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TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF MEN



4 IDEAS TO LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

HOW TO DATE IN ISOLATION

USING ZOOM TO DO BUSINESS

2020 SPRING ISSUE

WHY COVID-19 IS KILLING BLACK AMERICA

ON THE COVER
STEVE CAPERS:

WHY PROFANITY-FREE COMEDY BUCKS ALL TRENDS

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INSIDE



38 HOW TO DATE IN ISOLATION

There are many unfortunate consequences of the pandemic including trying to date and meet new people while in isolation.

ON THE COVER

28 **PROFANITY-FREE COMEDY**

Richard Andrews speaks with Steve Capers about comedy that the entire family can enjoy anytime.

6 **REVIEWS**

CODE M Readers sound off on their thoughts about past issues and how the feel about the topics discussed in past issues.

10 **WHY COVID-19 IS KILLING BLACK AMERICA**

Addressing the problems facing the black community going forward.

20 **SOUL OF A NATION**

With the political season coming, blacks and people of color will have to pay attention to the issues and vote like never before.

32 **BOOK REVIEW**

The Water Dancer By Ta-Nehisi Coates. We review one of the best books released this year about Hiram Walker, a



14 **LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD**

Tips on how to make sure that you not only survive the next pandemic, but thrive.

young man born into slavery on his father's plantation.

34 **RAPPER'S DELIGHT**

Learn how to get your music noticed, on your terms.

40 **COVID-19 DESTROYED MY SPRING**

Dealing with the pandemic told from the perspective of a young person.

43 **A LOVE LETTER TO MEN**

Dr. Leah Lewis pens an inspirational letter of love and hope to men of color.

44 **THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CORONA VIRUS**

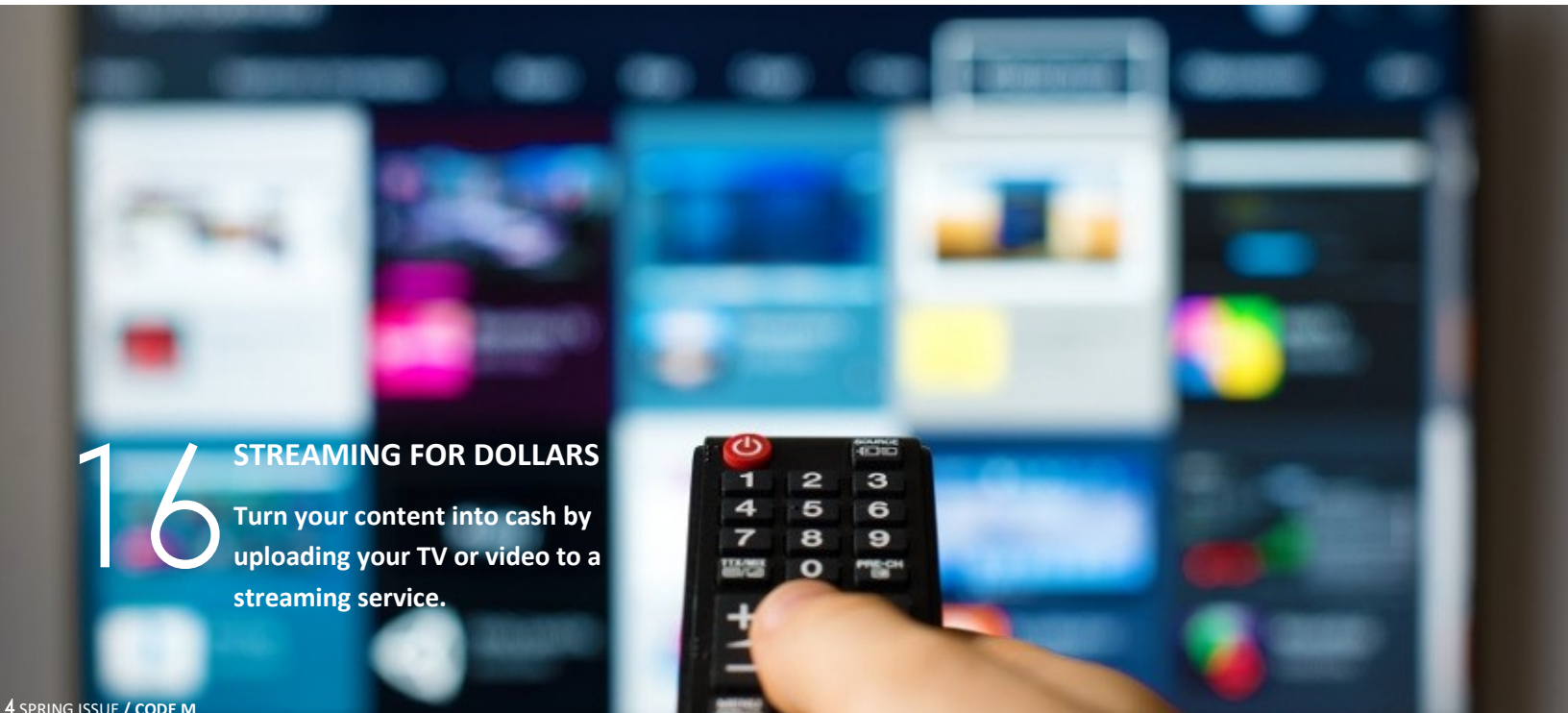
As people of color we examine what needs to be done after the pandemic so we never suffer like this again.

46 **GROWING A BUSINESS ONE BOTTLE AT A TIME**

Meet Timothy Maurice, the founder and president of one of the only black-owned tequila companies in the world and learn what drives him.

49 **USING ZOOM TO DO BUSINESS**

Non-essential businesses need to find a way to compete and keep their customers. Zoom is the answer.



16 **STREAMING FOR DOLLARS**

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REVIEWS

Hey man, I got it! This is incredible!!! I will surely share and continue to contribute. I am a wise man and I have a lot to learn from you. **(Shawn C. Pittsburgh, PA.)**



Wow brother! That is an amazing offering you have there! The cover compels me to look inside, and once inside every page is professional and engaging. The covers of other editions also look great. Such a variety of topics relevant to living - and not just for men. I think you will get subscriptions from many women who are interested in the same material such as how to deal with losses or emotional pain. I think many women will select Code M over other reading material looking to see what a respectable man's approach to an issue might be - and it can't hurt to have in front of them pics of some good looking, classy men.

I was I was reading I was wondering if you should include some type of daily bread kind of spiritual encouragement, and then came to your Spiritual Health Checkup! You might consider including an article each edition on "cars and technology" since both are of interest to most men. You could address what to look for and how to find gadgets that can help live life more enjoyably/ efficiently. Some months could address how to handle certain car issues as varied as pros/cons of insurance options or which repairs are suited for DIY, and maybe even guidelines on how to succeed at it.

Overall - amazing. Classy is the word. Looks to me like you have supernatural assist! I believe what you have is a great testimony of what the Lord and a good team can do to bring His message to the world in a relevant and upscale way.

Bill F. (Mentor, OH.)

CODE M is off the chain so to speak. I enjoyed reading the articles and I have shared the link with my contacts. Will there be a section for employment opportunities? Perhaps employers might be willing to advertise open positions. **(Dwayne D. Cleveland, OH)**

I wanted to touch bases with you about CODE M Magazine. I have two words for you....” Simply Amazing” and I mean it! I thought it was so dope the way the Magazine was constructed with information and different viewpoints from the writers. The articles are interesting, powerful & important. The inspirational messages on page 5 were Key for me. I know that this Magazine is for men, but I believe every person, (Men, Women & Children) could take away something from this magazine. It’s inspiring, professional & did I mention, it’s pretty Dope? Lol. Thank you for sending me this issue.

(Eric F. Cleveland, OH.)

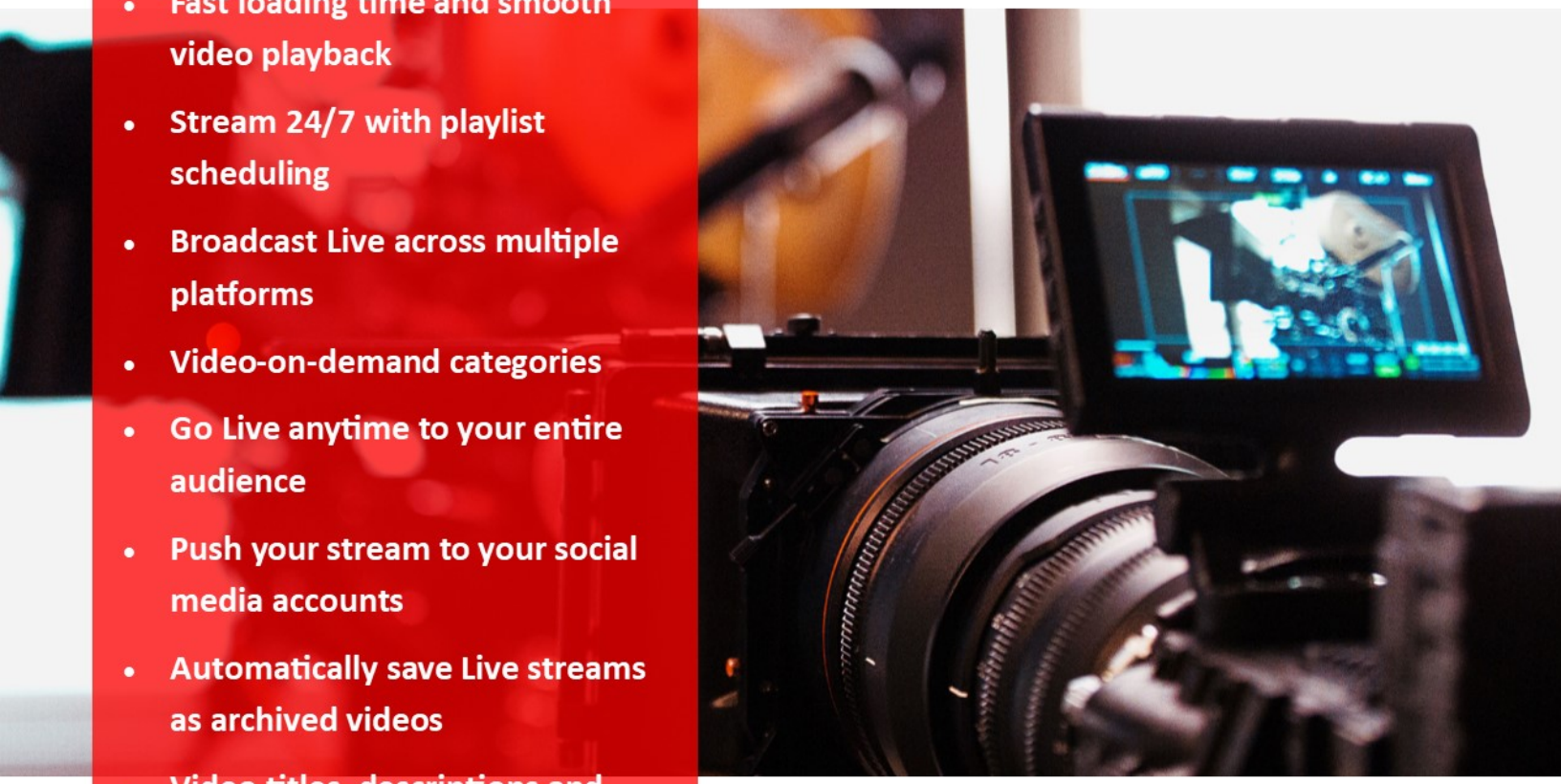


Bilal S. Akram, Code M Magazine CEO and Publisher.

