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# HOUSE, SENATE VOTED TO RAISE DEBT LIMIT, AVERTING A FIRST TIME DEFAULT BY THE U.S.



This measure comes after months of fighting between Democrats and Republicans. One Republican and all Democrats in the House voted to approve the hike, which passed in the chamber by a 221-209 vote, p3

***Merry Christmas! Happy Kwanzaa!***



## Overt racism, ongoing pandemic prompts more Black parents to homeschool children

Philadelphiaobserver.com

While the majority of us were happy to spend the summer and fall seasons outside, and plan family trips once again with the kiddos, the fact of the matter is we are very much still living in a pandemic state. With the onset of the newly detected Omicron variant of the Coronavirus, cases have been rising in recent months. Meanwhile, companies are continuing to reopen their doors to employees, and usher kids back into classrooms. An increasing number of Black families, however, are refusing their children re-entry.

The Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey reported that in April 2020, 3% of Black parents

homeschooled their children, and was up to 16% by October, a number that may not be entirely accurate, as halfway through the course of the survey, it was clarified that homeschooled children did not include those enrolled in public or private school. (Many of those surveyed were also reporting homeschooling their children during state mandated shutdowns.) Either way, a lot of us have taken to educating our own.

According to reporting by NPR, "covid was the catalyst." Didakeje Griffin and her husband, who were interviewed by the publication, stated that "It was like a lightbulb moment," in reference to the schools shutting down in the early pandemic days.

# Christmas for Christians—Kwanzaa for culture

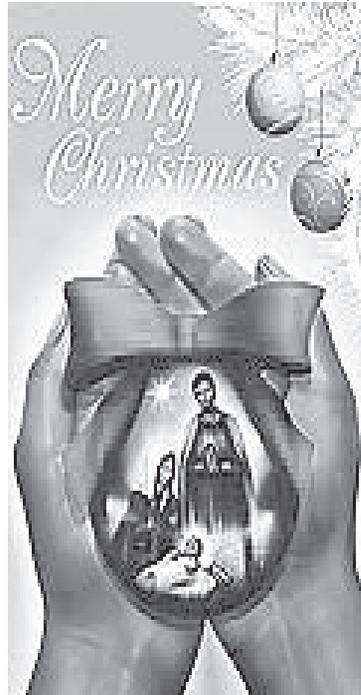
By Hazel Rosetta Smith

Christmas is the annual Christian festival celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ held on December 25th throughout the world. Christmas is celebrated, whether the celebrants are Christians or not, as a time when family and friends come together and share their blessings through gift giving. For Christians it is a deep religious remembrance of the birth of Jesus Christ, who is believed to be the Son of God.

Christmas means "Christ-mass," service to Jesus the Christ. Many ancient traditions have been carried over into Christmas observances and symbols. Trees are considered the symbol of eternal life. Martin Luther introduced them to the Reformation Church as a symbol of our endless life in Christ, by bringing in a tree to his family on Christmas Eve.

Candles or lights in general, present Christ as the light of the world. Presents are a reminder of the gifts of the Magi to the baby Jesus. Bells are associated with the ringing out of the good news that Christ is born. It is important to remember that Christmas is not just about the gifts we give and receive, it is a celebration of peace, joy, and love.

Kwanzaa is celebrated from December 26th to New Year's Day



with a light lit every evening in a sequence that corresponds with a discussion of the day. Kwanzaa means "first fruits of the harvest."

Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor of Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach, created the cultural celebration in 1966 to empower our people to rediscover their African heritage. It is not tied to any religious denomination. The language used is Kiswahili, the common tongue of the Great Lakes region of East Africa, and one of the most widely spoken languages in Africa.

By combining customs from various African harvest ceremonies, Karenga developed a tradition that is now widely celebrated around the world. Seven candles are burned throughout the week-long observance, and each represents a different principal of Kwanzaa. The colors of Kwanzaa are no accident. Red, black, and green have been historically used to represent African American organizations like the Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded by Marcus Garvey in the 1920s.

The African American and Pan African holiday is anchored by seven principles known as the NGUZU SABA to inspire Black people to be united, self-determined, accountable for their communities, financially invested in Black-owned businesses, purposeful with their lives, creative and full of faith.

Gather the necessary items—a KINARA (candle holder) and MISHUMAA SABA (7 candles or bulbs (three red, three green, one black) and let the celebration begin.

Lighting of the candles or lights is done from left to right. If you are using actual wax candles, please make certain they are either blown out nightly for fire safety or under a glass container. Use of electric bulbs are safer for the entire seven evenings to enhance the spirit of the festivity.

Night 1—UMOJA (means Unity—light the black center candle only);

Night 2 — KUGICHAGULIA (means Self Determination—light the black center candle and the outer red candle on left);

Night 3—UJIMA (means Collec-



tive Work and Responsibility—light the black center candle and the outer green candle on right);

Night 4 – UJAMAA (means Cooperative Economics—light the black center candle and the next red candle on left);

Night 5—NIA (means Purpose—light the black center candle and the next green candle on right);

Night 6 – KUUMBA (means Creativity—light the black center candle and the inner red candle on left);

Night 7—IMANI (means Faith—light the black center candle and the inner green candle on right).

On the seventh night, the entire seven lights of the Kinara are lighted.

The celebration ends with a prayer and reciting of the word HARAMBEE, a Swahili word meaning "Let's all pull together."

I hope this holiday season will bring good health, happiness, and prosperity to carry you and yours throughout the coming new year.

[Hazel Rosetta Smith is a journalist, playwright, and artistic director for Help Somebody Theatrical Ministries (HSTM) and Hazel Rosetta Speaks! (HRS). Former Managing Editor of the New York Beacon News and current columnist of Harlem Community News, Inc. C

## D.C. Attorney General sues Proud Boys, Oath Keepers over Jan. 6 riot

Philadelphiaobserver.com

Almost a year later, the Capitol Insurrection Saga continues with a new lawsuit filed by the D.C. attorney general against the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers and their leaders for conspiring to "terrorize" the US Capitol on Jan. 6.

The complaint filed in federal court Tuesday, according to CNN, accuses 31 members of the two far-right groups, along with their leaders Henry "Enrique" Tarrío and Stewart Rhodes, of orchestrating "a coordinated act of domestic terrorism." Proud Boys leader Tarrío is currently serving a five month sentence for the burning of a Black

Lives Matter banner stolen from the historic Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C.

The suit seeks to hold the rioters liable for millions of dollars spent on dispatching Metropolitan Police officers to the Capitol, treating the more than 140 officers who were injured in the attack, and their medical leave.

"In the complaint, we specifically allege that these vigilantes, insurrectionists and masters of a lawless mob conspired against the District of Columbia, its law enforcement officers and residents by planning, promoting and participating in the violent attack on the United States Capitol," AG Karl Racine said, according to NPR.





One Republican and all Democrats in the House voted to approve the hike, which passed in the chamber by a 221-209 vote.

## Congress passes measure to raise debt ceiling, avoiding government default

By Stacy M. Brown,  
NNPA Newswire Senior  
National Correspondent @  
StacyBrownMedia

Congress has approved legislation to raise the debt ceiling by \$2.5 trillion, a move that preempts any threat of a federal default until at least 2023.

The federal government has never defaulted on debt payments.

One Republican and all Democrats in the House voted to approve the hike, which passed in the chamber by a 221-209 vote.

In the Senate, the measure passed strictly along party lines with a final vote tally of 50-49.

President Joe Biden expects to immediately sign the bill, which gained traction only after using a so-called special pathway that allowed for a simple majority vote.

Lawmakers had to use the special pathway before the middle of January, or it could have faced a filibuster and other hurdles that would have allowed Republicans to block the measure.

"The debt limit amount has been modified 98 times since 1945, including for increases and suspensions. It was necessary to modify it once again to maintain a healthy economy, as well as our country's reputation as a trustworthy borrower," Texas Democratic Congressman Al Green stated.

