

# The Graces

The Official Newsletter of Malik Melodies Sisterhood, Inc.



May / June 2015

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Greetings Sisters,

We celebrate this newsletter with a focus on improve upon our health and wellness. With that in mind, let us enhance our organizational wellness of our Sisterhood. This objective is difficult to accomplish without your help and support.

One way of reaching financial wellness is by contributing to our membership drive. We are calling all Sisters to get actively involved and connected with MMSI. We need your support!!! There are so many things we could do as an organization and we need sisters to get it done. To continue to see MMSI inspire women please consider doing one, some, or all of the following suggestions.

- **Respond** to your email from MMSI. It can be a short, "Thank you", "Not available for this event", or "See you there" will do.
- **Participate** on our membership conference call - only once a month. Express your support, your concerns and hopes for MMSI.
- **Join** a department in our Leadership Development Program. Opportunities exist to offer your expertise in effective communication, money management, teamwork skills, health and fitness, and civic services.
- **Become Active.** Pay your membership dues in a timely manner. The funds are vital for our Annual Angela Pauling Memorial Scholarship, hosting events - mixers, conferences, etc.
- **Get Verbal.** Every organization needs an injection of new ideas to stay relevant and current especially with social media and marketing.
- **Support, support, support** MMSI events by showing up and bringing other Sisters. (AIDSWalk, Face-2-Face Meetings, Summer Mixer).

This is **our** Sisterhood!!! Let's continue to make a difference.

In Leadership, Sisterhood and Service: *GM Lisa Kirkland-Sutherland*



**In Honor of Women**  
**~Nkechi Taifa~**  
**By: Mildred Ngminebayihi**



**Nkechi Taifa, Esq** is a social justice attorney who lives in the District of Columbia. She graduated magna cum laude from Howard University with a BA in history and education and subsequently received her Juris Doctorate from George Washington University Law School. As an attorney, Ms. Taifa is certified to practice before the United States Supreme Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. In Washington, DC, her state of residence, Taifa convenes the Justice Roundtable, an advocacy group aimed at advancing federal criminal justice policy reform. Taifa also maintained her own private practice and specialized in employment discrimination law and the representation of impoverished juveniles and adults.

**Ms. Taifa** is a woman of many talents. In addition to her law career, she is also an author, activist, motivational speaker, entrepreneur and an adjunct professor at Howard University School of law for 10 years. During those ten years, she worked as the founding director of the Law School's award winning Equal Justice Program and developed new outlets for pro bono and public interest activities. Taifa also worked as a staff attorney for the National Prison Project and served as a public policy counsel for the Women's Legal Defense Fund.

**Ms. Taifa** has written extensively; some of her best known titles include *Shining Legacy*, a book that celebrates black heroines and heroes of the past through rhyme. She is also acclaimed for her children's books *Adventures of Kojo and Ama* and *Three Tales of Wisdom*. Currently, she serves as the senior policy analyst for the Open Society Foundations and the Open Society Policy Center. At the Open Society Foundations, Taifa focuses on comprehensive justice reform issues with a focus on federal reform, accountability in federal law enforcement, re-entry of previously incarcerated persons and prison reform.

**Nkechi Taifa** is the recipient of many awards and honors including the "President's Award from the Washington Council of Lawyers", "Rosmarian Award for Excellence in Teaching and Service", "Professor of the Year" and the "Outstanding Social Engineer Award". In 2014, she was the recipient of the "Wiley Branton Award" from the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.



**Ms. Taifa** has launched a crowdfunding website **SCHOLARgifts**, "*The Educational Funding Platform that Grows the Tree of Knowledge*". The SCHOLARgifts website states, "Anyone who wants to support and encourage people — young, older, young at heart — to pursue their educational dreams and/or learn new information and skills will be able to do so through SCHOLARgifts. Our funding platform is specifically tailored toward funding Scholar Campaigns encompassing, but not necessarily limited, to the following categories: Academics, Enrichment, Research & Study, Training & Licenses, and Other Educational Projects." To learn more about and to donate SCHOLARgifts visit: <http://scholargifts.com/>.