Bilal -- Love it! Present tense, as I have not completed my experience with the inaugural issue. The articles are chock full of information but not so much as to overwhelm the casually interested. I will share with my network. I suggest, if you haven't already done so, making "CODE M" accessible to young black men via school systems, sports and social programs, fraternities, etc. We need to help mold them so that they can warrant being featured in future "CODE M Magazine" articles. Bruh, you continue to raise the bar. I'm going to have to sell my mother's cow for a few beans and plant 'em so that I can grow a bean stalk and climb it to watch your goose lay her golden eggs. Good luck, moreover -- Godspeed. **(Victor G. Cleveland, OH)**

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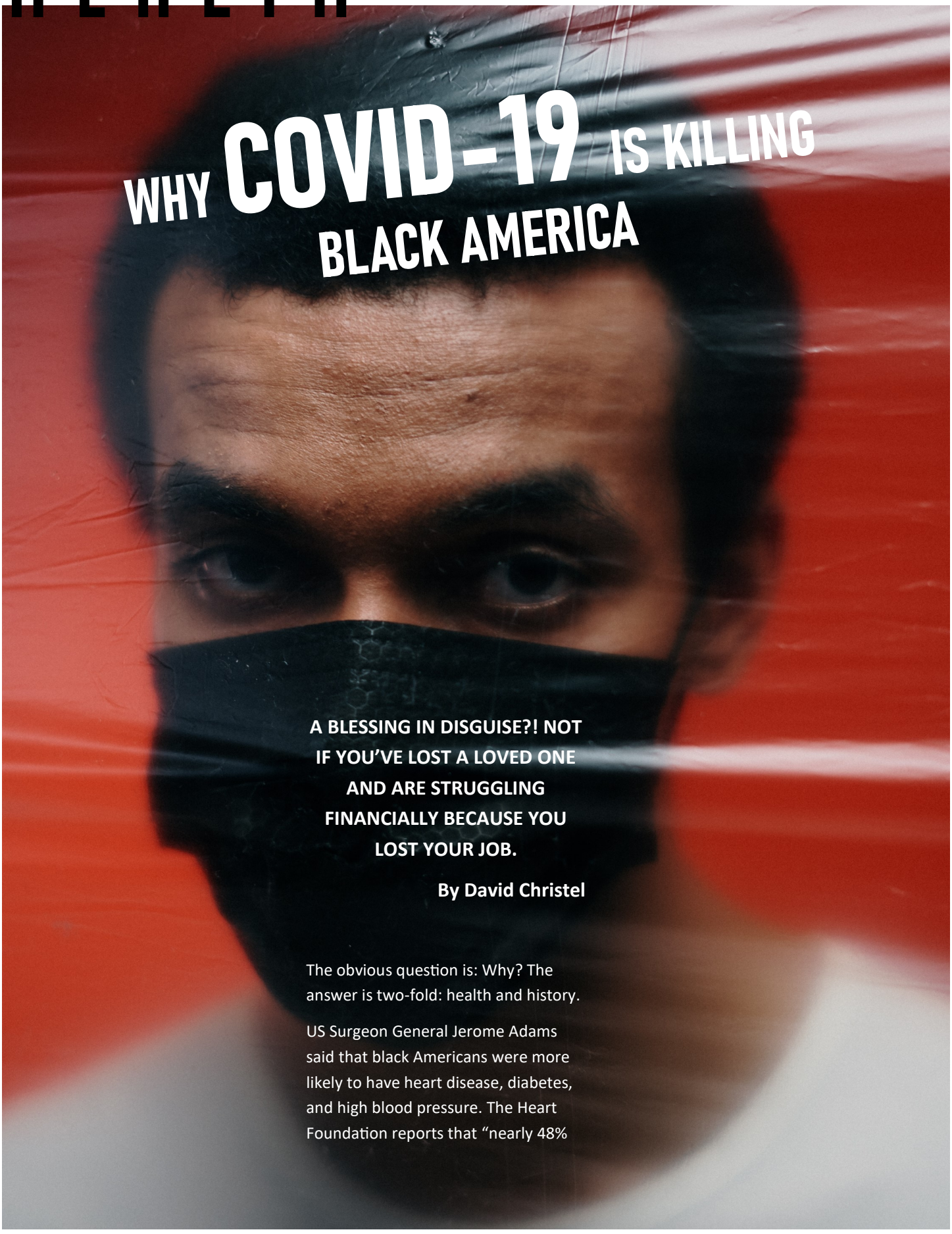
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Code M Magazine was created to be a guiding force in creating a dialogue for black men everywhere. Code M focuses on the conversations of advancement, mental health, career choices, the political landscape and relationships that define and shape the lives of black men everywhere.

Code M Magazine is published by CODE MEDIA GROUP, LLC

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WHY COVID-19 IS KILLING BLACK AMERICA

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE?! NOT IF YOU'VE LOST A LOVED ONE AND ARE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY BECAUSE YOU LOST YOUR JOB.

By David Christel

The obvious question is: Why? The answer is two-fold: health and history.

US Surgeon General Jerome Adams said that black Americans were more likely to have heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. The Heart Foundation reports that "nearly 48%

DEATH BY THE NUMBERS

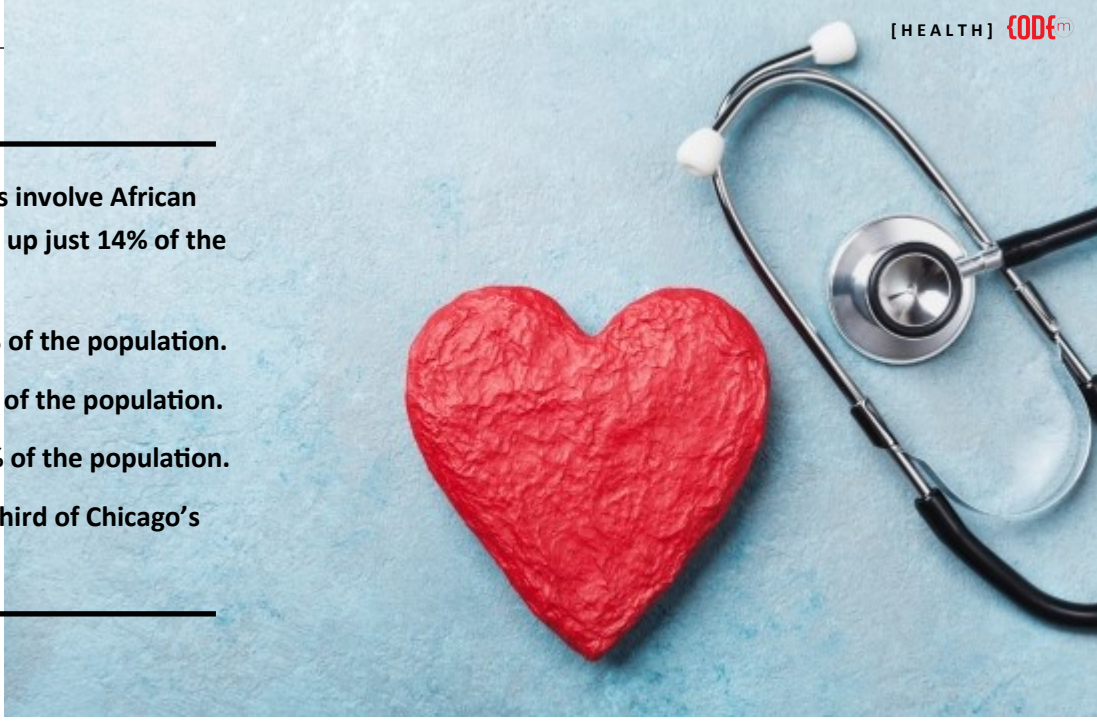
21.3% of New Jersey coronavirus deaths involve African American patients, although they make up just 14% of the state's population.

In Michigan, 40% of the deaths but 14% of the population.

In Alabama, 44% of the deaths but 25% of the population.

In Louisiana, 71% of the deaths but 33% of the population.

In Chicago, 72% of the deaths but one-third of Chicago's population of 2.7 million.



of African American women and 44% of African American men have some form of heart disease. Research has found that even among the growing middle- and upper-class black community, the rate of heart disease among black Americans is still greater than in white Americans who have a comparable socioeconomic status."

The apparent cause for these figures seems based on behavioral habits concerning diet, exercise, and lifestyle. But there's more to the picture.

Thomas A. Vance, PhD, in an article for the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry in 2019, wrote, "Research suggests that the adult black community is 20% more likely to experience serious mental health problems.… Additionally, black emerging adults (ages 18-25) also experience higher rates of mental health problems and lower rates of mental health service utilization compared to white emerging adults, and older black adults. These sobering statistics suggest that despite efforts to reduce disparities among race and class in the US, inequalities are increasing."

And there we have the real crux of the problem: inequality. Historically, Africana-Americans have been purposely abused, manipulated, suppressed, disenfranchised, dismissed, and segregated in order to uphold a socio-capitalistic system based on supremacist ideology. Because of this encompassing strategy at all levels of society, African Americans responded as best they could under withering circumstances.

How this has played out is that African-Americans were relegated to the lowest of socio-economic rungs from which they were enjoined to realize the American dream. Survival has been a steep climb out of desperate poverty, which has necessitated going without and affording the cheapest available in clothing, housing, food, insurance of all types, health care, and education. All while being disparaged as lazy and unindustrious.

Those striving to rise above this unbalanced and oppressive system have been maligned, patronized, hoodwinked, and imprisoned — while at the same time some have been lionized, canonized, risen to fame, and become heroes for the ages. It's been a Catch-22 scenario since day one.

It's no wonder that so many African-Americans have been battling such intense life issues — creating enormous stress and anxiety — that have negatively impacted their psychological well-being and health.

With the Coronavirus hitting the African American community so heavily, it's important to look at what we're going to do once the pandemic has passed. Are we simply going to return to the way things were pre-virus or become more strategic in our lifestyles, needs, and wants?

A number of theories are being advanced as to what the pandemic stands for metaphorically. However one wants to typify these circumstances,



there is one significant facet to look at: our behaviors.

Reading today's news, we see so much hurt, destruction, greed, and self-serving actions. Yet, we're also seeing extraordinary acts of kindness, compassion, connection, and giving. The latter is what I believe resides in the core of our being, our heart and soul. We all want a better world for ourselves and our children. Let's make that happen.

To do that will require looking at the behaviors and habits that are actually dehumanizing us, that negatively impact the world around us from humans to the environment. Imagine how different our interactions, relationships, and systems would be if we were more cognizant of the fact that we are here to help each other blossom into greater versions of ourselves.

