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For Today's Black College Students
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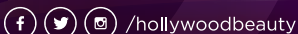
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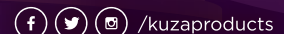
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BEING SAFE ON TODAY'S COLLEGE CAMPUSES WILL TAKE A COLLECTIVE EFFORT.

By Dr. James B. Ewers Jr.

My granddaughter, Makoy calls me “Pop Pop” and she always says, “Safety first”. This is to remind me to put on my seatbelt before I start the car. At the tender age of 5 years old, she understands the importance of being and feeling safe and secure.

Safety first is an important expression these days especially if you are on a college campus. Colleges are increasingly aware of some of today’s challenges and are increasing their efforts to keep their students safe and concentrating on their studies.

Our students with the knowledge they gain represent our future. The buildings and facilities they occupy must not be compromised by would-be intruders.

All members of the campus community can become what I call Campus Safety Ambassadors. Plainly stated, they help to create an atmosphere of safe practices.

This initiative begins in my opinion at new student orientation. Having both graduated and worked in HBCUs, this period is extremely important as it helps students to adjust to campus life. Whether it is a staggered orientation or a single orientation, the goal is to provide students with the emotional and practical skills they will need to be successful.

Faculty and staff can host meetings and workshops for their groups in order to strengthen their classroom and office environments. They should become more observant and vigilant about their surroundings.

Campus healthcare professionals must also be more involved in assessing student behavior as there are periods throughout the year that are more stressful.

Our schools must enhance relationships

with community agencies that have the necessary resources and staff to help when needed. Should some community agencies become a part of opening of school activities? That is a question for each school to decide.

Going to college has always been the goal for many students when they graduate from high school.

They take courses and pass tests in high school which prepare them for what is called the college experience.

Doing homework and writing essays were building blocks for attending college.

Back in the day in my Winston-Salem NC neighborhood, I saw older students leaving for college.

In some ways, it served as motivation for younger students like me to follow in their footsteps.

We simply wanted to be like them. They were our heroes.

Before ever enrolling in college, my friends and I had already been on a few college campuses such as Winston-Salem State University, North Carolina A&T State University and North Carolina Central University.

College students looked more serious, and they were certainly carrying more books.

At a young age, my parents told me that I was going to college so the only question was what college I would attend.

As my high school graduation approached, I became more anxious and excited.

In my community, education was valued and thought to be a key for a successful life.

Colleges during my day were lively places to be.



I never associated danger and misfortune with them. We went there to learn and to earn a degree.

Of course, we gained new friends and participated in all types of student activities.

I was blessed to have been a student-athlete which meant traveling to other cities and college campuses.

I had the opportunity to see schools like Howard University in Washington DC, Rider College in New Jersey and Tuskegee University in Alabama. While we were there to compete, it was also good to see the campus life as we went to their student unions and had meals in their cafeterias.

Colleges and universities are beacons of hope and opportunity for the next generation of scholars. Students need them because of the education that they provide. They must be proactive instead of reactive as they plan. Safety measures must be a priority in their planning.

This column is dedicated to my granddaughter, Makoy, a future student at an HBCU.

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Diversity Interview:

3 Challenges Minority Students Face Entering the Workforce

PART 2

By Robin Kegler



Robin: We are continuing our conversation with Tavon Lawrence about the challenges and potential solutions minority students encounter as they enter the workforce. Tavon, we ended the conversation in part one talking about diversity. Say more about that.

Tavon: Diversity is the most basic part of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is easy to say, and even make goals around. For example, we want 50% of our staff to be people of color. You go out and you hire your staff. Now you've got 50% people of color, but if you haven't created the conditions to make them feel like they belong, and you aren't including them in decision making, there's no equity within your systems and your processes, then guess what? They're going to pick up and they're going to leave. You find yourself going to go back to square one of we just need to diversify. It's much deeper than just diversifying. It is diversifying and then creating the conditions for people to succeed. Success looks different for every person. And so, you've got to be ready to support people in a way that they need to be supported.

Robin: That really goes back to hiring practices. I have a background with recruitment and placement. What you are suggesting is about changing mindsets. It starts with an employer's hiring process. There are questions an employer or company needs to consider

such as, what are the parameters? How does an employer or company represent themselves when candidates come in for an interview? What's the first thing a candidate sees? What questions does an employer ask? Tavon, our conversation is about changing mindsets. It takes time, it doesn't happen overnight. It does happen one step at a time if everyone's willing and if there's a buy-in upfront. With everybody on board, even those who may have been there for a moment, I think it's important that the understanding moving forward in the company or organization is that we will be intentional about diversity. We will be intentional about cultural awareness. We will be intentional about inclusion, because we really do want to model, get this, the global society. We are in a global society, and so we can no longer hide behind or consider ourselves elitist and that it's our way or no way.