As impressive as Taifa's list of achievement runs, it is in no way a full testament of all her accomplishments. She is indeed a laudable woman and we are grateful for all her contributions. Let's support Ms. Taifa as she provides this important educational funding platform by contributing to **SCHOLARgifts** and sharing the website with others. Be sure to visit and "like" **SCHOLARgifts** on Facebook.

## A Performance Review of

# BLACK & VIOLIN

by Gracious Melody Vanessa Miller

I am hard pressed to think of other African-American violin players who have made their mark in popular music, so the classically trained group called Black Violin comprised of Wilner “Wil B” Baptiste and Kevin “Kev Marcus” Sylvester, are a welcome revelation for their ability to blend classical, hip-hop, rock, R&B, and bluegrass music that breaks down musical barriers.



Several members of the Malik Melodies Sisterhood Inc. had the privilege of seeing this dynamic duo in action on March 8th at The Society of Ethical Culture concert hall in New York City. The environment was electric and you could feel the flow of positive energy as they played their own brand of music. It was amazing to witness these young brothers that are rising to the top with their unique blend of classical, hip hop, jazz, bluegrass, pop & any other impromptu sounds that manifest from their spirit.

I loved how they encouraged the audience to get involved and had the audience dancing in their seats and in the aisles. The entire hall was filled with a dynamic energy. After the show, they held a question and answer session and allowed the excited crowd to take pictures with them.

In short, they were AWESOME!

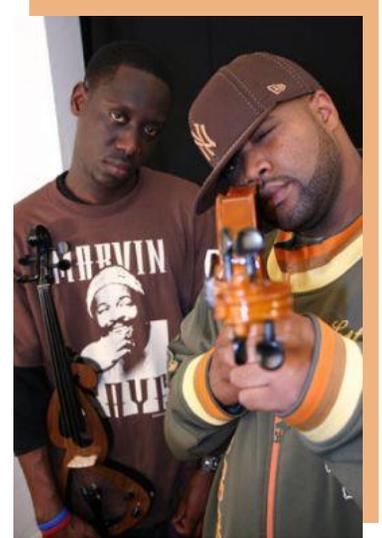


Favorite moment: *impromptu session...AMAZING!*

This group is incredible! They really got the audience into the music! We were dancing and clapping the whole time. It is clear how much of their heart and soul they put into their music and how important it is to them to give people the opportunity to truly appreciate music.

We loved their energy and passion for music. I enjoyed the show from the beginning to the end. I could have listened to them all night.

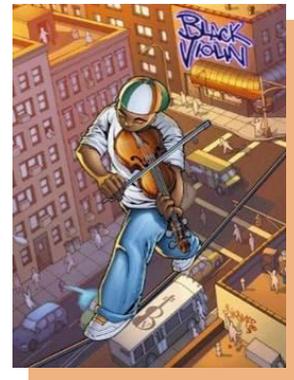
Wil B and Kev Marcus are classically trained viola and violin players who first met playing in the high school orchestra in Fort Lauderdale, FL. After graduating college, they joined up as hip-hop studio rats in the South Florida, working with several different acts before returning to their roots by fusing the two genres in a groundbreaking collaboration. They have taken this unique blend of music to the troops in Iraq; the President's Inaugural Ball; and the Kids Inaugural Ball in Washington, DC, where Barack Obama himself gave each a hearty hand-shake and man hug, as First Lady Michelle Obama looked on approvingly. The pair also headlined 40 shows in two stints at the New Victory Theater on Broadway, including 16 sold-out shows over two weeks last November. Along the way, they've wowed audiences at the legendary Harlem Apollo Theatre, accompanied Alicia Keys' performance of "Karma" at the 2004 Billboard Awards, and appeared with Gym Class Heroes and Fall Out Boy's Patrick Stump playing the hit song, "Stereo Hearts," for VH1's Unplugged.



Check out more of their background, music, and tour dates at <http://blackviolin.net>



It's a show you won't forget!



*"Talented young brothers found a way to captivate their audience by combining genres of music (Classical, Hip Hop, Old School), letting the melodies flow through string instruments"*  
~ GM Sharon Harleston

*"Black Violin is an exquisite mixture of classical and urban/contemporary music which provides soul to melodies which otherwise may not be received and appreciated. Their love, respect and passion for music was evident when delivering each mindful note, thus message, delivered to the listener. Along with enjoying the performance with the audience I enjoyed Black Violin enjoying themselves!"*~ GM Kathleen D. Taylor



(Pictured right)  
GM Nathalie C. Lilavois with the members of Black Violin





International Soccer Academy hundred and fifty Long Island participated, representing Long Island spanning from Suffolk's east end in Orient. social challenges such as homelessness, animal abuse, health, environment, and bullying.