It's not about fame, wealth accumulation, or supremacy in any of its permutations. It's about seeing the divine within ourselves and each other. It's about taking care of ourselves and others in the most healthful of ways. It's about everyone standing on the same level playing field not in competition, but in nurturing transformation.

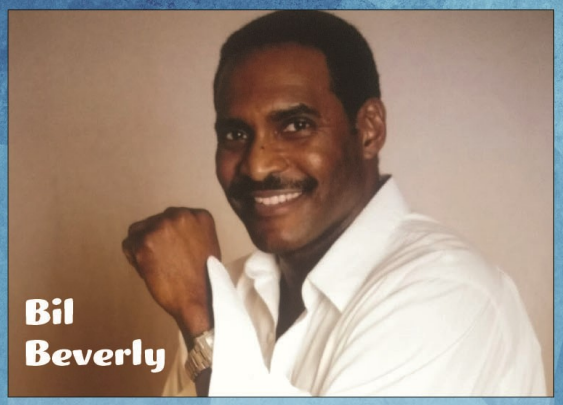
"It's no wonder that so many African Americans are battling such intense life issues — creating enormous stress and anxiety — that have negatively impacted their psychological well-being and health."

Become a trailblazer, a way shower, a teacher, an eternal student, and become unconditional love. Use your creativity, imaginative abilities, talents, empathy, and passionate heart to rise from the pain of the past, to let go of harmful behaviors and beliefs, and transform this pandemic into a year of blessing for all of humanity. It's your time!









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LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

Who we decide to be after the pandemic is over is up to us. One thing is certain, blacks cannot go on depending on others to come and save us when something bad happens.

By Justin M Bibb

Last month marked fifty-two years since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered these powerful words in what would be his final sermon. In Memphis, Tennessee supporting a sanitation workers strike, Dr. King would be assassinated the following day while standing outside his room at the Lorraine Motel.

In the months before his death, Dr. King organized the Poor People's Campaign to focus our nation's attention on poverty and the vast economic inequalities depriving African Americans of true equality. Fast forward to today, I can't help but think that Dr. King would be disappointed in the lack of progress we have made in eradicating structural inequality. Disparities that have been made even more alarming in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

Preliminary data emerging from cities such as Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit and New Orleans strongly suggest that African-Americans, particularly in marginalized communities, are being impacted the most by COVID-19.

In early April, the Associated Press analyzed publicly available demographic data to examine the racial disparities and deaths of COVID-19 cases nationwide. Their analysis found that African Americans make up nearly 42% of the nation's COVID-19 deaths but account for only 21% of the total population in the areas covered by the study.

At the time of this writing, in Cuyahoga County, Ohio nearly 40% of the 1,021 confirmed coronavirus cases were found in African American patients, who make up about 30% of its population. On



a statewide basis, and similar to trends elsewhere, only 12% of Ohio's total population is black, yet we make up 18% of the state's confirmed cases.

Sometimes referred to as the "Silent Killer," the coronavirus is sounding the alarm on the devastating effects of longtime entrenched structural inequalities facing black Americans. Poor health factors such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure, poor access to quality healthcare and insurance, and working in frontline occupational jobs or essential industries are only some of the underlying issues disproportionately impacting communities of color.

Now more than ever, we need radical change to achieve Dr. King's vision of true economic opportunity for all. With dissatisfaction with leadership in Washington, D.C. at an all-time high, residents will be looking to local leaders to articulate a compelling vision to uplift disenfranchised communities.

That vision must be centered on accelerating minority entrepreneurship, growing wages, and investing in affordable transit.

Accelerate Minority Entrepreneurship

Businesses with access to capital, who operate in more resilient markets and who have deep networks with a range of subject matter experts have a propensity to outperform those that do not.

Unfortunately, communities of color and many minority-led enterprises disproportionately lack these characteristics. It's urgent now, as always, to pursue policy solutions that increase access to credit and technical assistance to minority businesses.

Fight for High Wages

The fight for a living wage is nothing new; workers and allies have been organizing since the Occupy Wall Street Movement to increase the minimum wage to $15 an hour. It has never been more apparent how important our service workers are to our economy. Sanitation workers, those employed in the food service industry, bus drivers and the countless others working to keep our economy running deserve equitable pay.

Invest in Public Transit

Suburban sprawl and lack of transit-oriented development in distressed neighborhoods has made the goal of reliable transit a challenge for many cities. And as COVID-19 hit many cities across the country, total ridership declined by roughly 80%. Now is the time for us to think boldly about how we can support more public transit to ensure greater economic mobility.

Civic Engagement to Close Information & Education Gap

It's also clear that one challenge ahead, whether it's increasing entrepreneurship or decreasing devastating health outcomes, good information is not reaching everyone in our communities. Studies have shown that increasing civic engagement actually decreases unemployment. If we engage more deeply, we can get the word out about job training, how to start a business and important public health information can be disseminated to people of color in need.

We don't yet know the extent of coronavirus damage on communities of color but one thing is for sure, residents will require a greater sense of urgency for tangible solutions to eradicate persistent inequality. We can't afford to be patient about what the vision looks like. It's time we act now before it's too late. Until then, we've still got difficult days ahead.

Justin M. Bibb is Vice President of Corporate Strategy at KeyCorp, one of the nation's largest bank-based financial services companies in the U.S. with 17,000+ employees and total assets of $145B. Additionally, he is an active civic leader serving on the boards of the Greater Cleveland Transit Authority, Teach for America, and Destination Cleveland.



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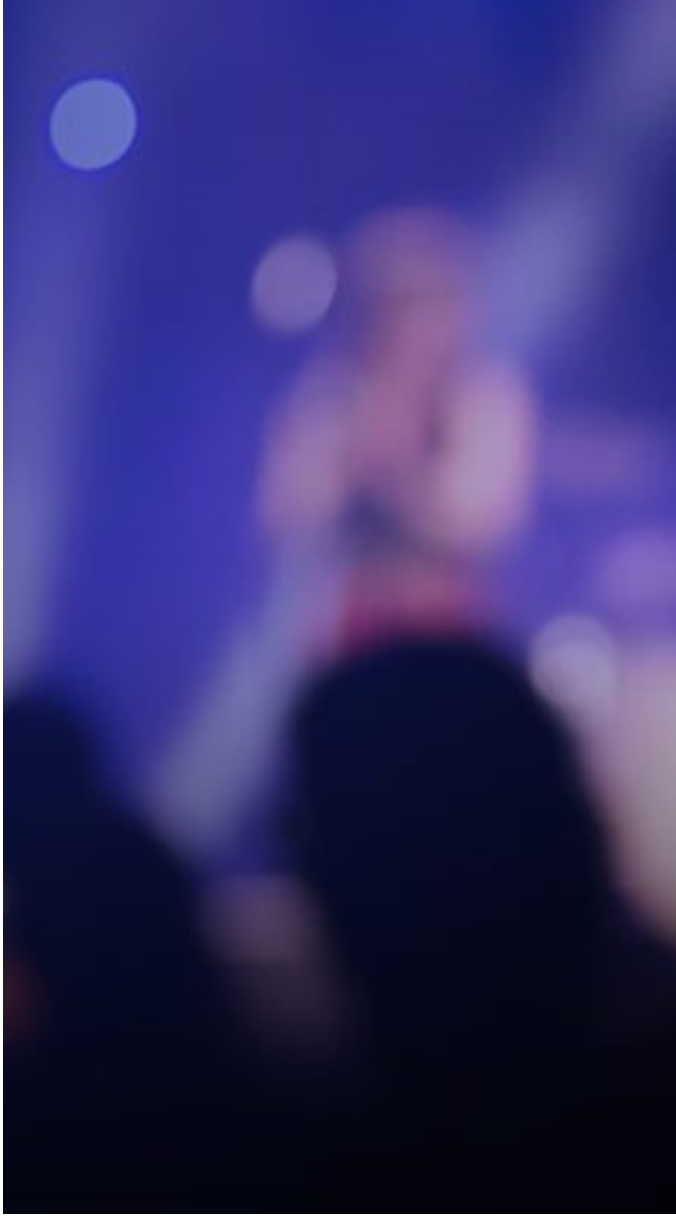
STREAMING FOR DOLLARS

STREAMING FOR DOLLARS

STREAMING FOR DOLLARS

Content creators are making the leap to streaming services and finding bigger audiences and more revenues.

by Brad Bowling



Live streaming has started to become the top choice for marketers and companies looking to have a deeper connection with their clients.

Turn your video production or ideas into revenue when you upload the content to a streaming service and surround it with advertising.

If you are like the rest of America, two things are happening to you while you sit in quarantine. You exchanged your local movie theater for your couch, and you have switched from network television to a streaming service. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Americans have flocked to SVOD (Subscription Video-on-Demand) services in pass time.

Netflix, Hulu, Roku, Amazon TV, and Apple TV have seen huge surges in subscriptions and viewership in the last 45 days and expect to continue growing until things go back to normal. But while most people enjoy watching tons of unlimited content, there are a few people who are sitting at home thinking of ways to create content and make a buck.

THE IDEA

People are at home dreaming up new and creative ways to develop their ideas into meaningful content. Social media is exploding with homemade videos of skits, shows, postings, and video shorts. It used to be that a lucky few would find a major distribution deal and turn their content into a career.

Whether you have seasons of content or just a great idea, you will need an outlet for your creation. Streaming services are always looking for good content. Netflix, the largest SVOD, has over 130 million subscribers in 190 countries. Amazon Prime just announced that they have over 100 million subscribers and Hulu is growing every day with 17 million subscribers.

Getting your project in front of one of these services could be a daunting task. Unless you are Steven Soderbergh or Spike Lee, chances are that you do not have a connection to a streaming service. Well, that's where CODE M comes in. Code Media Group LLC, the parent company of CODE M Magazine has just launched CODE M Network to help small and medium-sized content creators find a home on SVODs.

"CODE M Network was born to give men of color an outlet for their video content. With us, you retain the rights to your content and get paid for any advertising we place around your content," said Brad Bowling, the president of Code Media Group LLC.



CODE M Network is not just looking for existing content. The Network is also looking for anyone who has an idea for a show, currently working on shooting a show and/or has seasons of content shot. Through a partnership with Stiff Arm Media and Black-Tie Media LLC, the CODE M Network was created to give those who have excellent ideas a platform to upload and expose their content to over 90 million potential viewers.

"CODE M Network currently can be viewed on Roku, Fire TV, and Apple TV. We also can help any company using our network for their content marketing services to help find new audiences and grow their subscription base," said Bilal Akram, CEO of Code Media Group LLC.

THE PROCESS

So, what does that mean for the person who is sitting on their laptop editing their latest creation for an upload to YouTube? It means that you now can gain viewership on a streaming service and collect advertising revenue from your uploads.

"With CODE M Network, we can either take your completed content and upload it, or we can help you develop and produce your idea into a completed project," commented Kunta Bradford, President of Black-tie Media Group LLC.

CODE M Network offers a seamless process to contract, deliver, and upload your content without hesitation. You work on developing your craft and the Network will take care of the rest. With so many more people viewing streamed content, revenue generation is a matter of when, not if.

"Code M Network offers a seamless process to contract, deliver and upload your content without hesitation."