"At stake were the livelihoods of working families, who would have had to suffer drastically higher bor-

rowing costs for financial obligations such as mortgages, student loans, credit card bills, and car loans," Congressman Green remarked.

"Now more than ever is the time to strengthen the American economy, not make decisions that will cripple it. Moreover, emerging technologies and geopolitical forces demand our nation's stability and preparedness so we can overcome any challenges that may head our way."

Using the special pathway to pass the debt ceiling bill also raised questions about creating exceptions to the filibuster to push through significant voting rights legislation and President Biden's Build Back Better bill.

Grassroots leaders of the West Virginia Poor People's Campaign marched in a picket line outside Joe Manchin's office in Washington, D.C., demanding that their senator meet with them about his refusal to support Build Back Better and voting rights protections.

Sen. Manchin (D-WV) has refused any changes to the filibuster and effectively has blocked critical legislation that the President and most of Manchin's constituents wish to see passage.

On Tuesday, December 14, the Poor People's Campaign demanded answers from the senator.

"Everybody knows ours is one of the poorest states in the country. So, it's a shame that the senior senator, a Democrat, cannot support his state and the people in

his state," said Stewart Acuff from Jefferson County, West Virginia.

The state leaders marched in a picket line outside the Hart Building, the location of Sen. Manchin's office. After several people spoke, police officers warned that their voices were too loud, so they continued with the silent picketing.

"We're here today because we know that Sen. Manchin not only lied to the nation," Bishop William J. Barber II, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, explained.

"He not only lied to West Virginians. He lied to the nation," Bishop Barber said. "And I'm using that word intentionally because it's provable. And his inaction and his lies about scarcity – he's saying he's taking these positions because we don't have enough – that's a lie."

The Bishop called Manchin's action a "form of political violence against the 140 million poor and low-wealth people in this country and especially to people who have suffered during COVID, regardless of their color or their geography."

"He has engaged in a form of political policy violence. As a result, people will stay sick, people will die, people will not be able to recover," Bishop Barber continued.

"He also never asks these questions about scarcity when it comes to the military or corporate America. He's never seen a corporate tax break he didn't want to pass or a military budget he wouldn't fund."

## Civil rights pioneer Claudette Colvin's arrest record expunged 66 years after she refused to give up her seat to a White woman in Montgomery

Philadelphiaobserver.com

Claudette Colvin no longer has a criminal record stemming from her 1955 arrest in Montgomery, Alabama.

"My name was cleared. I'm no longer a juvenile delinquent at the age of 82," were Colvin's proud words almost three months after she and her legal team sought to have her record expunged. Alabama Juvenile Court Judge Calvin L. Williams approved the request that was made public on Dec. 16.

Sixty-six years ago a then 15-year-old Colvin was seated in the Black section of a bus when a white woman boarded seeking a seat in the same section. Colvin refused to move seats — at the time Black passengers were only allowed to sit behind white passengers, even when in their designated section.

"They had to sit behind the white person to show that they were superior and the colored people was inferior," Colvin explained to "CBS Mornings."

Her refusal was simple. Colvin said she "could not move because history had be glued down to the

seat," as she described the feeling of Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth each placing a hand on her shoulders during the ordeal.

As a result of her defiance she was removed from the bus by police, arrested, charged and convicted with felony account of assault on an officer — for allegedly kicking and clawing at an arresting officer — as well as two counts of violating the city's segregation ordinances which were later overturned.

She also faced what she's called a lifetime parole sentence when the courts failed to notify her of its end date.

Colvin has said the ordeal "terrorized" her family throughout the years, and that an expunged record would allow them all to finally move forward. Judge Williams said approving the expungement request was the least he could do to apologize for the injustice that had been her reality for decades.

"When she did this in 1955, there were no African-American judges in Montgomery. And now, I'm one of several African American judges in Montgomery," said Williams.



#DadJokesRule

fatherhood.gov

# Time to lower telephone rates to call prisoners in America

## Opinion

**Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.,  
President and CEO, National  
Newspaper Publisher  
Publishers Association**



**D**isproportionate mass incarceration of people of color in America continues. The calls for prison reform include proposals to lower telephone rates for prisons throughout the United States. This would benefit African Americans and other communities of color who have family members currently incarcerated.

Companies that provide communications services to prisons and jails have long drawn criticism for charging high prices for phone calls and emails between inmates and their families and friends. I've previously written about one such company – Securus Technologies – which in January 2020 did something rarely seen in corporate America, acknowledging past failures and making specific commitments to do better.

So, what has the company done over the last year to deliver on its promises?

They've brought in a number of outside advisors, including attorney and entrepreneur Yusef Jackson, who earlier this year joined the executive team of Aventiv, Securus' parent company. Aventiv announced in April 2021 that Jackson, the son of Rainbow/PUSH founder The Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, would be helping with the lowering of the price of calls and other services for the incarcerated as Aventiv worked to change some of its business practices and respond to criticism of the industry.

The company also says they have renegotiated contracts with more than 100 correctional facilities to lower the cost of calls, and over 50% of their calls now cost less than \$1. During the pandemic they also provided free calls, emails, and video chats – more than 95 million in total.

According to Aventiv CEO Dave Abel, the next big step in their effort to lower costs is expanding a program that lets friends and family of the incarcerated subscribe to a monthly call package that charges a flat rate as an alternative to paying by the minute for talk time. Securus announced a pilot program last year, which has since expanded to nine facilities across the U.S.

Across nine of the prison facilities, more than one third of calls have been made under the subscription plan, and the plan has reduced the per-minute cost of calls by over 50 percent, according to data shared by Securus. The company's data also showed that under the subscription plan, users utilized 75 percent of the maximum call time afforded by facilities, reflecting a rise of 15 percent compared to per-minute calls.

And in an initial customer survey, 80 percent of subscribers said they felt the service was easier to use, and 70 percent would recommend a subscription plan to family and friends.

Securus is now working to expand the program across all its facilities, but would require approval

from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which currently only allows per-minute phone plans. Securus has petitioned for a waiver that would exempt the pilot subscription plan from the FCC's rulemaking on per-minute call requirements, allowing them to provide subscriptions in jails and prisons in all 50 states.

This could ultimately have a big impact: there are over 2 million incarcerated Americans in thousands of facilities across the country.

"Now that we have seen the positive impact of these subscription plans, we know we need to make them available to as many people as possible," said Abel. "We're in the process of working with the FCC to modernize the regulation to allow for this type of cost saving program, while ensuring there are still strong consumer protections in place."

Some prison reform advocates and critics, however, have still questioned Securus' intentions with the subscription.

Anything Securus does "is designed to ... gouge the consumer and maximize their profits," Human Rights Defense Center Executive Director Paul Wright said, according to Communications Daily. Others have criticized the level of detail offered by Securus with Prison Policy Initiative General Counsel Stephen Raheer saying that the company's petition to the FCC "doesn't suggest that Securus is serious about doing that."

Abel, however, says the company has provided extensive detail to the FCC, and argues that any apprehensions about the program are misguided.

"We began this program as a response to specific requests we heard from family and friends of incarcerated Americans," he said. "Now that we have the data showing us that this is something the community values, we believe that we have a duty to expand these services."

While awaiting further instruction from the FCC, Abel said the company is continuing to look for other ways to help connect the incarcerated community to the outside world.

"Those who are incarcerated deserve affordable access to the life-changing technology that the rest of us enjoy," he said. "Our goal is to put a tablet in the hands of every incarcerated individual we serve."

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. is President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and Executive Producer/Host of The Chavis Chronicles (TCC) on PBS TV Stations across the nation and can be reached at dr.bchavis@nnpa.org.



## First anti-critical race theory complaint in Tennessee targets Martin Luther King, Jr. book

**By Lauren Victoria Burke,  
NNPA Newswire Contributor**

**A** group called Moms for Liberty has filed an 11-page complaint alleging that the book "Martin Luther King Jr and the March on Washington" is "anti-American."