Tavon: Yes. I want to add on to what you are saying because I've said something before about us really looking at diversity, equity, and inclusion, and it being a sexy term and everybody wants to do it and blah, blah, blah. But I also think even in hiring practices and being on the other side of a hiring practice, we as people seeking career opportunities, also must be careful, because employers know that diversity, equity, inclusion is important. They know it's important for people to see mirrors as a person of color showing up to an interview. If an organization has

an interview panel and it's three people of color on that interview panel, your automatic assumption is going to be that this organization is diverse because you see a couple of people of color but ask questions and know that it's okay to ask the questions.

"Hey, I see that you have a couple of people of color here on an interview panel. How diverse is your school? How diverse is the organization?" You ask the questions so you're not setting yourself up to go into a place where you thought there was going to be some diversity of thought mindset in people. You end up what I call, getting okie doked; and going into a place where you're like, "Hey, they just got all the black people to be on my interview panel because they know black people want to see people of color." So really asking those questions and know that you have the right to ask those questions so that you end up in a place and an environment where you can really succeed and thrive.

Robin: Yes. Great. Any additional tips you want to add before we close?

Tavon: Yes, absolutely. I hope I've given some nuggets that are helpful. I think one of the last things that I would do is just encourage folks as they're going out and looking for positions and looking for jobs, is to know that you have more power than you think you have. A lot of times we're like, hey, the powers in their hands, they're

going to give me the job offer. Like I just said, ask those questions because you are going into a workplace, whether it be a school, a for-profit or nonprofit, where you're giving up a lot of your time. Our work also impacts our mental health as well. Start thinking about a place where you can go, be happy, can do really good work, and you can feel and see the impact. Ask those questions. Go to a place where you can thrive and again, know that you have more power than you think you have when it comes to asking those questions about where you end up and you can do really good work.

Robin: For those entering the workforce, what are two or three questions they can ask to start the conversation?

Tavon: I really think it is about knowing

what is important to you. Think about the two or three things that are important to you and ask questions about it. A couple of questions that I ask is first a question around diversity within the organization. Another question that I ask about has to do with career advancement. "What does career advancement look like for me within the organization?" If you see that the organization does not have a lot of people of color or a lot of people who look like you, ask, what are the barriers for some of your people of color to move through? One thing that I've also learned that we don't do a lot, is we don't tell people what we think we're worth.

We wait for them to be like, here you go. Take it or leave it. Know what your boundaries are. Know what you need to live and to survive and put that on the

table. The worst thing that someone can tell you is no, but at least you know you've asked that question.

Robin: Fantastic. Thank you, Tavon. How can others reach out to you if they have more questions, or want to get to know you a little better and what you have to offer? How can they connect with you?

Tavon: You can connect with me on Twitter. My handle is Lawrence Tavon. Or you can email me Tavonlawrence@gmail.com.

Robin: Thanks for giving our readers tools to be successful in the marketplace, Tavon. This has been a great conversation.



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Sunny Isle Jamaican Black Castor Oil Brand

A Black Owned Family Business

by Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid



The Sunny Isle brand was founded in 2009 and spearheaded by Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid with the ongoing support of her Jamaican born husband Delroy Reid. Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid was born and raised in Jamaica, and later relocated to the United States. She is a wife, mother (including twins) and entrepreneur. The creation of the Sunny Isle brand came out of a need to provide high quality original and authentic Jamaican Black Castor Oil to address the restorative nature of hair and skin.

Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid is a Doctorally prepared Registered Nurse by trade. Compassionate quality care at the bedside combined with service excellence are vital when caring for her patients in the healthcare setting. These traits are equally important when serving her Sunny Isle customers in the beauty, hair, and skin care world. The skin (including our scalp) is the

largest organ on our bodies requiring attention and maintenance to remain healthy. Sunny Isle Jamaican Black Castor Oil is often dubbed as a natural “cure all” sometimes also referred to as “liquid gold” and is effective for promoting healthy hair growth, alleviating symptoms associated with eczema, psoriasis, and other skin conditions. Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid has been quoted saying “ a healthy scalp promotes healthy hair”. Sunny Isle Jamaican Black Castor oil seeds are grown and harvested in their natural environment In rural Jamaica. The beans are first harvested, roasted, grounded manually, and then boiled until 100% pure dark brown castor oil is extracted. Sunny Isle Jamaican Black Castor Oil has no additives and no preservatives making it safe for all ages. It is important to Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid to continue to provide the known high-quality authentic Sunny Isle Jamaican Black Castor oil, while keeping the safety of her customers at the forefront. The Sunny Isle brand started out with one product back in 2009. Today the Sunny Isle brand has 13 hair and skin care lines. Sunny Isle distributes nationally and internationally in the 4 major continents of the world (The Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa). The products can be found in all major retailers in the United States including, but not limited to CVS, Sally’s, Walgreens,