**Lift Up Long Island** <http://liftupli.org/> is a non-profit organization that empowers teams of students in diverse schools throughout Long Island to research and create socially innovative solutions to challenges specific to their region and interests. Students then launch social impact ventures aimed at creating a lasting community impact. Through experiential learning, students develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills that help prepare them for success in the future global economy, while also addressing real-world needs within their schools and communities.



On October 29, 2013, the one year anniversary of Hurricane Sandy, Lift Up Long Island hosted its inaugural event at the in Smithtown. Two students and teachers school districts across Hempstead in Nassau to These students tackled



Julie Foudy exchanging ideas with LULI students.

The former USA Women's Soccer Team Captain, two-time Olympic Gold Medalist and two-time World Cup Champion; **Julie Foudy** delivered an inspirational key note. She talked to kids about using their passion to make important change as she had done with her soccer career. In 2006, Julie had developed the Julie Foudy Sports Leadership Academy (JFSLA) a six-day residential Academy for girls ages 12-18 focusing on sports and leadership. The goal of JFSLA is "to expose students to Julie's great passion: the concept of not just being a leader on the field but a LEADER IN LIFE."



Town of Brookhaven Councilwoman, Valerie Cartright with LULI students.

(<http://www.juliefoudyleadership.com>) Leaders in their respective fields such as **Valerie Cartright** provided on-site expertise as students raised questions related to their ventures.

During the school year workshops and phone conferences were held to follow up with the progress of student ventures, culminating in a Celebrating Changemakers event on June 6, 2014 at Stony Brook University. Youth venture teams presented ongoing work and accomplishments. Food, music and motivational speeches rounded out this fun filled celebration. Lift Up Long Island's co-founder, James Komosinski, Dr. Pam Della Pietra, and **Dr. Nathalie C. Lilavois** received a proclamation from Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn and NYS Assemblyman Steve Englebright.



**Learn how the "Dream It Do, It" program can have a major impact on your school, students, and community in our interactive planning & training workshops. For more information, please contact our Education Coordinator, Tom Lyon at (631) 928-4317 or [tomlyon6@gmail.com](mailto:tomlyon6@gmail.com)**

## What's New?!

By Kim Bright

# Commencement Time!!!

Congratulations to our amazing Sisters and Brothers for their tenacity in reaching their collegiate goals!



On May 17, 2015, **GM Jhenna Zepeda** graduated from Hofstra University with a BS in Marketing and headed off to Arizona to start her career with Professional Sports Publications. Professional Sports Publications has been the nation's leading publisher of souvenir sports publications including game day programs and team yearbooks for more than 40 years. With Jhenna's leadership skills and vibrant personality, we are sure she will help them solidify their position as an industry leader. Well done Sis!

*(Photo by: Evan Gardner Productions).*



**Melody Brittany S. Johnson** participated in her Nursing Pinning Ceremony on May 8<sup>th</sup> and her commencement exercises from Tuskegee University on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Brittany will receive a BS in Nursing and plans to return to New York to pursue her career in nursing preferably in ER, ICU or critical care units. Ultimately Brittany plans become a medical doctor and we have no doubt she will achieve her goals!

*We urge all Melodies and MALIKs in the medical field to reach out to our Sister to help her network within NYC and east coast hospitals.*



**GM D. Melissa Charles** graduated on Sunday, May 17 with her Masters in Biomedical Science from Rutgers University in NJ. Well done Queen!!! Cannot wait to see what is next on your horizon!!



**GM Zainab Abdul-karim** graduated May 22nd from Stony Brook University with a Masters Degree in Social Work. Zainab is to be commended for her dedication and perseverance as she managed parenting a toddler, working full-time and pursuing her Masters degree. We have many social workers within the Malik Family... Please lend your expertise, networking and advice to our Sister as she begins her career in social work.

## CONGRATULATIONS PARENTS!!!

Congratulations to all Malik Melodies and MALIK Brothers whose children have or will graduate this spring. Well done all around!!!