The complaint is the first to be filed under Tennessee's new anti-critical race theory law. The new law specifically targeted a book about Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement, calling it "anti-American."

The group Moms for Liberty is in Williamson County, Tennessee. The complaint would forbid the book to be used by teachers at Williamson County Schools, a district south of Nashville, Tenn.

The Tennessee Department of Education refused the request. The department declined to investigate the allegations because the lessons referenced were not taught during the 2020-21 academic school year.

demic school year.

"The relentless nature of how these divisive stories are taught, the lack of historical context and difference in perspective, and the manipulative pedagogy all work together to amplify and sow feelings of resentment, shame of one's skin color, and/or fear," the complaint from Moms for Liberty read.

Moms for Liberty protested a photo of segregated water fountains and images showing Black children being blasted with water by firefighters during the civil rights movement.

Though "critical race theory" is a part of college level curriculum at law schools, the term has become a wide-ranging catch all in conservative circles. Many have loosely defined to mean any curriculum that includes efforts towards greater diversity and equity as well as discussions about how exclusion and bigotry has played a role in the shaping of American history and present-day events.

"Critical race theory" gained energy as an answer to the publication of the New York Times' 1619 Project by journalist Nicole Hannah Jones. That project greatly centered the history of African Americans and the impact of slavery in American history, politics and culture.

On November 19 in New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Department of Education made it easier for citizens to help enforce a law passed during the summer that restricts how teachers can discuss race with an online questionnaire to prompt investigations.

The state chapter of Moms for Liberty added a cash reward of \$500 for those reporting violations.

*Lauren Victoria Burke is an independent journalist and the host of the podcast BURKEFILE.*

*She is a political analyst who appears regularly on #RoilandMartinUnfiltered. She may be contacted at LBurke007@gmail.com and on twitter at @LVBurke*

## Brooklyn artist Elise Swopes earns over \$200,000 selling NFTs

**Philadelphiaobserver.com**

**A** Brooklyn-based photographer and graphic designer has earned over \$200,000 in less than a year selling her art as NFTs, or nonfungible tokens.

As reported by CNBC, Elise Swopes "lists her art on NFT marketplaces like SuperRare and Nifty Gateway. Her pieces depict animations of cityscapes that she photographs. She frequently adds elements of nature that she designs digitally to her photographs," the outlet writes.

"When I make a sale, I make sure that I'm giving back to the community that's giving back as well," Swopes says, "because there's a cycle [of support]."

"But I have also found quite a bit of difficulty with the [NFT] community as far as representation of people of color and Black women specifically," she says.

"There's obviously a ton of advance opportunity for white men, and we've seen them



continuously get more sales. Women have barely made any sales in the last 21 months," Swopes says.

When Swopes promotes diversity and inclusivity online, she says it "doesn't always garner the best support with everybody."

"They find it uncomfortable to be uncomfortable and hold them-

selves accountable with wealth distribution, especially with how much money a lot of these people have made. So, I find myself having a lot of responsibility as not just a woman, but a woman of color in this community, who understands perspective and can put myself in different people's shoes," she says.

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# Editorial - Opinion

## FCC should adopt rule change empowering minority-owned media businesses



By Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis

—We commend the Biden-Harris Administration thus far in its first year striving to move the nation forward on equity and diversity matters even during the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the epidemic of partisan politicization of issues and supporting public policies that will improve and enhance the quality of life for all Americans. On this issue of media reform, we hope and resolutely call for the FCC in 2022 to be aligned fully with the official stated commitments of the Biden-Harris Administration to ensure fairness, equity and diversity.

Whenever I have had the responsibility during the past six decades to weigh in on a vital civil rights issue on behalf of Black America and other communities

of color throughout the United States, I have not hesitated to speak out. Now is the time to publicly address the urgent issue of equal access, diversity, equity, and inclusion of Black-owned media in our nation's communications industry.

In this era of the global digitalization of media and other high technological innovations in the communications industry, Black-owned and other minority-owned media cannot afford to be denied access to the rapidly evolving industry innovations.

The issue today is that Black-owned radio stations and other minority-owned media businesses should be permitted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to compete fairly and equitably with large television and cable stations that geotarget audiences across America.

The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) has a strategic alliance with the National Organization of Black-Owned Broadcasters (NABOB) and with the Multicultural Media, Telecom & Internet Council (MMTC). We are all working together to ensure that the FCC will approve a rulemaking change that will enable minority-owned radio stations to engage in geotargeting of content to their audiences. This change is neces-

sary because the FCC's antiquated rules, written forty years ago, don't give radio stations the chance to compete in the current media environment.

The FCC has as its mission to regulate "interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories." The proposed rulemaking change will substantially increase the access to geotargeting by minority-owned radio stations and other minority-owned businesses that is so vital and effective in today's global and national media marketplace.

This is another crucial national civil rights issue. This is an issue of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Last month I wrote to the FCC to stress this point. I emphasized, "I have spent much of my career as a civil rights leader focused on ensuring that technological developments like the one at issue in this proceeding, lift all of America, and not just some of us. Too often, I have seen the benefits of technological development accrue to the privileged, with little or no benefit to disadvantaged communities, including some with which I work on a daily basis."

I concluded in the letter to the FCC: "Geotargeting technology would give minority-owned

broadcasters an enhanced ability to compete with the larger station groups...The technology would enable them to better serve their communities with localized content. In addition, for those broadcasters that choose to use this technology, since it is voluntary, they can give minority-owned businesses an affordable outlet for their messages. In short, I now believe that this technology is beneficial to minority communities, including radio broadcasters, small businesses, and the public they serve."

We recall that President Joe Biden announced, "On my first day in office, I signed Executive Order 13985 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government), which established that affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of our Government."

We commend the Biden-Harris Administration thus far in its first year striving to move the nation forward on equity and diversity matters even during the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the epidemic of partisan politicization of issues and supporting public policies that will improve and enhance the quality of life for all Americans. On this

issue of media reform, we hope and resolutely call for the FCC in 2022 to be aligned fully with the official stated commitments of the Biden-Harris Administration to ensure fairness, equity and diversity.

The proposed FCC rulemaking change is also supported overwhelmingly by all of the major national civil rights organizations including the NAACP, National Urban League, National Action Network, National Council of Negro Women, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, National Congress of Black Women, Hispanic Federation, National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators, U.S Black Chambers, and many more.

The time for the FCC to act and to approve the proposed rulemaking change submitted is now because it will help to empower all minority-owned radio and other media businesses.

Millions of Americans, particularly from underserved communities, deserve and have a fundamental civil right to have access and to be included.

*Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr, is President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and Executive Producer/Host of The Chavis Chronicles (TCC) on PBS Television Stations across the nation. He can be reached at dr.bchavis@nnpa.o*





## Meet Andre Douglas, NASA's only Black 2021 astronaut candidate class member

Philadelphiaobserver.com

**N**ASA's 2021 astronaut candidate class has been announced, and among the ten candidates chosen is Andre Douglas, who has had his sights set on the stars for as long as he can remember.

The prestigious class of 2021 marks NASA's first astronaut class in four years, selected from more than 12,000 applicants who used an online assessment tool and, for the first time ever, were required to hold a master's degree in a STEM field.

NASA Astronaut Candidate Andre Douglas Credits: NASA

The group will "represent the United States and work for humanity's benefit in space," which includes the possibility of com-

pleting a moon mission, or beyond, in the near future.

"Today we welcome 10 new explorers, 10 members of the Artemis generation, NASA's 2021 astronaut candidate class," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said when introducing the class on Monday, Dec. 6. "Alone, each candidate has the right stuff, but together they represent the creed of our country: E pluribus unum – out of many, one."

The ten candidates, including Douglas, will train for two years beginning January 2022 in lessons including operating and maintaining the International Space Station's complex systems, training for spacewalks, developing complex robotics skills, safely operating a T-38 training jet, and Russian language skills.