Rite Aid, Target, Walmart, Kroger, Albertson as well as local beauty supplies stores. Sunny Isle has been featured in many publications magazines and print media including Oprah Magazine, Allure, Essence, Ebony, Sophisticate’s Black Hair, Cosmopolitan, New York Magazine, The Washington Post, and the UK Post. Sunny Isle brand of products were also presented and reviewed on Canadian shopping network TSC. Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid is passionate about the Sunny Isle give back component. As a Jamaican born Christian businesswoman, she believes to whom much is given much is expected. Employment opportunities for the farmers in rural Jamaica are at times non-existent. Sunny Isle makes it possible for the farmers in rural Jamaica to provide for their families based on the stable income received from Sunny Isle. When our customers purchase the Sunny Isle brand, they are also supporting those Jamaican rural farmers. Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid refers to this as the “gift that keeps giving”.

During the Covid 19 pandemic the Sunny Isle brand offered mass products giveaways (not linked to purchases) both nationally and internationally to offset the financial stressors that was being faced worldwide. Dr. Ann Mullings-Reid approached this as she would her healthcare clients. She stated “when you look good, you feel good. I believed it was important for people to be able to have access to beauty products to maintain their health and wellness emotionally and physically even though they were stuck at home and did not have that disposable income coming in. Depression is real and can quickly set in when we are locked away from social interactions for extended periods of time. Beauty begins within. If you feel and look beautiful you then exude confidence hence a positive outlook. It was important to us to give back especially when it was most needed”.

Dr. Ann Mullings and her husband are extremely proud to be Black Business owners. Their humble beginnings in Jamaica and determined efforts have left a global footprint and paved the way for many other black owned businesses today.



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Morgan State University's 2021–30 strategic plan, "Transformation Morgan," makes it clear: Morgan's faculty are a pillar of the tremendous success the institution has seen during the past decade, and its members are vital to attainment of the high goals the institution's leadership has set for the next nine years.

But the strategic plan is hardly the only source of praise for Morgan's faculty. As they prepare their students to Lead the World — government, industry, community — the world is also increasingly acknowledging the leadership abilities and research innovation of MSU educators and is elevating them to positions where they can make the greatest impact.



MK Asante, associate professor of English at Morgan since 2006, is a storyteller whose tales of the African-American experience resonate with people of all races. He is the author of four books, including his bestselling memoir "Buck"; an award-winning filmmaker; a recording artist; and a distinguished educator from a family of educators in which "HBCUs, in general, were really held in high, sacred regard," he recalls.

Born in Zimbabwe and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Asante draws upon his varied life experiences and eclectic education to challenge his students at Morgan to be creative by "connecting the dots," being emotionally vulnerable and remembering the high value of their stories. On the other side of the balance, he says, his students have inspired him with their intellectual diversity, creative courage and resiliency. His youthful appearance belies the fact that Asante is a coach of his son's junior league basketball team and came of age before the rise of social media. He says learning his students' perspective has been valuable and has helped him channel his own creativity into projects in new media such as podcasts and Snapchat. Most recently, his creative side was on display for the nation to see when he performed two Monday Night Football intros.

Those diverse media are "just languages," Asante says, "ways to communicate with people."

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Counting her time growing up near the Morgan campus, raised by a mother who revered higher education, Natasha Pratt-Harris, Ph.D., has been a member of the Morgan family for more than two decades. Today, her focus has shifted far from playground games, to researching and rectifying disproportionality that adversely impacts Black males and other people of color in the criminal justice system. But to Dr. Pratt-Harris, Morgan is still “home, sweet home,” as she ends her 15th year as an associate professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University. Before becoming faculty, she joined MSU as a senior research associate in the Office of Institutional Research in 2000 and later served there as director for more than five years.



Her students have flourished “in ways that I did not imagine early in my career,” in courses such as Police and Society, which she designed to “address some of our most pressing community concerns: police/community relations,” says Dr. Pratt-Harris. “Students are expected to get as much out of me as I can give them,” she adds. “Students are expected to take the practice in the classroom beyond the classroom and apply these to their personal lives, career and academic opportunities.”