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Streaming content is becoming one of the top choices for gaining media exposure.

GETTING VIEWERS

Any content creator who is looking to increase their exposure and drive revenue must look at streaming their content. Now that you have partnered with a streaming service to upload your content, how do you attract enough viewers to create a profit?

Viewership is going to depend on one simple thing: How good is your project? Additionally, did you get the right actors for your script? Are you using the right equipment? It sounds like a good idea to shoot an entire movie on an iPhone, but if you are looking for revenue, you will want to invest in the right filming equipment.

The Unique Selling Points (USP) are critical when approaching a streaming service. The service can only promote what you, as the content creator, have provided. Make sure before you spend money on your project that it is done well enough to get the attention it deserves. With these tips, you are on your way to creating your own media empire and tons of cash.

If you would like to inquire about CODE M Network, contact Brad Bowling at brad.bowling@stiffarmmedia.com or 440-796-5763





POLITICS



THE SOUL OF A NATION: "BLACK MEN" VOTE TOO

By The Reverend Keith Magee, Th.D

The battle to 'Restore America's Soul' is Joe Biden's presidential campaign slogan. After an overly congested democratic primary, Biden is now the 2020 presumptive nominee.

It appears that for Biden soul is neither homage to his Roman Catholic upbringing nor a nod to having enjoyed a Chicago Southside Sunday dinner prepared by Marian Robinson (Michelle Obama's mother). Instead Biden asserts that his presidency will create policies that reflect our shared values. It is also a commitment to return integrity to the office of the President of the United States. While some, including a majority of people of color, feel President Donald Trump has sullied the office, there are others, most of whom are white, who feel former President Barack Obama created an environment in which they needed to try to take the country back.

Over a decade ago, the leadership of the GOP erupted in fear over Obama ascending to the presidency. There seemed to be concern that a Soul Fest would break out at the White House. The South Lawn would host picnics with fried chicken and watermelon. The helicopter landing would transform to a dance floor with the electric slide and a Soul Train line. The Queen of Soul would have an impromptu concert from the Truman Balcony belting out R-E-S-P-E-C-T! Oh, and maybe even, over in the Rose Garden there'd be a scramble board revealing the week's notable African American history—and, of course, over in the Jackie Kennedy Garden several card-tables for spades and dominos.

For eight years the country, love it or hate it, got to experience the soul of Barack Obama and his family. June 2020 will make five years since Trump announced his candidacy for president and under that context the country and the world have gotten to know his soul.



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The meaning of soul differs depending on a number of dynamics. Some psychologists have identified it as the immaterial essence and totality of who you are at a core level–your true nature. Mateo Sol suggests that the soul either gravitates toward light or darkness depending on how one's ego is developed. An ego is usually constructed from a collection of memories and beliefs about who you are, where you came from, and identity of what is good and bad , all connecting to the meaning of core value—soul.

President Trump's ego led to his mantra of 'Make America Great Again' is, arguably, a call of for America's restoration. Trump emerged to champion the hatred and racism that ensued after Mitch McConnell's failed attempt to make Obama a one term president. The blatant disrespect of Congressman Joe Wilson's shouting "You lie!" during Obama's 2009 joint session of Congress was also seeded with core values brewing within some in the Republican party.

This group had a disdain for a Black man who'd had sworn to up hold America's most sacred document, the U.S. Constitution. When it was written in 1787, the Founding Fathers didn't deem the Negro slave as a person or citizen. It wouldn't be until 1867, following America's Civil War, that slavery would be abolished in America. A Republican-dominated Congress passed the First Reconstruction Act, giving way to the 15th Amendment which divided the South into military districts and outlined a new government, based on manhood suffrage including Black men.

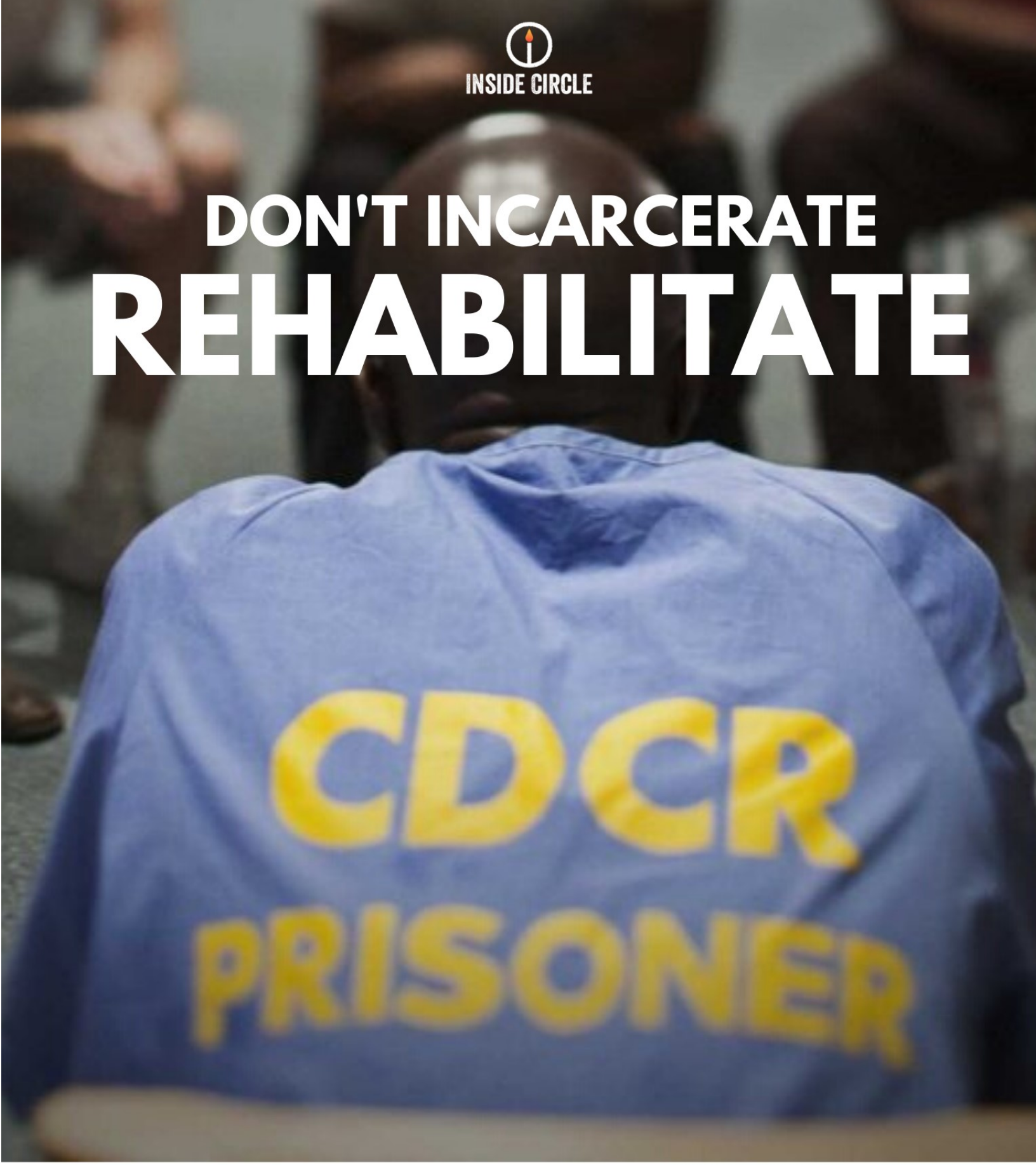
Within this era, Frederick Douglass partnered with his friend, Women's suffrage advocate Susan B. Anthony, towards mutual equality. Upon his taking on a gradualist position, which wouldn't include women as a protected class in the 15th Amendment, Anthony said, "I will cut off this right arm of mine before I will ever work or demand the ballot for the Negro and not the [White] woman." However, White men running the Republican party understood the power dynamic of Black men helping them to regain the South.

The day after the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870, Thomas Mundy Peterson of Perth Amboy, NJ, became the first Black man to vote. By the late 1870s, more than 20 Black men served in Congress, with more than 600 serving in state legislatures and local offices. The same Republican party, however, effectively nullified both the 14th Amendment which guaranteed citizenship with all privileges to Black men, and the 15th amendment—stripping their rights to vote .

In the ensuing decades bore witness to various discriminatory and voter suppression practices saw: poll taxes and literacy tests, along with Jim Crow laws, intimidation and outright violence,—were used to prevent Blacks from exercising their right to vote. It was not until passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, driven by a civil rights movement led by Black men—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Rev. Joseph Lowery, and Andrew Young, who went on to serve in Congress, as UN Ambassador and mayor of Atlanta, and others - — including many black women, that Blacks would legally regain the right to vote.

An estimated 30 million Black Americans are eligible to vote in 2020, according to the Pew Research Center. While Black women are rightfully celebrated as anchors of the Democratic Party, Black men have a long history of voting democratic as well. According 2019 the Center for American Progress States of Change report, 78 percent of black men with a college degree voted for Clinton (16 percent voted for Trump) and 82 percent without a college degree voted Democrat (11 percent voted for Trump).

In August 2015, I was in Cleveland, Ohio attending the memorial services of a mentor and fraternity brother, Congressman Louis Stokes. After the services, I took an Uber to a dinner with members of the Congressional Black Caucus. The driver was a married 54 year old Black male, father of three, and native of Cleveland And he was a Trump supporter. He had lost his construction job during Obama's



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administration. He felt that with Trump as president, having built hotels all over the world, trusted that Trump would put Black men back to work. And, of course, Trump had reputation as the celebrity boss from The Apprentice, Trump had fostered an image of giving chances to everyday people. After sitting in his car for 90 minutes, with a (my $12 ride turned into a $100 conversation bill (that would have been $12), and missing the dinner, I got out of the car, shaking my head in disbelief and saying, I said to myself, "if these are barbershop conversations, Donald Trump is going to win."

During the 2018 midterm election, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 49 percent of American's voted. There was only a 2 percentage differential in comparison with non-Hispanic Blacks, voting at 47 percent. Black men are focused on survival—and making it happen for themselves. For some, the immediate results of neither Obama nor Trump has delivered even a crumb, let alone a slice of the American pie.

While areas of criminal justice reform, free and subsidized child care childcare, keeping the family safe and, yes sure, marijuana legalization are important to Black men, the basics of sustainability and wealth creation areas missing from most candidates' platforms. More than anything Black men want equality and an opportunity to fully live the American dream, to provide and amass wealth. They don't want to build skyline condominiums they can't own. Nor do they want to pave roads leading to places they aren't welcome upon which they can't drive the same cars. Most importantly, Black men know that they directly descended from the 'commodity fodder used to' that has built America's wealth, originally as from free slave plantation, now labor of the sugar inducts commodity to currently warehoused inbeing the products of privatized prisons. Black men are no longer interested in being counted as inmates or voters but rather included as citizens upon which the government and society are accountable to their needs.