The 35-year-old Douglas recalls being enthralled by space since the age of 7 and went on to obtain his bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical engineering from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and the University of Michigan.

He also earned a master's in naval architecture and marine engineering from the University of Michigan, a master's degree in electrical and computer engineering from Johns Hopkins University, and a doctorate in systems engineering from the George Washington University.

"There's a possibility of humans becoming an interplanetary species, and I want to be a part of that effort," Douglas told The Virginian-Pilot newspaper.

## 28-year-old Patricia Kingori becomes youngest Black woman to receive tenure at Oxford University

Philadelphiaobserver.com

**P**atricia Kingori, 28, who is originally from Kenya, has been awarded a full professorship at the University of Oxford, making her the youngest Black woman to receive tenure so far in the institution's history.

Kingori is a sociologist who studies the everyday ethical experiences of frontline workers in a global scope. She was appointed at the Wellcome Centre for Ethics and Humanities at Oxford "in recognition of the quality and global impact of her research on academia and beyond," the university stated, according to Quartz Africa.

For 8 years, Kingori has been at Oxford where she made several achievements. She had acquired competitive funding grants, written outstanding publications, supervised several DPhil candidates, and taught hundreds of students.

Prior to that, Kingori's journey wasn't really smooth. She had just given birth to her first child when



she received a Wellcome Doctoral Studentship to fund her Ph.D. with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

She had to file for maternity leave for a year before relocating to Kenya with her family to do fieldwork. At that time, Kenya was facing civil unrest and Kingori, who was pregnant with her second, had to leave the country. She was able to return after 10 months to finalize her data collection with the help of 2 new supervisors.

## Sharon Bowen named first Black woman Chair of NYSE Board

Philadelphiaobserver.com

**H**er appointment follows senior leadership changes across the company

Sharon Bowen has made history as the newly named board chair of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).

Bowen, a finance and securities lawyer, is the first Black woman to be appointed to the position. She has been a member of the board of directors of Intercontinental Exchange, Inc. (ICE), NYSE's parent company, since December 2017.

ICE announced earlier this month that it named Bowen as the next chair of the New York Stock Exchange. Her appointment follows senior leadership changes across the company under CEO Jeff Sprecher.

Sharon Bowen "When a handful of colleagues and I founded ICE over twenty years ago, our simple idea was to make trading more automated and transparent, and that purpose anchored our original leaders as we grew exponentially, and their duties grew along with the firm,"

Sprecher, who founded and chairs Intercontinental Exchange, said in a Dec. 6 letter. "Now with a



market capitalization of over \$70 billion, and a substantially transformed company from our origins, it's more important than ever to challenge our leaders to take on new tasks and acquire new skills as we serve a new and ever-evolving marketplace."

The leadership changes for 2022 also include Lynn Martin, current president of ICE Fixed Income and Data Services, who will replace Stacey Cunningham as the next president of the NYSE. Cunningham, who was the first woman in that role, is moving on to a position on the NYSE board of directors.






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# On the scene

## All eyes were on Zendaya at the 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' Premiere

By Audrey J. Bernard

Marvel Cinematic Universe fans are over the moon in love with the latest

"Spider-Man: No Way Home" installment which was released nationwide December 17, 2021. All eyes were on Zendaya at the red carpet premiere at the Regen-

cy Village Theater in Los Angeles December 13, 2021. The amazing adventure is breaking all box office records and Zendaya is breaking all hearts. The beautiful star of

"Spider-Man" got all caught up in her own web wearing a plunging, custom Valentino gown covered with a high leg slit and intricate beading that mirrored the look

of spiderwebs. The blockbuster film was released by Columbia Pictures in theaters nationwide on December 17, 2021. (Photos by Getty Images)



Jacob Batalon, Zendaya, and Tom Holland at the 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' LA premiere



Benedict Wong, Benedict Cumberbatch, Jacob Batalon, Zendaya, and Tom Holland at the premiere



Paula Newsome plays a head faculty member at MIT, the college Peter is trying to get into



Smooove, who plays Parker's teacher, Julius Dell, showed up on the carpet with his wife Shahidah Omar



Zendaya wore a web dress with a matching mask on the carpet



Tom Holland & Zendaya



Producer Amy Pascal oversees the 'Spider-Man' franchise for Sony



Producer Kevin Feige oversees all of Marvel Studios



Shameik Moore, who is the voice of Miles Morales in the 'Spider-Verse' franchise



Hannibal Buress is back to play gym teacher Coach Wilson



Jamie Foxx reprises the role of Electro, the villain he plays in 2014's 'The Amazing Spider-Man 2'



Zendaya plays MJ in the franchise, the love interest of Holland's Peter Parker



Marisa Tomei once more plays Aunt May



Jon Watts is the director of 'Spider Man: No Way Home.' He also directed the previous two 'Spider Man' movies

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# Culture

## Flavor Flav 'super grateful to be alive' after nearly being crushed by boulder

Philadelphiaobserver.com

**P**ublic Enemy mainstay and "Flavor of Love" star told TMZ, "God is good," and said he "came very close to death."

Flavor Flav is recovering after a recent traumatic incident when a boulder rolled down a cliffside and landed on his car.

Born William Drayton, Jr, the 62-year-old Public Enemy mainstay and former reality star could have been killed by the massive rock had it landed a few feet in another direction, according to the report from TMZ.

It struck the right side of his white Audi Tuesday, causing the rapper to momentarily lose control as he drove from Las Vegas to Los Angeles. Rainstorms had loosened the rock in La Tuna Canyon, which then tumbled down a cliff.

Ultimately, he was able to pull over to the side of the road.

"God is good," Flav told TMZ not

long after the accident, which another shocked driver had witnessed before pulling over to check on him. Flav said he was shaken up mentally, and "came very close to death, but is super grateful to be alive."

Associates were able to help him get AAA to the scene, and his car was deemed totaled.

An original member of the legendary rap group Public Enemy, Flav is perhaps equally known now for Flavor of Love, a VH1 reality series that debuted in 2006 and lasted two seasons. It was spawned from Strange Love, which, in 2005, had chronicled his unsuccessful love affair with actress Brigitte Nielsen. On Flavor of Love, 20 women vied for Flav's affections and the camera's attention. That show launched several spin-offs — including a few for its sauciest first-season contestant, Tiffany "New York" Pollard — as well as Flavor of Love Girls: Charm School.

Flav was accused of domes-



tic violence in an incident that occurred in October. Per Rolling Stone, he had previously been arrested in Henderson, an affluent suburb of Las Vegas, on domestic

violence charges for grabbing a woman who lives in that household and poking his finger in her nose and face.

Those charges were dropped

on Dec. 8 after he pleaded guilty to a lesser charge — the non-violent act of grabbing a cell phone during the incident, which is a misdemeanor.



## UCLA soccer star Reilyn Turner becomes Nike's 1st NCAA sponsored athlete

Philadelphiaobserver.com

**W**ith the NCAA finally allowing student-athletes to cash in on their names, images, and likenesses as of July of this year, Nike is officially staking its claim with the announcement that it's partnering with its first college athlete: UCLA soccer star Reilyn Turner.

While the terms of the sophomore forward's deal with Nike have not been disclosed, she was last year's Pac-12 Freshman of the Year and has blossomed into a premier scorer for the Bruins, racking up 10 goals this season—including a hat trick against Loyola Marymount in September.

Per a press release provided to The Root, any deals that Nike makes with college student-ath-

letes "will include an element that connects back to their local communities." As such, Turner and the sports apparel juggernaut will "focus on working with nonprofit partners [in Los Angeles] that help create an active and equitable future for youth" in order to continue to demonstrate how sports have the power to inspire and create change.

"As a Black woman and Mexican American, I think about those who have paved the way for me and how they used their platforms to create so much change, even beyond sport," Turner said in a statement. "I hope to be a role model for those around me and those after me, and I'm so excited to be a part of what Nike is bringing to the future of women's sport."