Being a faculty member at Morgan “has been a proverbial love affair,” says Dr. Pratt-Harris, who served as the lead of the instrumental study detailing the community’s perceptions of and experiences with the Baltimore City Police Department, following the 2017 U.S. Department of Justice Consent Decree.



People-centric educator Mark Barnes, Ph.D., gives full meaning to the term “human geography,” working constantly to build interdisciplinary campus communities around his academic discipline as he strives to guide his students to global citizenship. Dr. Barnes combines and implements his interest, knowledge and expertise in fields including North American geography, climate and society, environmental policy and planning, transportation, urban studies and religious studies.

students by giving them exposure to leading technologies used in burgeoning fields such as geographical information systems. As one of the creators of Morgan’s Environmental Workgroup, he has helped chart new and innovative ways to advance environmental learning, and as a developer of a new student group named the Geographical People’s Society (GPS), established with the support of the American Geographical Society, he promotes the mission of increasing campus awareness of environmental matters with the aid of geospatial technologies.

Morgan’s rapid growth during his nine years on the faculty has been a pleasant surprise, Dr. Barnes admits. It has also been a boon for his teaching.

An associate professor of History and Geography at Morgan, Dr. Barnes is a founder of the University’s Geospatial Collaborative, which provides new career pathways for

“A geographer whose interests lie in institutional decision-making around environmental risk reduction and adaptation could not ask for a better place to teach the causes and consequences of human-environment interactions than Morgan,” he says. “(MSU’s) architectural asset growth, along with its increases in student population and development expansions like new student life and degree programs, provide the perfect living laboratory for geographic instruction and research as well... Morgan truly is the place to be for a keen introduction to the use of the principles and tools of the discipline to ‘lead the world.’ ”

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Frequent appearances on MSNBC, CNN and other popular media outlets have also increased the global impact of Jason Johnson, Ph.D., political analyst, commentator and author, but he says his role as associate professor of Multimedia Journalism at Morgan State University is central to his life.

His experience at Morgan's School of Global Journalism and Communication since he arrived in 2016 has been "absolutely transformative," says Dr. Johnson, who creatively

integrates popular culture and political discourse to shape his classroom instruction. "I've had an opportunity to grow here, and I've had an opportunity to receive unprecedented levels of support from the University."

During his time in academia, Dr. Johnson has become one of the more prolific voices on Twitter, amassing more than 276,000 followers. And, as Morgan envisioned, his students have benefited from Dr. Johnson's ever-growing presence in front of international audiences. On MSNBC, he often talks about his Morgan students and what he's heard and learned from them. And in his work as professor — defining "real" journalism and challenging his students to deepen their knowledge of how the world actually works — "I like to think that I've given back: taking the students to The Daily Show, taking the students to media studios where I'm working. I've always been happy to share anything I'm working on with my students and the University as a whole."

As an associate professor of City and Regional Planning at Morgan, Tonya Sanders-Thach, Ph.D., also believes in 'giving back,' acting on what she sees as the full range of duties of her position: teaching, research and service.

"In the discipline I'm in, the community calls to you, and you want to be on the ground, addressing the huge need in Baltimore. I'm hoping that over a career of 30, 40 years, I can start making some inroads," Dr. Sanders says.

She's off to a very good start. The Maywood, Illinois, native came to her passion for faith-based community development and curriculum development from personal experience: seeing the church she grew up in revitalize a declining community. Coming to Morgan in 2012, she has expanded and implemented her research on those topics and has served as president and vice president of the University of Maryland Extension Baltimore City Advisory Board. As a teacher, she has learned, "you have to be able to adapt in a



classroom to the students who are sitting in front of you. You have to be very dynamic and be able to read the room and adjust, on a dime."

Dr. Sanders came to Morgan with high expectations, after reading about the University's strategic plan and MSU President David K. Wilson, and MSU "has exceeded my expectations," she says. "You just love the mission, and you love the students."



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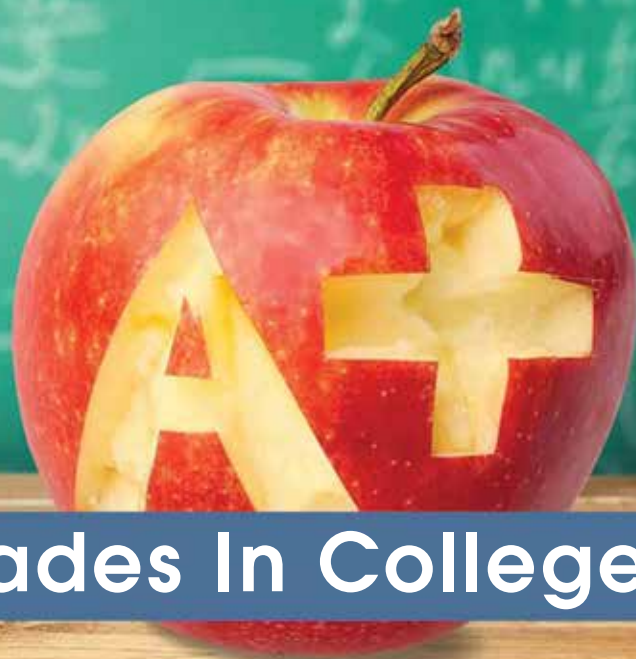
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Getting Good Grades In College