In W.E.B. Dubois' seminal collection of essays, The Souls of Black Folks, written in 1903, he pens "Of the Sons of Master and Man." In it he discusses physical proximity, economic strategy, and politics—the power of the ballot in every state. He reveals the police system as designed to control slaves and how courts can be the means of re-enslaving Blacks. Equally important, he addresses social contact, stating that "there is almost no community of intellectual life or point of transference where the thoughts and feelings of one race can come into direct contact and sympathy with thoughts and feelings of the other." He concludes that "the future of the South depends on the ability of the representatives of these opposing views to see and appreciate and sympathize with each other's position."

Dubois was speaking to the soul of a nation. He was not completely heard then, but we should really listen and take action to restore or even discover the true soul of America now.

For Biden's clarion "soul" call to resonate with Black men, it has to be about accountability more than the political rhetoric and empty promises portrayed by many public officials . And, he must give a more honest account of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, now known as the 1994 Crime Law.

On May 14, 2019 during one of his events, Biden, was questioned about the bill's intended punishments. His response was, "let's get something straight: 92 out of every 100 prisoners end up behind bars are in a state prison, not a federal prison. This idea that the crime bill generated mass incarceration—it did not generate mass incarceration." Nah, Joe, you've got to come better than that. According to the Sentencing Project's June 2010 "Felony Disenfranchisement: A Primer", currently one out of 13 Blacks can't vote due to a felony connection. Want to guess how many are Black men? Where's the federal bill to, rightfully, protect and restore their voting rights?

The Crime Law, also, separated fathers (and mothers) from children, community and work. And, yes, it was the catalyst for harsh sentencing guidelines that placed Black men behind bars in states, that still, disenfranchised their voting rights. T-Bone got locked up over a dime bag and Ray-Ray for transporting firearms. However, both industries are being run by 'the man' not Black men. They were both trying to catch a piece of the American Dream, but instead they got 20 to life, taking away their promise and some of the hopes of their children.









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during the covid 19
pandemic, including

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firefighters
police
grocery store employees
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and all others
risking their lives for us.

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still ,having Anniversaries
still ,celebrating Life.

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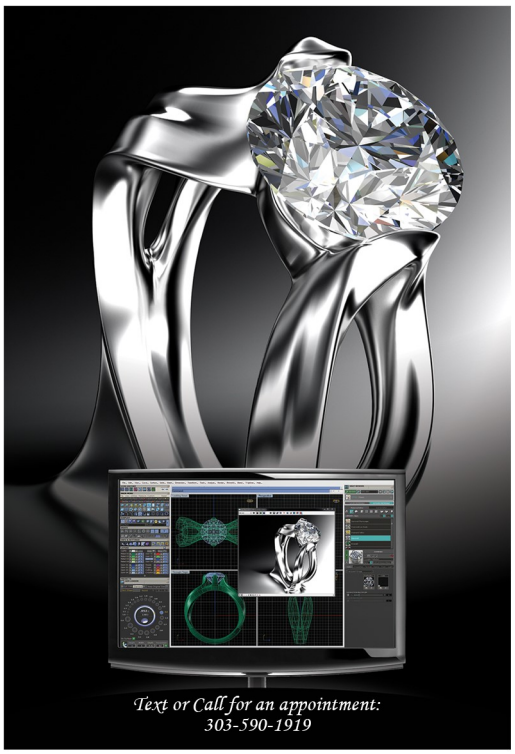
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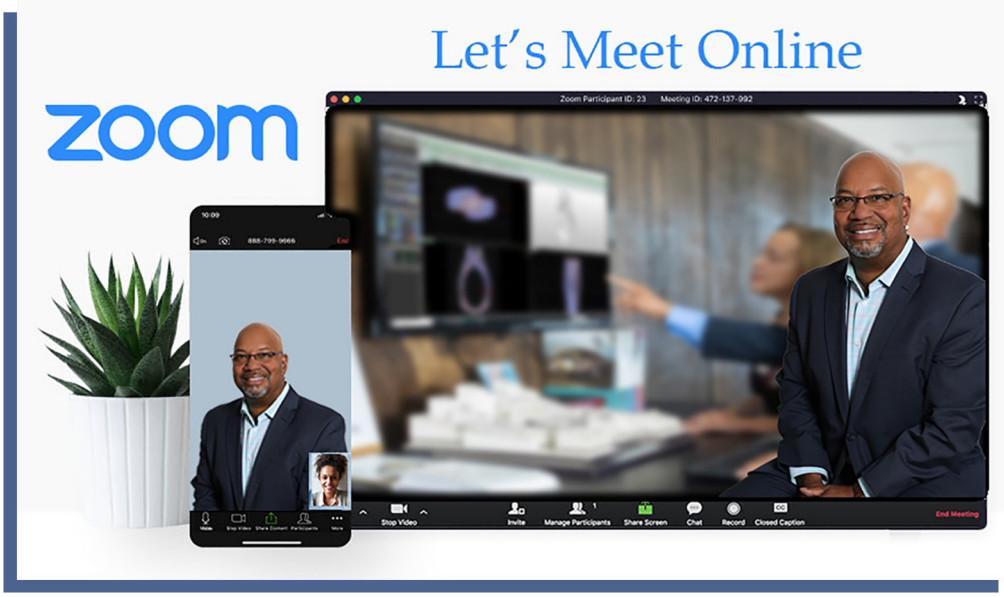
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The Bible, in Genesis chapter 2, says that God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Then man became a living soul. That soul became the father of nations. A Biden vote, for a Biden win, has the potential to breathe life into Black men, so that they can become vital leaders and fathers within a nation.

Black men are more interested in the answer to Plato's Republic than more questions. And, rather than taking Socrates' a long way around to define justice as the virtues of human beings in a city, it is time for America to replace structural racism will create scales of economic, political and social justice that are leaning toward the uplift of Black men, instead of structural racism that works to their detriment. Black men can no longer be satisfied being fishermen; it's time to own oceans. No longer is being the vast majority seventy-five percent of the NFL's field athletic talent on the field sufficient, it's time for ownership. We Black men demand/want access to the flowing veins and arteries essential to create fulfilling lives, which when woven together comprise a nation with rhythm and balance.

With eyes on that type of future, I certainly believe that Black men will head to the polls for Biden, and leave echoing borrowing from the departing words of Soul Train's host Don Cornelius's signature sign-off, "we wish you love, peace and soul, [Joe]."

The Reverend Keith Magee, Th.D is a London-based public intellectual with a focus on social justice and public theology. For more information, visit www.4justicesake.org or follow him on social media @keithlmagee.







COVER

Profanity-free

COMEDY BUCKS ALL TRENDS

By Richard T. Andrews

The ComedyFest Legacy Building will Continue at Martha's Vineyard.

Tenth Annual show will feature some of best black comics in America.



Black people have been laughing to keep from crying or going crazy since shortly after being brought to North American shores. When you have been ripped from everything you know — history, language, family, culture — developing a sense of humor, whether bitter, wry, sardonic, or self-deprecating is likely a necessary tool for survival.

Notwithstanding this motherlode of African American humor, black comedy is of more recent vintage, although it too has a rich history, one that Black Comedy Month founder Steve Capers has been celebrating and building upon for much of his professional career.

Ten years ago, Capers founded the Martha's Vineyard ComedyFest, a national stage for African American comics. It has blossomed since then into a multi-week event that occurs every August at Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts.

August, in case you didn't know, is Black Comedy Month. Capers trademarked the moniker a few years ago.

The legendary Dick Gregory made a useful distinction between humor and comedy. Humor, he said, is when you and your buddies get together and crack jokes. Comedy is what professionals do.

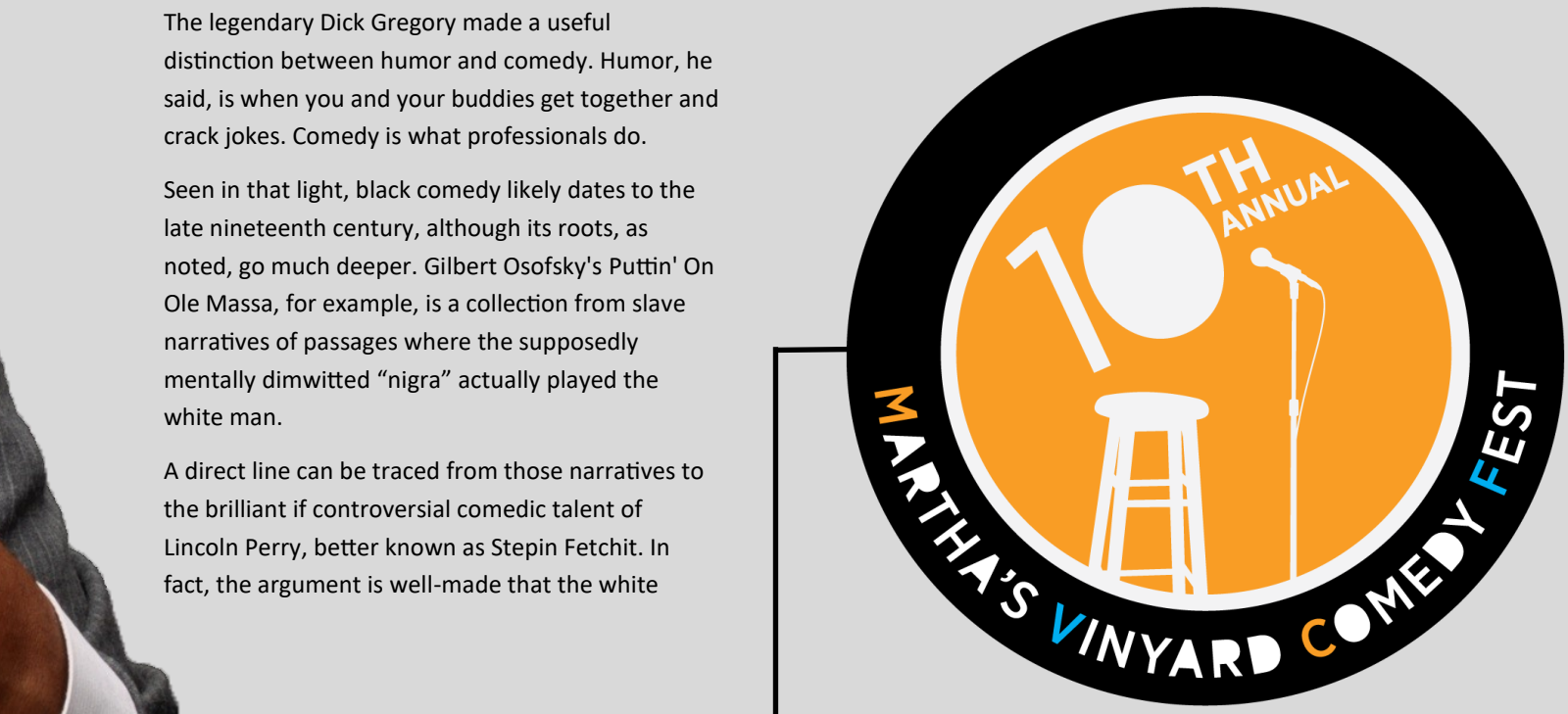
Seen in that light, black comedy likely dates to the late nineteenth century, although its roots, as noted, go much deeper. Gilbert Osofsky's Puttin' On Ole Massa, for example, is a collection from slave narratives of passages where the supposedly mentally dimwitted "nigra" actually played the white man.