On May 8, 2015, **Bro. Courtney Matthews** graduated with his Masters in Mental Health Counseling from Northeastern University. Congrats Courtney for pursuing your 2<sup>nd</sup> degree while holding down a demanding full-time position.  
(Photo by: Erskine Isaac, Ivision Photography)



On April 25, 2015, **Bro. Isaac Rashad** was conferred the Doctorate Degree of Humane Letters from CICA International University & Seminary. Congrats to Dr. Isaac Rashad, CDKA!



On May 17, 2015, **Bro. Shawuki Hilton** graduated with his law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan. Bro. Shawuki will be working towards starting his own sports agency and we have no doubt of his success. Congrats Shawuki Hilton, Esq.!! (Photo: Bro. Ryan Simmons celebrates with Bro. Shawuki)

*Congratulations to any Brother who graduated and missed in this issue.  
We salute you and are proud of your accomplishments!!!*

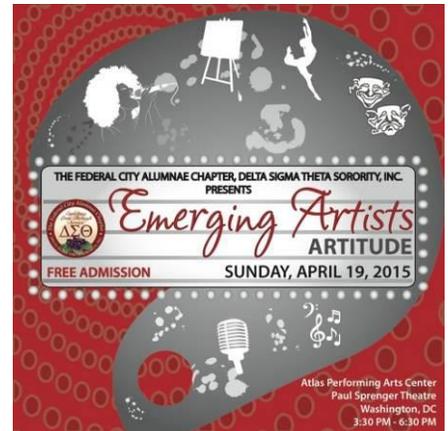
***Maliks and Melodies goes on!!!***

## ARTitude!!!



Congrats to MMSI's Artist Networking and Mentor Initiative participant **Chidinma "Chi-chi" Dureke** on being selected by the Federal City Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. as one of their **2015 Emerging Artist in the category of Visual Arts!!** On April 19, Ms. Dureke and 6 other artist of various genres will present their work at the Atlas

Performing Arts Center in Washington, DC.



MMSI acted as a catalyst encouraging Chi-chi to submit her application. We are very excited to see Federal City Alumnae Chapter's goals are in alignment with MMSI's art program and look forward to future community partnerships to further both our programs.

The Federal City Alumnae Chapter's **Emerging Artist** program was created to provide exposure and professional development to Washington, DC metro area artists and performers through networking, professional development, and a formal talent presentation.

## MY Melody!!!

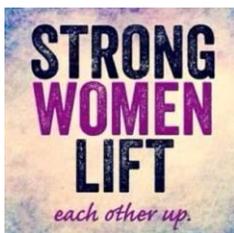


On February 7, 2015, our Sister, **Kimberly Lucas**, was honored by the **National Action Network, NYC Chapter House of Justice (HOJ)** as a **Deaf Humanitarian Award recipient**. The awards banquet was held at the Harlem State Office Building Art Gallery in New York. Sister Kim is the Eastern Regional Representative, National Black Deaf Advocates (NDBA). To learn more about NDBA



which is the leading advocacy organization of Black Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in the United States, visit:

<http://www.nbda.org/>. (Photo: Sister Kim (on right) with fellow honorees)



MMSI celebrated **Women's History Month** in March and continued into April with our **Strong Women Who Lift** campaign. We celebrated the women in our lives and in history that have made a difference in our lives. Reach out to a Strong Woman in your life and let her know how much she means to you and the positive contributions she has made. Thank you to everyone who submitted an honoree!!

On April 14, 2015, **GM Lisa Marie Rodriguez** provided public testimony at John Jay College of Criminal Justice



for the **White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics**. Her testimony focused on addressing the social/emotional needs of students. By addressing traumatic experiences, students are able to develop the coping skills, LIFE SKILLS and emotional intelligence needed for academic/life success. *“The initiative is committed to engaging leaders from all sectors to invest in meaningful, lasting approaches to increasing access and success for Latino students from cradle to career in the following critical areas: Early Learning, K-12 College Assess,*

*College Completion, STEM, and Latino Teacher Recruitment.”* To learn more about this initiative visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/hispanic-initiative/>.