Getting good grades and maintaining your GPA is among the biggest stressors that college students report. Despite studying for hours and taking copious notes in class, they note that they are still not “making the grade.” Let’s face it, college is a challenge, and keeping grades up as we maneuver through life can be a challenge. This month I want to leave with some tips that will help you focus your energy in the right direction so you can start seeing earning those grades you desire.

1: (Turn In Your Work On Time). One sure way to ensure you are getting passing grades is to make sure you turn your assignments in on time. Often professors will

drop your score an entire letter grade if you do not turn in a paper or assignment on time. To avoid this penalty, always turn in your assignments on time or early. This requires that you pace yourself and not wait until the last minute to work on your assignments. You can try to map out your assignments by looking at a calendar and noting what you work on each day.

2: (Ask Clarifying Questions). No question is a dumb question. Often students are shy to ask questions because they do not want to appear dumb, but those who ask questions exhibit intelligence. Do not make the mistake of not asking questions when you have them. Boldly ask questions and ask follow up questions if you do not understand the expectations of an assignment. Getting clarification on an assignment can make a massive difference in obtaining exemplary grades. I have had students not ask for clarification, and this causes them to miss critical points that can

be the difference between an A and a C.

3: (Read Assignment Requirements Carefully.) One significant way to earn a passing score is to follow the specified requirements for an assignment. Be sure to read the criteria or rubric very carefully so you don’t miss points for forgetting to include a component in a paper or have the required number of reference sources. I have seen many students miss points over the simple mistake of not reading the requirements carefully for an assignment. For example, last semester, a student did not read the requirement to have five references, and this caused her to lose out on the 5 points that made the difference for her receiving a B instead of a C. Such a small mistake caused a considerable difference in her grade. This is just a tiny example of how missing the requirements on the rubric can have a significant impact on your final grade.

4: (Study With A Group.) Research has shown that students who work in study groups earn higher grades in college. Study groups can serve as a great way to help make excellent grades. Some of the reasons include the fact that your study buddies can help remind you of deadlines and the requirements of the assignment. From the examples shared above had the student been in study group, she may have had her classmate read her paper and would have been reminded that she needed five references.

Working in a study group also helps with accountability. If you are part of a study group, you are more likely to follow through and study and not just blow it off because you would be letting your teammates down if you did not follow through or show up to the study group.

5: (Extra Credit Matters.) Professors often offer opportunities to earn extra credit. In my classes, I have two or three extra credit opportunities during the semester. However, my students falling behind frequently fail to complete the extra credit assignments. If you are falling behind, ask your professor if there are extra credit opportunities. The professor often offers an extra credit assignment if you are proactive and ask. Remember, extra points can go a long way.

The five tips shared this month can be a catalyst for improving your grades and helping you make the grades you want to earn. The life of a college student is hectic and full. I hope that you can use the tips to make your college journey more smooth.

Dr. Felicia Durden is an accomplished Educator with over Twenty years experience in Education. She holds her Doctorate of Education degree in Educational Leadership, Master's Degree in Curriculum & Instruction and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Literature. Dr. Durden has taught grades K-12, served as an Assistant Director of Reading and Writing and currently serves as Principal in a large Urban School District in Arizona. She has taught English Composition at the College level as an adjunct instructor for over 10 years. Dr. Durden has a passion for assisting student growth in reading and writing.

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Do You Value Your History?

Black History Month comes around every 12 months with acknowledgements and cultural celebrations all across the United States and beyond. This month is dedicated as a prominent symbolic reminder to never forget legends of the past for their extreme sacrifices and consistent service they continuously exuded with passion for a necessary freedom and stabilization of our Black communities, globally...not just in the United States.

So...Who Cares?

But, I'm not sure if the significance of the month radiates as it *should* with each younger generation. Why do I say this? --because of the escalation of violence and bullying of peers rising in real-time, at an escalated rate in our schools and neighborhood streets...in elementary school gymnasiums, middle school hallways, high school bathrooms and college dorms.