A direct line can be traced from those narratives to the brilliant if controversial comedic talent of Lincoln Perry, better known as Stepin Fetchit. In fact, the argument is well-made that the white vaudevillians who observed black Americans acting in outrageous ways and used blackface to mock them, failed to understand that what they were watching was black people having laughs at the outrageous and hypocritical ways of white folks.

Black comedy pioneers like Bert Williams (1874-1922), one of the most popular entertainers of his day, are today largely forgotten. Black comedy existed in Jim Crow America until near mid-twentieth century as a largely underground phenomenon, where stellar performers like Redd Foxx and Moms Mabley performed on what came to be known as the chitlin' circuit. Their uproarious and often blue humor was circulated hand to hand via recordings sometimes known as "race records." Other outlets for black comedy were found in the music of performers like Cab Calloway and Louis Jordan.

> "This year's event will largely be a virtual comedy fest. Only the laughs may be live, as the country will likely still be easing into some degree of post-coronavirus recovery."

More on the surface was the sly but nonetheless deep and always honest humor that came from the pen of black America's poet laureate, Langston Hughes, most notably in his fabulous creation, Jesse B. Simple, who regularly appeared in the columns of





From left to right, AJ Jamal (Cleveland, OH), Correy Bell (Chicago,IL) and Mike Bonner (Detroit, MI).

black newspapers that connected the ghettos filled with the masses of black Americans.

The mid-twentieth century civil rights movement was accompanied by breakthroughs best represented by Dick Gregory, who used his rapier-sharp wit and powers of observation to make trenchant social and political observations that evoked first laughter, and sometimes much later, quiet reflection among largely white audiences.

The pace of black comedy quickened after Gregory as folk like Cosby, the inimitable Richard Pryor, Flip Wilson, Nipsey Russell, Sinbad, Eddie Murphy, and Chris Rock broke through.

Black comedy has often made some black folk uncomfortable. Stepin Fetchit, and later Amos and Andy, who started off first as white actors mimicking black folk, could be simultaneously instantly recognizable, uproariously funny, and yet deeply disturbing for perpetuating unflattering stereotypes.

In that light, the MVCF event is perhaps both ironically and ideally suited for the Vineyard's Oak Bluffs enclave. The Bluffs have been perhaps the premier summer vacation spot for the nation's well-to-do black folk for more than half a century. One can imagine the original proper black Oak Bluffs denizens scouring the terrain before allowing themselves to laugh at honest black humor, lest they appear to be condoning less than exemplary Negro behavior.

Times have indeed changed.

This year's event will largely be a virtual comedy fest. Only the laughs may be live, as the country will likely still be easing into some degree of post-coronavirus recovery. Details are still being worked out, says Capers, with the event, set to run August 3 through August 20,



George Wallace is an all-time favorite comedian for the Martha's Vineyard Comedy Fest.



From left to right, DJ Dolla Bill, Steve Capers, George Wallace, Dorothy Capers, Damon Williams, Mark Gregory, Frank Collaso and Myra J.

consisting of "past performances of your favorite MV ComedyFest comedians, interviews, pictures, movies, and live streaming events.

This year's unique character will have a rich roster of past performers to draw upon. Headliners will include Damon Williams, Kym Whitley, Mark Curry, DJDolla, J. Anthony Brown, Marina Franklin, and a host of other established and rising talent.

For his part, Capers has been in and around the comedy world for much of his career. He worked with luminaries like Jon Stewart, the former comedic icon Bill Cosby, and many others at Comedy Central. He's also worked with BET. In Chicago, he started Funny First Saturdays, featuring the likes of such stars as Curry and George Wilborn. The shows enjoyed a successful run for more than seven years.

Capers said the idea for the MV Comedy Fest came to him while he was at the Vineyard in 2011. "There was no live entertainment," he says. "I wanted to do something edgy, but because of the Vineyard's family atmosphere, I wanted it to be profanity-free."

Capers was quickly able to leverage contacts in his illustrious career to land entertainment giant HBO as a founding sponsor, a relationship that continues to this day.

This year's ComedyFest, scheduled to run August 3 through August 20, features some of the funniest black comedians performing today. Paradoxically, its total audience, which has been international, may be even broader this year thanks to its virtual nature. Live streaming events can be accessed at MarthasVineyardComedyFest.com and BlackComedyMonth.com.

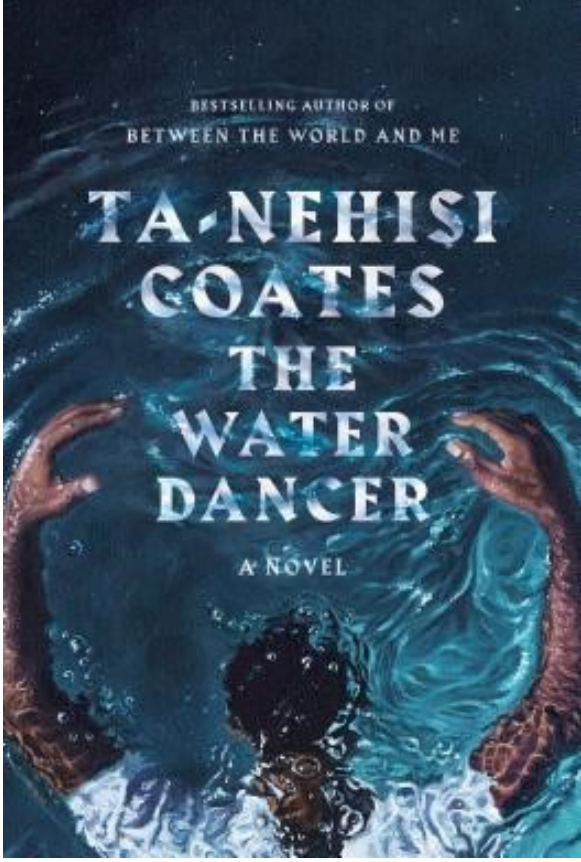


Steve Capers has had an incredible amount of success promoting a profanity-free format.

Live streaming events from this year's ComedyFest can be accessed at MarthasVineyardComedyFest.com and BlackComedyMonth.com. MarthasVineyardComedyFest

BOOKS

BLACK MAGIC IN OUR DNA



By Bradford Davy

A recipient of the MacArthur Genius Fellowship, Ta-Nehisi Coates is often cited as one of his generation's preeminent thinkers on race in the United States. Coates gained notoriety for his resurrection of longform journalism, as highlighted in his landmark piece, A Case for Reparations. In recent years, Coates has applied his craft to a broad range of mediums, which includes comic books (Black Panther), non-fiction (Between the World and Me), and most recently, novels.

In his fictional debut, The Water Dancer, Coates tells the story of Hiram Walker, a young man born into slavery on his father's plantation. In this coming of age story, Hiram is endowed with a unique and mysterious power called conduction: the ability to conjure memories, often of love and pain, to then magically transport himself and others from place to place. He learns to harness and employ his abilities as a member of the underground railroad, where he seeks to emancipate himself and his loved ones from their bondage.

The Water Dancer covers all the atrocities of slavery we have come to know: the destruction of the black family, the theft of traditions, and the egregious brutality inflicted on black bodies. What makes this story successful, however, is not the detailed, journalistic account of slavery you might expect from a historian like Coates; it's his ability to dismantle the illusion of superiority of the white southern aristocrat while reorienting his reader to the magnificence of the enslaved.

To this point, he writes: "The masters could not bring water to boil, harness a horse, nor strap their own drawers on without us. We were better than them—we had to be. Sloth was literal death for us, while for them it was the whole ambition of their lives."

With this in mind, Coates utilizes the magic of conduction as a literary device to articulate a universal truth; the oppressed possesses the wisdom, power, and talent the oppressor desperately desires but can never wholly obtain.

To some it may seem an unfitting subject to apply magic. But it is indeed a superpower to summon collective pain in order to forge a path ahead. It is herculean to know acutely the historic and present transgressions done to you and your family, and still choose to hope and dream. It is nothing short of heroic to recognize your own greatness when the world constantly tells you otherwise. And yet, this is the black American experience. It is employed daily in communities across this country, where in the face of adversity, people of color do extraordinary things.

"Every day across the country, people of color do extraordinary things in the face of adversity."

Today, as the world we know has come to a grinding pandemic-induced slowdown, it's natural to feel powerless. As we seek forms of entertainment in our isolation, a book that implores us to consider superhuman acts, while also grounding us in our history, may be just what we need.



Ta-Nehisi Coates is a best-selling author and writer.





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MUSIC

RAPPER'S DELIGHT

Rappers are turning to the internet and websites like Nerve DJ Mixtapes to gain exposure and record deals.

by Brad Bowling

Back in 1989, if a fledgling rapper wanted to get noticed, he put out a mix tape and sold it from the trunk of his car. He would pass it out at parties and nightclubs, and he would work to build his audience one mix tape at time. Fast forward to today, the hustle remains the same, the process has changed. Rappers today are uploading their music to websites like NerveDJMixtapes.com and building audiences around the world.

Created in 2012 by a former DJ, John Horton, the website has launch scores of careers and hosts over 5000 artists and members on its website. "I created the website for artists who didn't have an outlet for their music to get noticed. We also provide DJs from around the world by allowing them to come to the site, listen to the whatever music they want, and promote it," John said.

The site offers different levels of participation. Artists can pick certain packages that range from just up-loading music all the way to getting promotion and advertising. Every two weeks, Nerve-DJsMixtapes.com holds a conference call to discuss the latest trends in music, introduce new artists to the site, and have artists get constructive feedback from DJs from around the world. The call is open to anyone that wants to attend and typically has over 500 people on each call.

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Cardi B had her first public appearance on one of our conference calls and has been on numerous times. And Wiz Khalifa has also been on our conference calls more than eight times. They are both like family to our site and we continue to find new talent and help them launch their careers."

The process for a new artist to get on the site is simple, they fill out an application and then wait for the approval to upload their music. They pick the right plan for them and then they are exposed to whoever may want to hear their music.

The site also has a robust social media presence. They are constantly working to help grow the site and its fanbase.

"Our goal is to help promote and keep our artists out there. With social media, we can highlight different sounds and music to specific people and remind people about our conference calls."

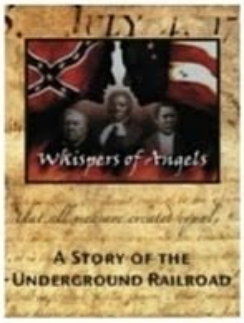
For rappers, there is no better feeling than being discovered, with technology, the internet, and websites like NerveDJmixtapes.com. The possibility for finding stardom just got easier!



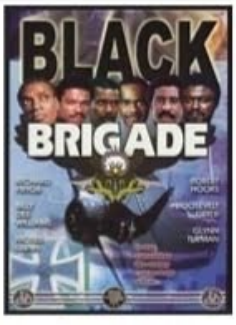
Cardi-B

Wiz Khalifa

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Life

HOW TO DATE IN ISOLATION

By Brock James



Society is currently struggling to adjust to this new way of life. People are figuring out how to work from home (IF they are working). They are dealing with financial issues and overcoming this new way of life with limited access to everything. But there is one huge elephant in the room that most single people did not consider. If you do not have a love/friend/mate to self-isolate with, how you are going to meet new people while you self-quarantine.

