adults to get vaccinated. Current clinical trial research is now underway to also study the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine in youth and children under the age of 16.

Ongoing research is underway now to study the efficacy of the current and future vaccines to afford protection against emerging variants of the COVID-19 virus as well as to study how long these vaccines will afford people protection against reinfection with COVID-19. Information and our knowledge of the long-term behavior of the virus as well as the long-term effects in people who have been infected and recovered from the virus continues to evolve. This column will serve to update the reader with such information.

Charles Modlin, MD, MBA is a kidney transplant surgeon, urologist and Black Professional of the Year, 2015.



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What Does It Mean to Be Healthy?

by Porscha Phillips

VEGAN

I find that this is an impossible question to answer quickly and without explanation. My own understanding of what it means “to be healthy” has changed time and time again throughout the years. Even as a young chef, I struggled to figure out how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Like most people, I used food to soothe stress or angst. Often eating things that were filled with processed sugars and preservatives. Breaking that mental cycle was my first step to answering the question of the hour.

It was a difficult adjustment but once I was in a routine, it taught me how to properly handle the many curve balls life tends to throw your way. The benefits were mind blowing. I realized it was because I was feeding my mind and body things it had been craving for years. I shifted my focus to the nutrients the food provided vs the flavor of that said product. Our cravings are often attached to our emotions. I no longer wanted my emotions to control what I was putting into my body. Fruits and vegetables have so many natural benefits that feed mind, body, and spirit. For me, it provided balance.

Being of both African American and Native American descent my ancestor’s history with food has been both beautiful and difficult. Both cultures’ belief systems were heavily rooted in a deep respect for nature. They praised the rain, the sun, and the earth. Giving thanks for the bounty that grew after planting tiny seeds.

In the modern world we believe in chemically engineered products and look to them to provide healing. I was more interested in the old way of life. I found it more pleasing to my spirit to eat cilantro or strawberries I had planted with my own hands. To grow my own aloe plant to soothe burns I would get while working in the restaurant. Once I realized how much it blessed my life, I wanted to share the knowledge with my people. Cooking for me is great fun. I thoroughly enjoy it. I also recognize that it is a great responsibility. A responsibility that I carry with great pride and honor.

I have been vegan for over 5 years now and it was for me the best decision. I am more connected with nature, and my food source. Woman, man, or child it does not matter. We need this planet to thrive for the human species to survive. Now when I am asked how to lead a plant-based or healthy lifestyle, my answer is this: Eat from the earth, search for things that remind you of the rainbow. Try things you’ve never had before. The rainbow features an array of colors and your food sources should as well. Explore markets from different cultures, shop at local farms and farmers markets. Being mindful of what you are putting into your body is really the best gift you can give yourself. Love is without question the most important ingredient in my food.

Executive Chef Porscha Phillips creates extraordinary cuisines at The Vegan Club.



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