There seems to be a "we don't care about ourselves, but other folks better care about us" mentality running rampant among some of our youth that is inevitably destroying segments of our community each day.

So How Do "You" Value Your History?

The past is gone, but the present is now. Have you thought about how you can be a mentor to a motherless or fatherless younger person..a guide for the teen who is leaning toward *dat'* street life? Do you participate and/or watch violent bullying and fighting posted on Instagram and TikTok with humorous laughter as entertainment, or are you an advocate in local neighborhoods working with parents to help them understand the issues their children are facing, and strategizing about ways you can help make a difference in their lives?

SOS!

I urge everyone reading this article to challenge yourself, and motivate your peers, to come up with ways to help eradicate gang violence and bullying inter-Black communities. Be encouraged to *Show Up* in at least one person's life who needs you!

Happy Black History Month!

Until the next time...





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HEALTH 101:

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR THE HEART

by Jessica Miller



Have you been putting off exercising? What about not having confidence in yourself? Or are you looking to find a consistent routine that works for you? Whatever your excuse is, I'm here to say that today is your day to start working out. Did you know that exercising makes you happier and help you live longer? Regular exercise is key to living a healthy, balanced life.

We know regular exercise strengthens muscles, but it also helps the heart do a better job of pumping blood throughout the body.

Benefits of Exercising for the Heart

1. Lower blood pressure. A healthy heart pushes out more blood with each beat, enabling it to function more efficiently. This decreases stress on the heart and surrounding arteries, potentially reducing blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, cardiovascular exercise may help lower it. If you don't have high blood pressure, exercise may help prevent it from rising as you age.

2. Improve blood flow. Regular cardio-based physical activity enables the heart to achieve improved blood flow in the small vessels around it, where blockages of fatty deposits can build over time. Better circulation in these areas may prevent heart attacks. Evidence even shows that exercise can cause the body to create more physical connections between these small blood vessels, meaning the blood has more ways to travel to where it needs to go.

3. Improve workout efficiency. As you begin a new workout routine that includes cardio activity, it may take a while for your body to adjust to the faster pace. But the more routine exercise becomes, the quicker your body pulls needed oxygen from your blood during workouts. Because of this, people who work out regularly have hearts that perform better under stress and are less winded during exercise activities. Regular cardio also allows your body to recover more quickly after exercise.

4. Lower cholesterol. Many studies show that exercise is linked to healthy improvements in

cholesterol, such as increasing the amount of healthy HDL cholesterol and possibly lowering bad LDL cholesterol by as much as 10 percent.

5. Decrease risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Studies show regular exercise helps reduce the risk of coronary heart disease as much as 21 percent for men and 29 percent for women. Additionally, active people have 20 percent less chance of stroke. Regular exercise also helps keep blood sugar levels in a healthy range and, in turn, helps lower risk for pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes.

6. Promote other heart-healthy habits. According to studies, regular exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight, make better nutrition choices, decrease stress and improve your mood.

What's Next?

It's time to find the right activity for you to stay active and consistent. Keep you a journal and develop a convenient schedule. Also journal your feelings to be able to see your growth with self love. Remember to be sure you drink lots of water, eat balanced meals, and speak positive intentions on yourself.



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A hurricane has just passed through your neighborhood. The power is out, you do not have a generator, and your phone is dangerously low on battery. What if you could generate enough electricity to recharge your phone just by sitting down? That is the vision presented by the five Xavier students of Team Xenergy (Xavier Energy) to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Johnson Space Center in Houston on December 9.

The team pitched their commercial application and distribution plan for a piezoelectric, energy-harvesting mat (PEM) that could transfer self-generated sustainable energy wirelessly to various devices, mitigating the need for working wires and outlets. Team Xenergy was one of six finalist teams from across the nation in NASA's higher education spinoff challenge, the Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP) Innovation Tech Transfer Idea Competition (MITTIC).



Team Xenergy includes first-year Xavier students Jada Thibodeaux, Nyla Gayle and Amna Aslam and sophomores Bershell Reynaud and William Foster. They faced off against teams from the University of St. Thomas (Team Celts) and the University of Puerto Rico- Rio Piedras (Team Li2+Sen), as well as collaborative teams from East Los Angeles College, City College of San Francisco, College of Marin and California State University-Northridge (Team Frankenstein's Gears), Hampton University and Tufts University (Team PowersIO), and from Hampton University and Boston College (Team Spectacle).

The teams were challenged to derive a commercial application of intellectual property (IP) of NASA. Though Xavier's Team Xenergy did not ultimately take the prize, it still knocked it out of the park with its concept, with each group member taking turns to present different aspects of the commercial production and application of PEMs.