## It's over: Kim Kardashian files to be legally single despite Kanye wanting her back

Philadelphiaobserver.com

**I**t looks like Kim Kardashian is over it. The reality star has filed paperwork to become legally single, even after Kanye West used his massive platform to beg for her to come back, repeatedly.

Should anyone be surprised considering she was the one who filed for divorce, though? And you know it's real since she's reportedly going to formally drop "West" from her name.

Reports TMZ:

Kim filed legal docs Friday ... which if signed off by a judge, will

make her officially single. She's essentially asking the judge to separate issues of child custody and property from marital status. Kim is also asking that her maiden name be restored ... aka, drop the "West."

It's interesting ... Kim's lawyer is disso queen Laura Wasser, who has frequently made similar moves with other celebrity clients, including Dr. Dre and Kelly Clarkson — separating marital status from other issues. It allows people to get on with their lives ... settling other issues for a different day.

What's especially interesting

... just hours before Kim filed for a change in her marital status, Ye went on stage at the L.A. Memorial Coliseum, and as he sang "Runaway" he ad-libbed over vocals at the end of the song to say, "Run back to me ... more specifically, Kimberly."

While Kim and Kanye may have been spotted together about town and are clearly keeping things cordial for the sake of their kids, signs still point to her moving on. At least romantically, since she's been photographed kicking it with Saturday Night Live actor Pete Davidson.



# International

## Brooklyn billionaire, buyer of looted antiquities worth millions, walks free in gov't deal

(GIN) –

**A** golden bowl, a ceremonial libations vessel, a marble statue and a small chest for human remains were among the 180 reputedly stolen antiquities that decorated the homes and offices of a Brooklyn billionaire whose collection of the ancient artifacts was valued at \$80 million.

Under a deal struck by Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr., a multi-year, multinational investigation of artifacts in the possession of hedge fund pioneer Michael Steinhardt will not be prosecuted.

Steinhardt is one of the world's most prolific buyers of ancient art and a dedicated supporter of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which named one of its Greek art galleries the Judy and Michael H. Steinhardt Gallery.

When the government seized at least nine items from his private collection, including a terra-cotta flask from the fourth century B.C. and Proto-Corinthian figures from the seventh century B.C. Forbes magazine carried a piece on the scandal titled "Ancient History for Sale."

According to the search warrants, the pieces were purchased within the last 12 years for a total cost of \$1.1 million and there is a possible charge of possession of stolen property, noted the Columbia University Journal of Law and the Arts.

The seized pieces were looted and illegally smuggled out of 11 countries, trafficked by 12 criminal smuggling networks, and lacked verifiable provenance prior to appearing on the international art market.

Prosecutors said Mr. Steinhardt had owned and traded more than 1,000 antiquities since 1987,

and his art collection was valued at about \$200 million.

"For decades, Michael Steinhardt displayed a rapacious appetite for plundered artifacts without concern for the legality of his actions, the legitimacy of the pieces he bought and sold, or the grievous cultural damage he wrought across the globe," District Attorney Vance was quoted to say in a press release from his office. (Steinhardt's) pursuit of 'new' additions to showcase and sell knew no geographic or moral boundaries, as reflected in the sprawling underworld of antiquities traffickers, crime bosses, money launderers, and tomb raiders he relied upon to expand his collection."

Joint investigations were conducted with authorities in Libya, Bulgaria, Egypt, Greece, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

The investigation began in 2017 over a two thousand year old Bull's Head stolen from Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War. It was determined that Steinhardt had purchased the multimillion-dollar statue then subsequently loaned it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Following an order from New York prosecutors, the Met surrendered the bull's head, which is believed to be a stolen item.

Vance continued: "Even though Steinhardt's decades-long indifference to the rights of peoples to their own sacred treasures is appalling, the interests of justice prior to indictment and trial favor a resolution that ensures that a substantial portion of the damage to world cultural heritage will be undone, once and for all."

"This agreement establishes that Steinhardt will be subject to an unprecedented lifetime



ban on acquiring antiquities," he concluded.

Steinhardt's lawyer praised the decision that ended with no charges against Steinhardt for items bought from "traffickers and tomb raiders" as long as Steinhardt returned them "expeditiously" to their native countries.

Mr. Steinhardt, 81, is a major contributor to New York University and to numerous charitable groups. There is a Steinhardt conservatory at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and a Steinhardt Gallery at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property has been on top of the radar screen of UNESCO, a U.N. cultural organization which condemned an upsurge in the looting of archeological sites and the dismantling of ancient monuments as far back as 1930.

Their initiatives picked up steam this year at an international conference on the illicit trade in cultural goods estimated to be worth nearly \$10 billion each year.

African countries which have sought the return of objects looted during the colonial era are Ethiopia, Benin, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Holland and Nigeria. w/pix of vase taken from Steinhardt collection

## Longest dry spell in memory takes toll on Kenya's nomads

(GIN) –

**K**enya's crucial rainy season came up short this year with only a few showers—wiping out livestock and putting millions of people at risk.

Photographs from Wajir County, near the border with Somalia, show dying and dead cows in a desert dotted with thorn trees. The longest dry spell in memory is pushing pastoralists nearer to starvation. "If they die," said one herder referring to his camels, "we all die."

"The rains have stopped now, so there is no hope of any other rain unless a miracle happens," says Yusuf Abdi Gedi, Wajir's local official for livestock and agriculture.

Since September, much of Kenya's north has received less than 30 percent of normal rainfall – the worst short-rain season recorded in decades, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network. The lack of rainfall has wiped out pastures and exacerbated food and water shortages.

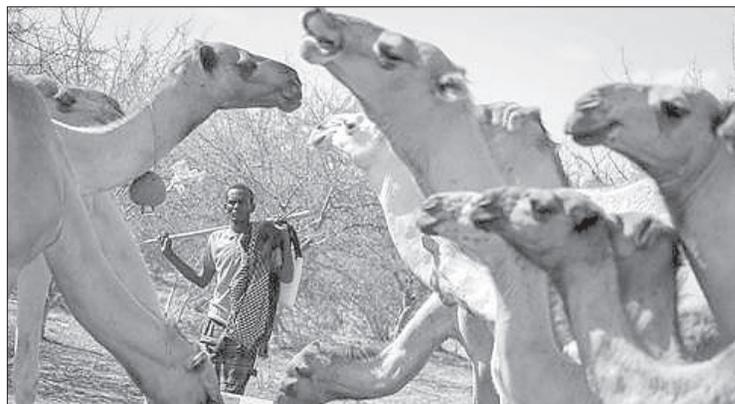
The Wajir County administration is struggling to cope with the scale of the emergency and has hired 40 extra trucks on top of 18 of their own to distribute water. However, community leaders in Dahabley and Eyrib say they have not received government aid. "We have about 400 villages and we were not able to reach all of them," says Abdi Gedi.

"We need three [trucks] a week for the 350 households in Dujis," says Muhumed Noor, chair of Dujis village in Garissa, Wajir's neighboring county. Noor. But with no healthy livestock to sell, the community is struggling to pay the drivers, who refuse to leave without payment.

Wajir has not received any extra funds from the national government since the president, Uhuru Kenyatta, declared a national disaster in September, according to the Wajir local official. "That was supposed to 'trigger support from the international community,'" he says, adding that it had not happened to the extent needed.

The drought has been mounting for years but until the crisis peaks, news organizations and the international donors have their attention elsewhere.

Deterioration in the region's food security situation has resulted in an estimated 2.1 million people facing acute food insecurity and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in the next six months. Compared to the short rains' assessment, this is an increase from 1.4 million found to be acutely food insecure. The deterioration is attributed to the dismal performance of the March-May Long rains season, climate change compounded by the effects of Covid 19 and the poor performance of the previous short rains season. w/pix of herder and camels.