### Angela Pauling Memorial Scholarship Fund "Happy Hour For A Cause"

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, the Professional Branch hosted an evening of fun & networking to raise funds for the Angela Pauling Memorial Scholarship Fund. The event was held at Turtle Bay in New York City and was well attended by Melodies, Maliks, friends, family and co-workers. We thank everyone who attended and to Turtle Bay for the opportunity and their incredible hospitality! We look forward to issuing our scholarship to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Angela Pauling Scholar in June 2015.

Please consider making a donation in honor of our Co-Founder Angela and to give a step up to a deserving student . To donate visit: <http://www.malikmelodies.org/#!angela-pauling-scholarship-fund/cveb>

Photos from Turtle Bay:





*The National Museum of African American History Culture (NMAAHC)* is currently under construction. For the past 2-years MMSI has been a financial contributor to the building of the museum. Last fall, **MGM Kim Bright** had the opportunity to participate in a behind the scenes tour of the museum's construction site.

The museum will occupy the last available space on the National Mall in Washington, DC and will be situated across the street from the Washington Monument. The museum is scheduled to open in 2016 and will be a centerpiece venue for ceremonies and performances, as well as amazing exhibitions dedicated to African American history and culture.

Per the architect's vision as stated on the museum/s website: *"The primary architectural idea for the museum was derived from the classical tripartite column with its base, shaft and capital. In Yoruban art and architecture, the column or wooden post was usually crafted with a capital resembling a crown. This crown or corona form is the central idea which has driven the design of the museum. The bronze corona also reflects an African American presence that is a permanent part of the American landscape. Reaching toward the sky, the bronze clad corona expresses faith, hope and resiliency."*

To learn more about the NMAAHC, its mission, exhibitions, programs, events, and how you can participate in securing a place in history visit: <http://nmaahc.org/> Be sure to make a donation!





Our Melody Sister, *Dr. Lisa Kirkland-Sutherland* was honored by the *South East Queens Chamber of Commerce* (in New York) on March 29, 2015. She was honored for her many years of community and professional service she has provided in Queens and to its residents.

Currently Dr. Kirkland-Sutherland is working with the Deputy Director of the *Queens Economic Development Corporation* to establish the *Guy R. Brewer Merchants Association*. We are certain she will be quite successful in this endeavor and her reach will impact thousands of Southeast Queens residents.

# Celebrating our Community Partners

MMSI honored our community partners with an appreciation luncheon held on April 25, 2015.

*The following organizations were celebrated:*

- ♥ African American Museum
- ♥ Cayuga Centers
- ♥ Gerald J. Ryan Outreach
- ♥ Girl Scouts of Suffolk County
- ♥ Long Island Cares
- ♥ Long Island Head Start
- ♥ Light House Mission



- ♥ PS. 347 American Sign English Lower School
- ♥ The Journey Church



Language &



# Join Us for Fun and Friendship

**“PAINT NITE with MMSI”**  
*Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015*



**Summer MMSI Mix and Mingle**  
*Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015*

**Details for both events to follow!**



**ON SALE NOW!!!**



We all have a love for food and drink, and cooking is a labor of love.

Thank you for supporting the Malik Family Cookbook fundraiser.

The cost of the Malik Family Cookbook is \$25.00 USD  
(Shipping & Handling included)

[<<CLICK HERE TO PURCHASE YOUR COOKBOOK>>](#)

We hope you will enjoy this cookbook and treasure it as a fun keepsake.

We extend our special thanks to all those who contributed recipes;  
our Melody Sisters, MALIK Brothers, and our friends and family!

Raise your glass and toast to good food!!!!!!!

**KUDOS to *The Graces* Newsletter Staff**  
(March/April 2015 Issue)

*~Just had a moment to read most of it and it is very well-written and informative.  
Congratulations to you and the rest of The Graces staff sisters~*

*Thank You,  
Natalie Yeager*

*Hi Ladies,  
I had to take a moment from my place of employment and read the newsletter. I must say I do love the article I wrote for Women History Month. I plan on acting upon my own words that I shared, not only for this month but for the remainder of the year. I hope Sisters will take a moment for themselves as well. Thank you for sharing all the great articles and for your hard work to produce an informative issue.*

*TQIMSTQIY  
Sharon Harleston, MMSI PB President*

**MALIK MELODIES  
SISTERHOOD, INC.**

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