"The PEM will be a self-powered, autonomous system containing a 3-by-3-foot piezo relaxer sensor embedded in a 4-by-6-foot very sturdy [floor] mat, not very different from the standard leisure mats you might have in your home," explained Foster during the presentation. He went on to describe how the PEM would be capable of integration

with Wi-Fi networks and could store energy with an internal supercapacitor for later use.

Foster also shared that piezoelectric, or electric charges generated through mechanical stress or “pressure,” technology is not new; it has long been established for use in roadways, underneath railways, certain kinds of watches, pacemakers, and even light-up children’s shoes.

Ashwith Chilvery, Ph.D., assistant vice president for the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) and associate professor of physics at Xavier, is a material scientist and has deep roots in research on piezoelectric materials. Dr. Chilvery is also the faculty leader of Xenergy and accompanied the team to Houston.

“Avenues such as NASA-MITTIC are much needed to drive today’s research to innovation that can make an economic and societal impact,” said Dr. Chilvery. “These brilliant students are driving the innovation that will affect future generations.”

The five Xavier students discovered in their research that current applications of piezoelectric materials are limited to 10 to the power of 4 picocoulombs, or units of electricity, per individual newton (10^4pC/N). In lay terms, current technology is limited in its ability to transfer mechanical energy and mechanical vibrations into electrical energy that can then be used. Team Xenergy thus proposed shattering that limitation through the application of NASA IP, increasing the

constants by “100 times” that of anything on the market today with a much higher conversion efficiency.

Team Xenergy pitched harnessing the “wasted” energy that can be “scavenged” around the average person’s home using the PEM in everyday activities. They explained that among those gathered at the presentation, just moving and walking around all day could potentially generate 18-20 volts of electricity, enough energy to power the lights in a house or 12-15 AA batteries.

“PEMS can be used in gyms, on the dance floor, and in kitchens, but that’s not the overall concept!” said Reynaud about the everyday use of the technology. “The big picture is to ‘cut cords with the cords’ by using ambient wireless charging.”

Ambient wireless charging, a concept introduced nearly a decade ago, has been used in many of the newer-generation smartphones that can charge wirelessly—either with a charging pad or other power-sharing technology. Though an older concept, Team Xenergy’s new spin of incorporating pressure-produced energy vastly widens the impact.

True to the mission bestowed on students at Xavier to promote a more just and humane society across the globe, the team was emphatic about developing an alliance with a global partner for worldwide distribution, particularly in areas without consistent energy access.

Aslam, who is from Pakistan, shared that the use in her home country, some areas of which are without reliable power, would be revolutionary.

“This product, I know for sure I can take it back home. Whenever I’m sitting in the dark, without electronics [access], I can [use the PEM to] charge my phone and connect to the outside world,” said Aslam. “This product really touched my heart because of this reason; because I can take it back home and help those in need.”





WHAT'S HOT ON THE NET!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! WELCOME BACK TO BCT'S WHAT'S HOT ON THE NET!!! WE'RE BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS ON CELEBRITIES ACROSS THE WORLD SO LET'S GET INTO IT!!!

Congrats to the Queen of Hip-Hop and R&B!!! **Mary J. Blige's production company, Blue Butterfly**, recently signed a first look deal with **BET** for new non-scripted projects! The first project, **The Wine Down**, is already in development. The Wine Down will feature Mary J. Blige talking to some of her celebrity friends! We're extremely happy for MJB and we can't wait to watch!

Following his role on **The Best Man: Final Chapters**, **Terrence Howard** stated he is retiring from acting. He feels as though he has given his best as an actor. Howard has been in classics such as **Dead Presidents, Hustle & Flow, The Best Man and the Fox TV show, Empire**. He previously announced his retirement and came back, so we hope he does the same again if the acting bug bites him!

In other movie news, **Tyler Perry** recently signed a four movie deal with

Amazon Studios! According to the terms, it appears that Tyler Perry will write, direct and produce all four films. We've got our Prime memberships so we're ready to watch what TP delivers!!!

You love to see it! Congrats to **Missy Elliott!** The music icon recently received an honorary doctoral degree from **Norfolk State University!** 2022 was an amazing year for Missy. She also had a street named after her and was given her own day, "Missy Elliott Day" in Virginia. 2023 should be another incredible year for the legend!

After a 40 year absence, **The Wiz** is returning to Broadway! The legendary musical will tour in other U.S. cities first in 2023 before returning to Broadway for a limited run. Catch it while you can!!!

Speaking of tours, stop what you're doing and make sure you buy your

tickets for **SZA's S.O.S. Tour!!!** Following the release of her latest album, S.O.S., SZA let us know she is going on a 17 city concert tour! If you haven't seen SZA live, this is your chance! If you have, then you know how dope she is live!