# Changemakers

## 1091 Pictures Presents Film Festival Favorite *Maya & Her Lover*

By Audrey J. Bernard

From 1091 Pictures comes the official trailer for *Maya & Her Lover* that received a nomination for the Fan Favorite Award following this year's American Black Film Festival. The honor comes as writer/director Nicole Sylvester closes the year having screened her debut feature film at some of the most coveted festivals across the country. The film was released digitally on December 7, 2021 and is available for pre-order [HERE](#).

*Maya & Her Lover* offers a perspective on love and romance that is rarely told: the tale of a woman who daringly goes against everything she believes about love, in search and favor of herself. As Sylvester's new feature opens, the eponymous lead character—played by Ashanti J'Aria—is a 39-year-old woman stifled by complicated memories of her overbearing father and on the verge of becoming a recluse, begins a sexual relationship with a much younger man who at the ripe age of 22 is unsuccessfully attempting to overcome his past. While he serves as the catalyst for Maya's evolution, her love interest Kaseem (Shomari Love) is never quite the center of the story the way she is. As the title implies, this is squarely Maya's story, something we don't often see in Black romances. In that regard, *Maya & Her Lover* is a coming of age story of sorts,

crafted for a generation in constant redefinition of the rules.

"Sharing '*Maya & Her Lover*' with the world is a dream come true. I've spent over a decade in the industry helping others achieve their dreams and this was the opportunity for me to realize my dream of directing. With a shoe-string budget, I was able to bring my own personal narrative to the screen. We gathered a great cast, crew and production team—who were all willing to support my vision by spending 12 long, hot days in Brooklyn to bring '*Maya & Her Lover*' to life. It's been a journey and this release feels like a celebration," said Nicole Sylvester.

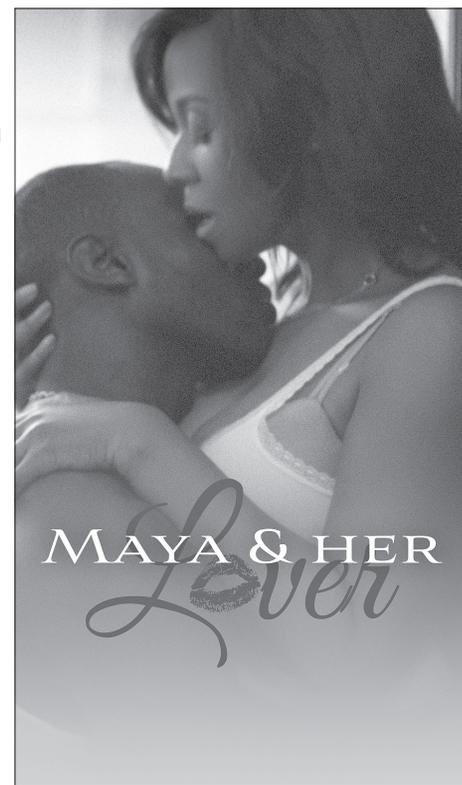
"Nicole is the definition of a success story and her work ethic is evident in the quality of the projects she directs," said Greg Maurice, 1091 Pictures Director of Acquisitions. "As a former intern and assistant who has worked on several mainstream TV shows and films, she has put in the work to build her experience and vision. The result of her tenacity is the release of her first feature film, '*Maya & Her Lover*.' Her film highlights the topic of love through the perspective of a Black woman, a narrative that is uncommon in most films. Though her film has been featured in several festivals, I'm confident this is only the beginning of Nicole's success as a Director."

In addition to the ABFF, *Maya & Her*

*Lover* has been selected and shown at the Pan-African Film Festival, the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival and the African Diaspora International Film Festival. The film was most recently screened at the Black Harvest Film Festival at the Siskel Film Center in Chicago.

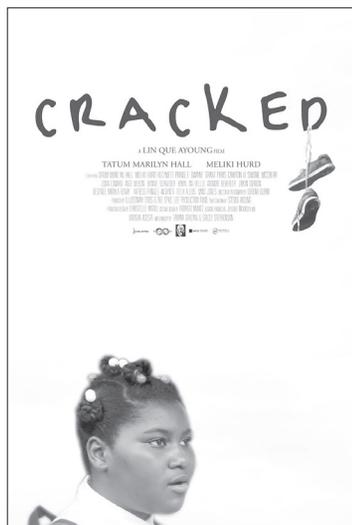
### About 1091 Pictures

1091 Pictures is a modern distribution partner for independent film and series owners based in New York and Los Angeles, offering content licensing and delivery to over 100 destinations in over 100 countries. The company represents over 500 filmmakers and distributors and has amassed over 150 award nominations, including two Academy Award nominations, an Emmy nomination, a Grammy Award for Best Music Film, and over a dozen Spirit Awards nominations. Leading the way in digital distribution, 1091 Pictures helps its clients navigate the streaming landscape, providing marketing resources and valuable insights through partnering with its parent company's new technology platform in development, Streamwise. 1091 Pictures' diverse slate of releases include NYT Critics Picks such as *The Ghost of Peter Sellers* and Grammy-Award Winner Linda Ronstadt: *The Sound of My Voice*, riveting sports stories such as *A Kid From Coney Island* executive produced by Kevin Durant and featuring Stephon Marbury and Red Bull's *The Dawn*



Wall, audience favorites such as *The Last Blockbuster*, groundbreaking documentaries such as *Close Encounters of The Fifth Kind* and *The Phenomenon*, which reveal the latest intelligence on UFOs, and indie film hits such as Academy Award® Winner Taika Waititi's *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, Spirit Awards-winner Christine, and the knockout comedy *The Overnight* starring Adam Scott, Taylor Schilling and Jason Schwartzman. [1091pictures.com](http://1091pictures.com)

## Lin Que Ayoung winner of HBO Short Film Award for '*Cracked*'



*Cracked* official poster

Lin Que Ayoung was one of the distinguished honorees at this year's Warner Media/HBO Short Film Competition at Harlem, New York's historic Schomburg Library for Research in Black Culture, on Friday, November 19, 2021. Lin Que was one of five HBO Short Film Competition winners who attended a star-studded red carpet screening, talkback, and reception. This special competition celebrates fledgling filmmakers in accordance with HBO's long-standing partnership and commitment to further the film careers of people of color, the creativity of the individual artists, and HBO's continued commitment to showcasing and providing funding for artists in the film industry to hone their craft and

share their visions with the world. As a winner of this year's Warner Media/HBO Short Film Competition Lin Que was presented with a \$5,000 scholarship to further her filmatic career.

Lin Que is a graduate of New York University's (NYU) Graduate Film Program with a Master in Fine Arts. A consummate creative, she is a winner of many awards in film and television, most notably the Spike Lee Production Fund Grant which helped to fund her award winning film for this festival, *Cracked*, which explores a young girl's first journey in love and compels her to face a traumatic past. *Cracked* had its world premiere at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival, and has been selected to appear at other prestigious film festivals including the American Black Film Festival, HollyShorts, Chicago International Film Festival, LA Shorts International Film Festival and many more.

At NYU's 2021 First Run Film Festival, Lin Que's thesis film *Cracked* won the 2nd Prize King Wasserman Award for Best Graduate Film; as well as Craft Awards for Cinematography and Acting. The film's cast and creatives include: Director: Lin Que Ayoung Writer: Lin Que Ayoung Producers: Lin Que Ayoung, The Spike Lee Production Fund (Production Grant) Cast: Tatum Marilyn Hall, Meliki Hurd, Kizzmet Pringle, Dwayne Grant

Lin Que's a two-time winner of the BAFTA-NY Scholarship, the winner of the 2018 New



Warner Media/HBO Winner Lin Que Ayoung (center) is congratulated by *Cracked* Cast & Crew at reception at the Schomburg (L-R) Rashad Frett, Co-Editor; Christelle Matou, Production Designer; Raquel Matos, Lin Que Ayoung's wife; Meliki Hurd, Actor in *Cracked* with his mother Jennifer Dottin (Photo by Louis Boone)

York Women in Film and Television (NYWIFT) Scholarship, and the recipient of NYU's 2018 First Run Film Festival Craft Award for the Directing of her film, *The Dreamer* aka *La Soñadora*. The *Dreamer* was Lin Que's 2nd year

film at Tisch. It was also an Official Selection to HBO's 2019 New York Latino Film Festival. Before starting her 3rd year at NYU, she wrote her first feature-length script, *Flesh*, which was selected for the 2nd round of consideration

for the 2019 Sundance Institute's Feature Film Program Development Track. Her 3rd year film, nowhere, was exclusively distributed by Full Spectrum Features' *Our Right to Gaze: Black Film Identities Collection*.