Before COVID-19, singles would have first dates at bars and restaurants to introduce themselves to potential dating partners. Whether they met online or as a passerby, they all ended up at the same place: in public conversation to see if there was a fit.

Today, the opportunity to meet in a public place is on hold. Any chance of even trying to schedule a date is impossible with the Coronavirus attacking life as we know it. Think you are going to meet a nice person at the grocery store? You can forget it! With everyone wearing a mask and offering the evil eye if you dare speak to them, finding love on aisle 6 isn't going to happen.

OK, let's turn to online dating. Millions of Americans subscribe to one or more dating platforms in order to find love. With everyone in isolation, online dating sites have literally become the only way to find and meet new people. Even with online dating sites, most people are reluctant to schedule a meeting in person.

"People are very concerned about catching the Coronavirus, so when you ask them if they would like to meet, they quickly refuse to even consider it," a single, Craig, said. "I have no idea how I am going to successfully date until we all feel a whole lot better about being out in public."

"There are many unfortunate consequences of the pandemic including trying to date and meet new people while in isolation."

Here are a few suggestions on how to create a first date during a pandemic.

VIDEO CHAT

If texting while on an online dating platform goes well, you can always move the conversation to a video chat service. Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, and Facetime are all great ways to continue to see if the connection with the person you are texting with grows into more. Video conferencing allows you to see them and continue to build the relationship before you meet.

WALK IN THE PARK

If you two are local and your new potential love finds it safe, you can always schedule a time to take a walk in the park. With America re-opening, a walk in the park is safe, you can practice good social distancing, and still meet with your date in person to explore if there is a match or not.

COFFEE IN YOUR CARS

If you want to get creative, you can invite your date to meet for coffee but stay in your individual cars. You have a chance to continue to converse and keep a safe distance from one another until you both feel more comfortable while in each other's presence.

Getting adjusted to this new normal in life also means changing the way you might find love. Use some of the techniques mentioned and you just might find a good mate to self-isolate with. Happy Hunting!



Self Isolation is always better when you have someone to share the time with. Singles are turning to dating apps to find love.

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by FRIDA HULTEN

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COVID-19 DESTROYED MY SPRING

The pandemic from the perspective of a young person who was looking to launch her career, enter the world and discover who she really was. All haulted to a screeching stop due to the Coronavirus.

By Briana Oldham

You know that feeling of excitement you get when you've worked really hard, put your best foot forward, shed blood, sweat, and tears all in an effort to accomplish your dream? It's a feeling spring 2020 graduates won't get. COVID-19 has changed everything and I'm pretty mad about it. To be honest, I'm sad and frustrated, too. May 9th was going to be the big day for me and after all I've been through, graduation was going to be the big cherry on top of a successfully sweet sundae.

I graduated from Villa Angela – St. Joseph in 2007 and had known since middle school that I wanted to be a journalist. Sophomore year, my first piece of poetry was published. I won an award and stipend for it and all I can remember is how nervous I was. In the years to come, though I kept my work to myself, that feeling sophomore year also made me feel unstoppable.

I was accepted to every school where I applied; the only stipulation I had was getting out of Ohio. So, I ventured to Eastern Michigan. I experienced so much there and really got to spread my wings. I learned invaluable lessons and benefited from a great curriculum. I was able to tap into skills I didn't even know I had.

My former teacher, Anna Vitale, probably doesn't realize the impact her creative writing class had on me. She knew how much I enjoyed the work and when we went home for the summer, she mailed the final project with comments. One that I'll never forget is her saying that what I wrote was an award-winning sentence. She really had me thinking I was a mix of Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison!



Little did I know, the place I loved so much, where I took my writing to another level, would not be the place I completed my undergrad degree. I didn't feel challenged enough and decided I'd go home but immediately transferred to Georgia Southern in time for the following school year. The plan was almost executed until I ran into financial aid problems. It meant I moved back home to stay for a while and began the two and three-job hustle.

Over the next 10 years, I would study at Cuyahoga Community College and Ashford University on and off, but I'd never give up. It wouldn't be until I transferred to Cleveland State University in Jan. 2018 that I would find my place and literally everything I wanted would come to fruition. It started when I began writing for The Cauldron. Since that time, I've also gotten broadcast and digital experience as an intern at WKYC and become a contributor, then culture editor, of Vindicator magazine.

With an independent study called the Witness Project and only a handful of classes between me and my diploma, here we are … in the first major pandemic I've seen and can remember this lifetime. When I heard other schools were switching to remote

Briana Oldham is scheduled to graduate from Cleveland State University this spring.



learning, I was highly upset that my school had not gotten on the bandwagon. Days after the first wave of shutdowns, I received the news. I went from feeling relieved to depressed in one text.

My friend and mentor texted me about graduation and my heart instantly dropped. I immediately went to check my email and saw that the ceremony was going to be cancelled. I can recall my eyes welling up and getting a lump in my throat – I didn't want to cry. I had so many feelings about The Rona, but this was the first time it was personal. How dare this virus rob me of all that I had worked for?

I texted my mentor back, then something happened. It was the first time someone gave me permission to wholeheartedly feel every bit of whatever this emotional rollercoaster was going to take me on. And so, I did.

It didn't hit me right away. I drove home with no problem, pulled up, took my boots off at the door, and set my things down. Right before bed, I went to use the bathroom and just broke down. A news station in Atlanta aired a few local songs that would help reach the 20-second mark we were instructed to hit while washing our hands.

So, I drew on that, and dried my tears and sang, "I'm sorry Ms. Jackson, wooo, I am for real. Never meant to make your daughter cry. I apologize a trillion times." I repeated this hook once like the newscaster said and of course slid into the bridge of the song because who sings that and stops there. This was symbolic of so many things for me. One, this was my new normal. Singing songs for 20 seconds or more to get a good wash in. Two, I was sorry (to myself) as I stared in the mirror and sang. Sorry that this was happening right now of all the times. And three, I knew, much like how the song I love and choose to sing every handwashing comes to an end, so, too, will this.

After a month of not being at my best mentally and as a result a rocky performance academically, after a month where people I thought I was close to stopped talking to me and couldn't even tell me why they were upset, after a month of feeling like a failure because there were days I couldn't even get out of bed, I'm finally somewhat back to myself. It's taken a lot to get here – a lot of love from my mom and sister, a lot of laughs from my favorite cousin coupled with wisdom from my grandmas, and prayers from family and friends.



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A LOVE LETTER TO MEN



By Dr. Leah C.K. Lewis, J.D.

Dear Brother:

Know that my thoughts and prayers are with you and us all in the season of Coronavirus. Our world has shifted in heretofore unimaginable ways. Our community, and those of Native-American, and Hispanic and Latino people, are facing grave economic and socio-political challenges once again. We must be particularly vigilant against contagion, illness, misinformation, and baseless conspiracy theories and policies that put us at risk. While every human is vulnerable, we may be especially so due to pre-existing conditions rooted in oppressive historical realities.

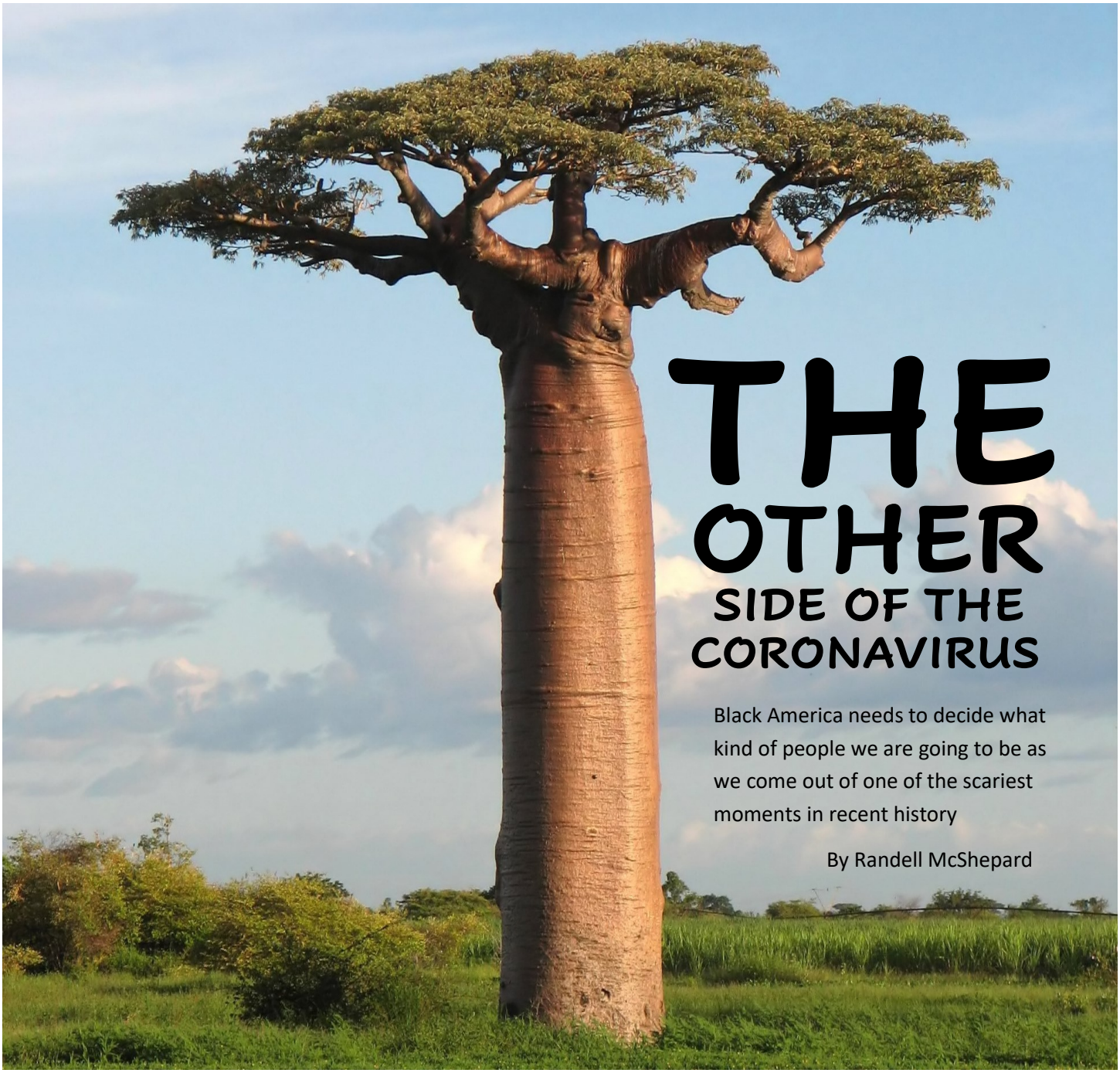
Without question, many are suffering the loss of life and loved ones. I find comfort in 2 Corinthians 5:8, "Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (NRSV). Death brings an alleviation of pain for the dying. Sorrow and grief become the order of the day for the living.