As far as other new music goes, here's what we are currently listening to:

- **A Boogie With Da Hoodie - Me vs. Myself**
- **Ab-Soul - Herbert**
- **Jacquees - Sincerely, For You**
- **Lil Durk & Only The Family - Loyal Bros 2**
- **Metro Boomin - Heroes and Villains**
- **SZA - SOS**

THAT'S IT FOR THIS EDITION OF WHAT'S HOT ON THE NET!!! BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MORE CELEBRITY NEWS NEXT TIME IN BCT!!!

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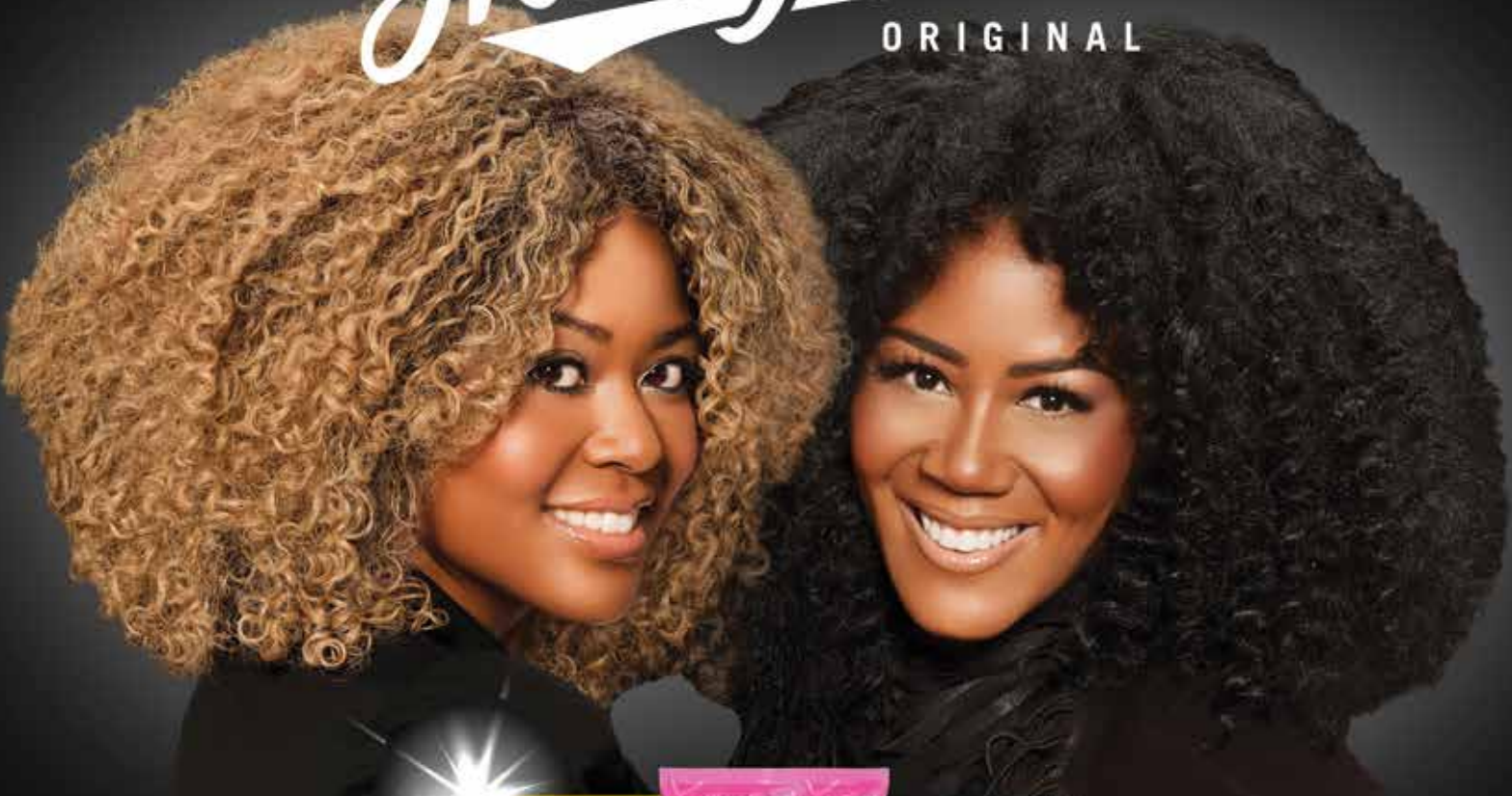
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