## The Voice slammed after Wendy Moten loses to trio Girl Named Tom in the finals



Wendy and Blake belt-out AWESOME version of "Just A Fool" during The Voice finale (Photo: Courtesy NBC)

By Ashish Singh

Despite facing flak at the beginning of The Voice season 21, the group called Girl Named Tom emerged as the winners of the singing reality show. Wendy Moten from Team Blake lost the crown to the sibling trio even after being a fan favorite from day one. Girl Named Tom became the very first trio to win the show giving their mentor Kelly Clarkson her fourth win on the renowned singing show.

While many celebrated the win of Girl Named Tom, others took to Twitter to slam the show claiming that Wendy Moten got robbed for real also dubbing the show as "racist." Paris Winningham from Team Blake and Jershika Maple from

Team John were two other favorites who failed to lift the coveted trophy.

Wendy, who is already an established singer, managed to impress all the coaches and the audience with her powerful vocals and the ability to easily pull off high notes. A lot of furious social media users took to Twitter as they dragged the show for being racist and added that they were not going to watch it again. "Girl named a\*\* ain't my winners! Wendy got robbed," said one user as another posted, "The Voice is just looking for drama. Wendy is the true winner."

The next one shared, "Wendy was robbed!! Done with the voice!" as one chimed in, "The Voice is the name of the show, not The Voices!! Wendy was robbed of a win. To-

night I realized this was a wasted season. We got played y'all."

Meanwhile, one asserted, "America got it wrong. Wendy should have won. I'm not watching the voice again." Another irked user shared, "#thevoice voted for the white group over Wendy. Yea' this show is so racist." One individual posted, "The Voice is so racist it's sad. there is no way more ppl voted for ugly a\*\* yts over Wendy."

One person, on similar lines, said, "#wendymoten was robbed the #VoiceFinale is racist!!!!" Another concluded, "If Wendy Moten couldn't even win the voice by being one of the greatest singers ever then I'm convinced literally no Black woman will ever win... racist a\*\* show."



Fans were angry with Wendy's second place title behind trio Girl Named Tom finals win (Photo: Getty Images)

## Tweets from Singer Wendy Moten's loyal fans

By Courtney Ciandella

Fans were angry over finalist Wendy Moten's loss to Girl Named Tom in the season 21 finale, claiming that the show was "fixed." The two-part season finale concluded revealing Wendy's second place title behind the sibling group who was declared the winner. Fans were angry with Wendy's second place title behind Girl Named Tom. The victory marked the first time a group artist won in the show's history. Following the snub, fans of the 56-year-old singer took to social media to voice their frustrations over Wendy's defeat, saying she was "robbed" of the victory.

One viewer tweeted: "Watching this moment made me absolutely SICK for Wendy. Man I can't believe #The Voice." Another fan tweeted "Blake you were robbed. Wendy hands down was the outstanding singer. To not win the voice was a travesty!! Very sorry for her and you. She deserves to be Champion !!@blakeshelton #VoiceFinale"

In response to another fan's tweet, encouraging viewers to vote Team Blake prior to the results airing, one person responded: "I agree



Coach Blake Shelton penned a heartfelt message to Wendy Moten on Instagram following her loss (Photo: Instagram/Blake Shelton)

The Voice was fixed Wendy was the better performer all the way around. I would buy or stream Wendy's music." The comments continued to

roll in on Blake's Instagram page in favor of the knockout performer as he shared a heartfelt message for the star following the episode.

Alongside a photo of the pair embracing and smiling at the camera on set, Blake wrote: "@WendyMoten there are no words

to describe how much I've loved having you on my team! It was a privilege to share the stage with you! #TeamBlake #Voice-Finale" One disappointed fan commented: #robbed. A slew of other fans echoed the statement: "I call BS on the ending!!!!" "She got robbed! Definitely the best voice this year!!" "What just happened? SHOCKED." "Wendy should've won" @wendymoten deserved to win. She is an amazing singer!"

During the first part on the finale, fans threatened to boycott the singing competition show if Wendy did not come out on top. After her rendition of Whitney Houston's "How Will I Know," following by the competition classic "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," Blake had nothing but praise for the Memphis native.

"America, I mean jaw drop," said the God's Country singer. "We've never seen anything like you on this stage in 21 seasons." Fans at home completely agreed with the veteran coach, noting that it would be "crazy" if Wendy didn't win the whole thing. One concerned fan tweeted: "IF AMERICA DIDN'T VOTE WENDY MOTEN TO THE TOP I'M NEVER WATCHING THE VOICE AGAIN Period."

# Flick chat

## “Swan Song” will keep you intrigued until the end

By Dwight Brown  
Guest Scribe

“I love you Cameron Tanner. Always have. Always will.” Most husbands adore their wives’ words of love. Cameron’s (Mahershala Ali, *Moonlight*) ambivalence stems from his secret, painful ordeal. He’s dying and his wife Poppy (Naomie Harris, *Moonlight*) doesn’t know it. Convulsions. Blackouts. Brain disease is draining the life out of him. Poppy has just emerged from months of depression after the death of her brother Andre (Nyasha Hatendi) and the couple is going through a rough patch. He can’t heap more burdens on her or fathom leaving her alone to parent their young son Cory (Dax Rey).

Out of sheer desperation, Cam seeks out a service that can clone him—DNA et al. A genetically engineered replica would integrate into his family, without their knowledge, and support his wife and child long after he’s died. Nothing goes smoothly. The dra/sci-fi premise is set in the future when driverless cars are old hat and technology has made human replication near seamless.

Best Short Film Oscar-winner Benjamin Cleary (Stutterer) builds the characters with three dimensions in a genre that rarely uses more the two. The evocative storyline reveals plot points in a jumbled spread-out fashion. Things are hinted at before being revealed. It’s an alluring puzzlement that grabs then holds your attention.

When Cameron and his doppleganger confront each other’s fears and act out, the film finds its footing. Then, real outward emotions ground the previously sterile storyline and themes of selflessness and making the ultimate sacrifice emerge. It’s enough to make audiences consider if they would do the same if they faced similar circumstances and could get away with it.

The crisp earth colors (art director Michael Diner, *The Revenant*), sharp cinematography (Masanobu Takayanagi, *Hostiles*) and slick and amazing tech tricks (special effects coordinator Tony Lazarowich)



Mahershala Ali (Cameron) and Naomie Harris (Poppy) in “Swan Song”

make everything look real when obviously it’s not. Floating in air checklists, dad and son playing MMA fighter games with little droids on a Zoom conference call, robocars... Production designer Annie Beauchamp (*Moulin Rouge*) along with set decorator Shannon Gottlieb create interiors, exteriors and props that reflect the futuristic times in the most sparse and exquisite ways.

Jay Wadley’s modern touch musical score eschews legato for staccato piano music and is greatly aided by a playlist that includes Frank Ocean crooning “Moon River” in the most spacy and weirdly bewitching way. Only an actor of Ali’s caliber could interpret a character on death’s door with so much grace he makes you feel his sorrow in every frame and understand his apprehensions. Actors playing two characters on screen at the same time is routine. Actors making this kind of deep connection with their alter egos is not. Feelings well up in Cameron and his clone that Ali

passes along to you in the most haunting way.