Let us lift medical professionals and hospital workers, scientists seeking solutions and vaccines, and essential workers of every stripe. It seems to me that whether a person is working or not, the challenges are plenty. From being unemployed to being furloughed or having to interface with people who may be asymptomatic or showing visible signs of the virus, we are living in a perilous time.

Even so, please do what you can to be optimistic. It is true that "trouble don't last always." Social distancing, shelter at home orders, and quarantining will end, appropriately, at some point. In the meantime, the earth is healing, nature is replenishing, and wildlife is relishing in our confinement and restricted movement. Care for and encourage those whose mental and emotional health is burdened in this strange era. Prayerfully, a more humanely conducive, eco-friendly new normal will emerge. It is up to us.

May we take this time, if able, to ponder a new course forward. What behavior ought we leave in the age of the pandemic? What relationships ought we release, and which ones should we fortify? Are there goals on which we should focus or refocus? What opportunities await us?

As humans, we have always been overcomers. Our Ancestors have overcome enslavement, Jim Crow, the 1918 Spanish Flu, and a myriad of death-dealing phenomena. The fact that we are still here is a testament to their strength and ours. Remember who you are, whom you come from, and whose you are.



THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CORONAVIRUS

Black America needs to decide what kind of people we are going to be as we come out of one of the scariest moments in recent history

By Randell McShepard

The baobab tree, found in mainland Africa, Australia and Mudassar, is often referred to as the "Tree of Life."

We are living in unprecedented times and facing a once-in-a-generation (if not once- in-a-century) global crisis. What has made this pandemic most peculiar and challenging for all of us is the fact that has challenged every important priority in our daily lives, including health status, economic well-being, faith, food security, interpersonal relationships with family and friends, recreation, entertainment and a sense of hope for the future.

We will come through this crisis and will ideally find ourselves somewhat different as we land on the other side of it. Our priorities will change. Our appreciation for life and liberty will take on a whole new meaning. Our respect for other human beings and humanity will be heightened. And our understanding about our vulnerabilities as world citizens will sharpen our focus on the importance of international relations—as we only have one world to share.

In reflecting on the changes that I would hope to see in our world post COVID-19, I am reminded of a recent trip to the Cleveland Botanical Garden, where I learned, for the first time about the

baobab tree. The baobab tree, found in mainland Africa, Australia and Madascar, is often referred to as the "Tree of Life" and is revered for its extraordinary resiliency. It provides shelter, food and water for animal and human inhabitants, and the portly trunk of the tree has deep root systems allowing it to store up to 32,000 gallons of water to protect itself from drought. The tree's smooth, slick bark protects it from wildfires and reflects heat to limit evaporation from its pores. All the while, the tree produces leaves that are eaten as leafy vegetables, serves as important nesting sites for birds and produces nutritious fruit and seeds. Baobab trees have been known to live for 3,000 years.

Like the Boabab Tree, we as a global community need to demonstrate resiliency. We need to retain faith and hope like the baobab retains water. We need to reflect negativity, partisanship and hate (like the baobab reflects heat) with kind deeds, care and concern for others and a renewed interest in disenfranchised people, particularly those with "pre-existing conditions" resulting from societal inequities.

The baobab tree, found in mainland Africa, Australia and Madascar, is often referred to as the "Tree of Life" and is revered for its extraordinary resiliency.

We all need to share the "fruits" of our labor in a way that provides health and prosperity to all our citizens, as the baobab feeds people and several forms of wildlife.

Ryder Carroll wrote in "The Bullet Journal Method" that, "No matter how bleak or menacing a situation may appear, it does not entirely own us. It can't take away our freedom to respond, our power to take action."

We - as corporate, community, civic, faith and political leaders must come together to fully realize our power and our responsibility to take action. COVID-19 can't own us if we choose to own the new normal and remain a united front.

Randell McShepard is Vice President of Public Affairs and Chief Talent Officer for RPM International Inc. He is also the Chairman and Co-Founder of PolicyBridge, a public policy think tank.



BUILDING A BRAND ONE BOTTLE AT A TIME

Timothy Maurice took a chance on himself and started a world class tequila brand as a result.

By Wes Jackson

When most kids are in school and asked what they want to become when they grow up, very few, if any, say that they want to start their own tequila company. But that is exactly what Timothy Maurice did. The year-old company is now sold in over 80 bars and restaurants and is quickly becoming the brand of choice among tequila drinkers.

Back in college, the marketing and branding specialist decided he wanted to own his own company. After working and designing for others, like the rapper Akon and the Sean John clothing line, Tim decided to take a trip to Mexico to learn more about the art of making tequila. Upon the manufacturer educating him on the product and theories behind such a special opportunity, Timothy decided to become one of the few black-owned tequila brands in the world.

"When I started the process of launching my tequila company 8 years ago, I didn't have the funds to do so. So, I worked and saved and did whatever I had to do to make sure that my dream became a reality. And I knew that if I was going to do this, that I had to do it right," Maurice said.

Doing it right meant only using the plants that grow in the fields of Mexico to develop the smooth taste of Real Azul. The name tequila can only be used if the ingredients are from the blue agave plant grown around the city of Tequila, northwest of Guadalajara, and in the Jaliscan Highlands (Los Altos de Jalisco) of the central western Mexican state of Jalisco.

Doing it right also meant creating brilliant packaging and branding that compliments the amazing taste of the tequila.



The brilliant Real Azul bottle is made in France and shipped to Mexico and hand-signed by Timothy himself.

"I created the design of the bottle and we ship it from France to Mexico. I personally sign every bottle that we sell before it leaves for market. We want everyone to feel a personal connection to the brand and to the taste of Real Azul," Timothy said.

So far the company is exploding in popularity. It was a major sponsor at the Oscar Awards in 2019 and has been used in promotions at Tyler Perry Studios events. The company wants to make sure that it aligns with other products that can ensure its branding and image.

For Timothy, his story should resonate with any man of color who is looking to start their own business. To own a tequila business is a dream come true, but for anyone who is looking to breathe life into their own dream, they can look to men like Timothy who had an idea and worked tirelessly until it became a reality.

"When this is all said and done, I would like to write a book about my 8-year journey, about what it took to make this happen. I made a lot of mistakes along the way that I think I can help others avoid," Timothy concluded.

Those mistakes have made him the man he is today. One thing is for certain, when a little school-age child is asked what he wants to be when he grows up, he can now say he wants to own his own beverage line because of men like Timothy Maurice.



Timothy Maurice founded Real Azul in 2019 after an 8-year journey to fulfill his dream of owning his own tequila brand.



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Jeffery Bolling is the owner and president of Jeffery B Jewelers located in Denver, Colorado.

USING ZOOM TO DO BUSINESS

Non-Essential businesses are finding new ways to stay open and stay relevant by choosing Zoom to meet with their clients.

By Brad J. Bowling

When the Coronavirus hit America, no one could have predicted the financial outcome of this crisis. For businesses deemed non-essential, it meant certain death if they did not find a new way to stay open and connect with their clients. And that is what Jeff Bolling, from Jeff B Jewelers did. They adapted to the new conditions and created Zoom meetings to continue to do business.

Zoom is a digital meeting application that allows people to meet via video conference. In many respects, Zoom does nothing new. It's a cloud-based tool where you can host calls with others. Users can open chat rooms and can have up to 500 attendees all sharing the feed from their webcams, thus giving the illusion of a typical meeting.

With social distancing and businesses shuttered, for Jeff to stay in business, he needed to find a way to continue to meet with customers just like he would if they entered his store in Denver, Colorado.

“Luckily, we established video conferencing last year, but no one took advantage of it. We purchased over $50k in software to allow us to digitally design and show people what they were buying,” said Jeff.

Jeff B Jewelers uses Computer Aided Designs (CAD) to design, create, and make some of the best custom-made jewelry in the country. The process to dream up a new piece of hardware can be done in three easy meetings.

“We start off with a discovery meeting where the client can describe what they are looking for. Then at the next meeting, we present some of our ideas and show them some examples of what we designed. The last meeting is picking a final CAD drawing and





determining a date of delivery."

Since the introduction of Zoom meetings, Jeff B Jewelers' business has picked up. They can meet with a customer from anywhere in the country or clients can simply dial into a Zoom meeting and wait a moment for the video chat to start.

"We are still functioning just as if we were in our Cherry Creek store. Customers can call 303-590-1919 and in moments we can begin a Zoom meeting."

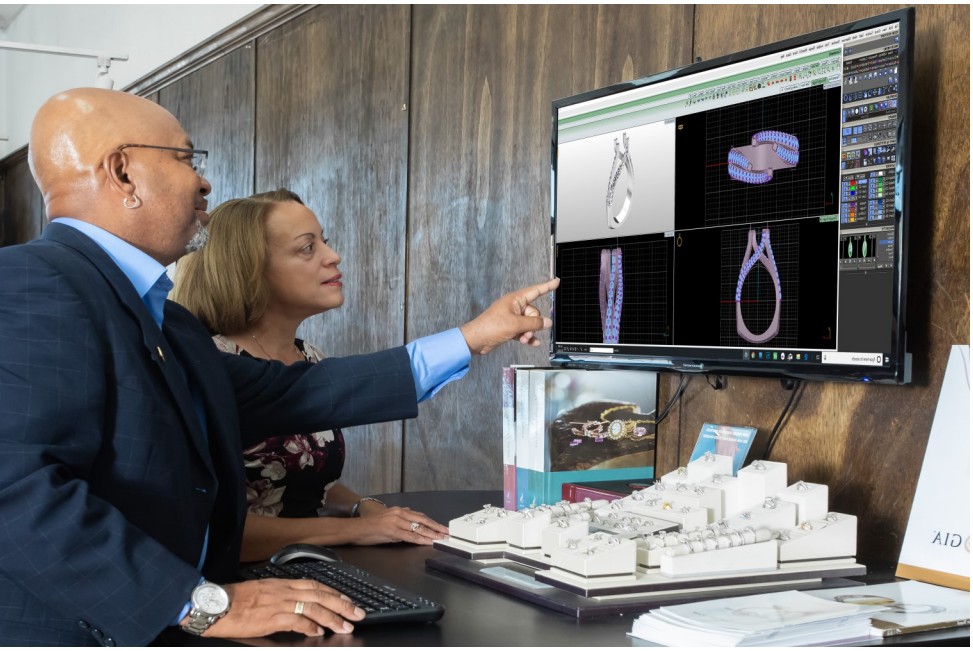
Jeff B Jewelers caters to people ages 26 to 50 and offers custom designs for anyone who wants something special up to professional athletes looking to get their dream pieces of bling.

They also specialize in watches, wedding rings, engagement rings, and rubber wedding bands for men.

"We can do custom pieces that range from $8,000 to $15,000 and we have a wide selection of products to choose from.

While the shutdown continues to plague non-essential businesses, companies like Jeff B Jewelers are adapting and thriving with video conferencing and Zoom meetings to stay connected to their customers.

For more information about Jeff B Jewelers, contact Jeff at 303-590-1919.
300 S. Jackson St. Suite 135
Denver, CO 80209 (Cherry Creek)



Jeffery Bolling's design team uses the latest in technology to design and make custom-made jewelry.







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