Harris, as a musical therapist who plays the piano and sings with an enchanting soprano voice,

melts into the Poppy character. Her misery is blinding and her happiness celestial. It’s easy to see why a husband would not want to abandon her. Together, Ali and Harris

magically forge a partnership that is earnest and endearing. Glenn Close as Dr. Scott, leader of the experimental Arra Laboratory, is as nurturing as she is callous. Adam Beach is far more sensitive and caring as Dalton a lab technician.

Providing needed comic relief among the constant strain of sadness is the job of Awkwafina as Kate, a woman in a similar last chapter situation. The mixed feelings of the main character surmise the mixed feelings the audience will have watching a very sobering narrative that brings death to the forefront. In real life the only way you can leave a piece of yourself behind is by passing your spirit along to the ones you know and love. Here, Cameron gets to kick the tires and check under the hood of the look-alike who will keep his persona alive. It’s surreal, poignant and stylish beyond words thanks to Cleary’s visions.

Come for the sci-fi tricks. Stay for a story bathed in an ethereal atmosphere that will keep you intrigued until the end. Whatever that may be. He loves her. Always has. Always will. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lx-ftqrrISqc> On AppleTV+ December 17th, 2021. Visit NNPA News Wire Film Critic Dwight Brown at [DwightBrownInk.com](http://DwightBrownInk.com) and [BlackPressUSA.com](http://BlackPressUSA.com).



Glenn Close portrays (Dr. Scott) in “Swan Song”

## “...Still Sex in the City?” Candace Bushnell’s answer

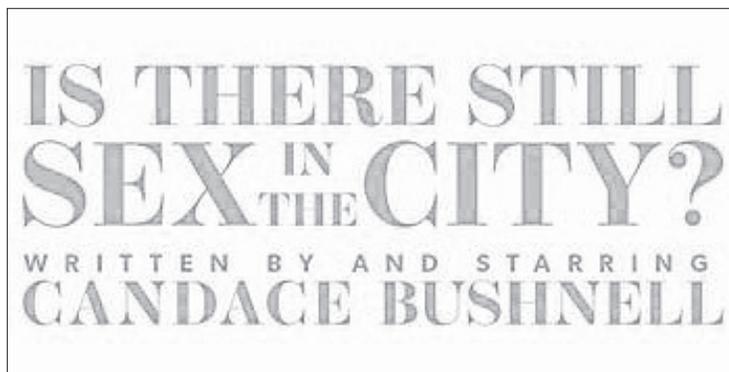
By Ernece B. Kelly  
Drama Critic

The light, sometimes comic one-woman show, “Is There Still Sex in the City?” follows the eventful life of Journalist Candace Bushnell from the suburbs where in the Third grade she decided to be a writer and “change the world” to her early sexual experience when the boy says “Kiss it” and she doesn’t, to her success as the writer of the 1996 book, *Sex in the City* which became the basis for the popular television series.

Along the way she marries, divorces, writes 10 books—many land on the New York Times Best

Seller List—hob-nobs in Swinger Clubs and assumes different pen-names to protect her family from embarrassment over the subjects of her articles, (female orgasms for example) which were in outlets like “Ladies Home Journal,” “Cosmopolitan” and “The New York Observer Newspaper” where her popular column, “Sex in the City” celebrated female sexual liberation.

Director Lorin Lattaro’s pace is practically breakneck as we travel with Bushnell thru different eras. Liza Zinni, costume designer, must have had fun designing dresses for the countless times Bushnell strips to reveal yet another outfit



underneath as she sails along. Complementing that pace is Travis McHale’s lighting design which throughout the 90 minute production, flashes on and off in a rainbow

of colors and Caite Hevner’s projections of videos, film clips, and the New York skyline which keep the stage abuzz even when Bushnell slows down a tad.

This is a fun, lively show—there’s even an interactive segment “True or Not True” where the audience guesses which of her little narratives—most are pretty raunchy—really happened. Yet it doesn’t shy away from the fact that Bushnell has consistently written as a feminist even while looking for the Right Man—first Mr. Big, then Mr. Bigger, and finally Mr. Biggest before she realized she wanted to be Mr. Big! “Is There Still Sex in the City?” is Off-Broadway at the Daryl Roth Theater, East on 15th Street, closing Feb. 6, 2022. As always, stay safe and stay in the theater mix!

# Classified

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# Sports



**Andrew  
Rosario,  
Sports  
Editor**

## NFL: not for long part 2

By Andrew Rosario

Last week, the Philadelphia Observer looked at the AFC. This week we look at the NFC as Covid 19 saw the league reschedule games. We start with the Eastern Conference.

**NFC East:** The Dallas Cowboys (10-4) lost their first game to start the 2021 season to the reigning Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers then proceeded to win their next 6 games in a row amping up conversations of them getting to the big game in Los Angeles. Dallas lost 3 of their next 4 games before righting the ship as they took out New Orleans, Washington and the Giants. Dak Prescott, coming off the gruesome ankle injury last year has struggled. Injuries to running back Ezekiel Elliot and the wide receiving core hasn't helped. Dallas

will win the division but how deep they go in the playoffs will remain to be seen. The Washington Football (6-7) and the Philadelphia Eagles (6-7) have an outside shot at a wild card spot. The last place New York Giants are done as it was announced quarterback Daniel Jones is out for the rest of the year with a neck injury. General Manager Dave Gettleman will be looking for another job after the last game.

**NFC North:** The Green Bay Packers (11-3) dealt with the Aaron Rodgers soap opera all off season before he decided to attend training camp. After getting trounced by the New Orleans Saints (38-3) it looked like Rodgers made a mistake coming back. Since that game, the team won their next 7, with Rodgers elevating his play and talk of another MVP is growing. The Minnesota



*Aaron Wants Home Field Advantage  
Photo: Special to the Philadelphia Observer*



*Dak Has Struggled Recently  
Photo: Special to the Philadelphia Observer*

Vikings (7-7) have won their last two games keeping them in the wild card hunt.

**NFC South:** The Tampa Bay Buccaneers (10-4) lost more than a game when they were shut out by New Orleans (9-0) this past week. First running back Leonard Fournette and wide receiver Mike Evans go down with hamstring injuries and both will miss games. Making matters worse Tom Brady's number one receiver Chris Godwin tore an ACL and is done for the season. The Bucs will win their division and are hoping to have the top seed in the conference. It will be tough but you can never count Brady out. It was disturbing watching how the Saints (7-7) defense manhandled

the Bucs offensive line. Head coach Bruce Arians needs to find a way to protect Brady or it could be an early playoff exit. Know teams facing Tampa Bay will use the New Orleans game as blue print.

**NFC West:** This is the most intriguing conference of them all. The Arizona Cardinals (10-4) sit on top with the Los Angeles Rams right behind them at 9-4. Cards quarterback Kyler Murray is nursing a sore ankle but is expected to play Sunday when they host the Colts. They are hoping to break their 2-game losing streak. The surging San Francisco 49ers (8-6) have won 5 of their last 6 games after taking out the Atlanta Falcons this past Sunday 31-13. The Seattle Seahawks have been

one of (5-8) the most disappointing teams this year. After losing 3 in a row, they have won the last 2 games but will not make the playoffs. The future of quarterback Russell Wilson is up in the air as the relationship with head coach Pete Carroll has been questioned all year. Russell gave the organization a list of teams he would accept a trade to prior to the start off the season.

There are 4 weeks left in the regular season. Teams are looking to solidify their playoff position in hopes of getting home field advantage. The way this year is going, that may not be good enough to get to SoFi Stadium in February. That's why the NFL stands for: NOT FOR LONG!



*Murray Looks To Get Healthy  
Photo: Special to the Philadelphia Observer*



*Brady Beat Up By Saints  
Photo: Special to the Philadelphia Observer*