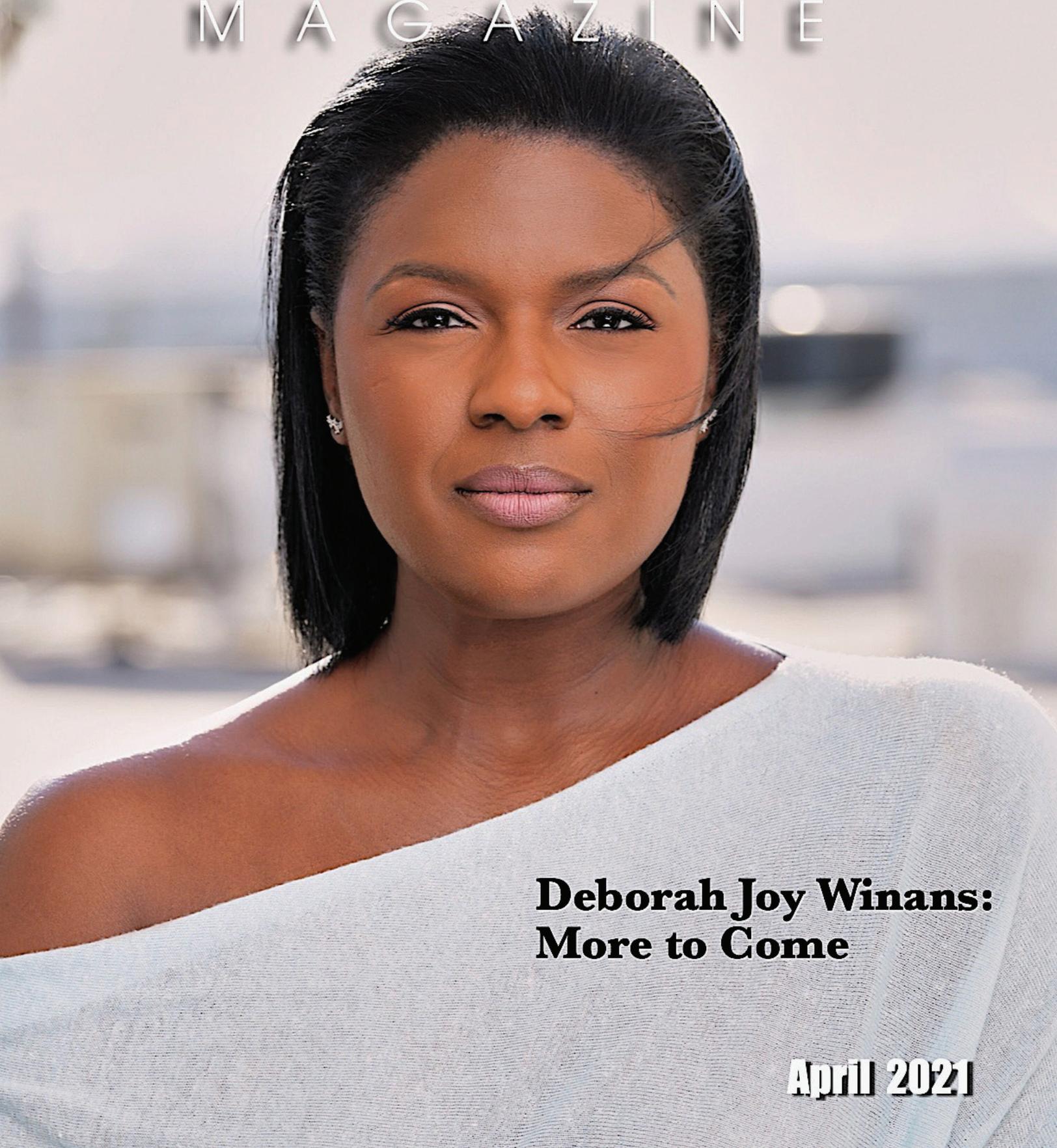


# SoulVision<sup>®</sup>

M A G A Z I N E



**Deborah Joy Winans:  
More to Come**

**April 2021**

EDITORS NOTE

# BK Fulton



*Photo by Queon “Q” Martin*

## | “Showing up is half the battle.”

Showing up is half the battle. Don’t just do it for you though. Include those who are up next. As a leader, you are in the pole position. You are the pace car. Leaders do not need to wait around for accolades, permission or inspiration. While all these things can help, leaders must do what is required to go forward when it’s time to do something. We all get to choose how much energy we are willing to put into what we say we believe in. Leaders often have to do what others don’t to achieve what others won’t. In this issue, we take a leap forward with leaders, innovators and influencers who have found their gifts and who are using those gifts to change lives. Our April issue showcases the acting brilliance of Deborah Joy Winans, the educational excellence of Dr. Walter Milton Jr. and Joel Freeman with Black History 365, and the artistic genius of Baxter Perkinson Jr. We also chat with Rita Cohen, Page Turners and Michael “Boogie” Pinckney. Last, we light up the kitchen with chef JJ Johnson and salute the late great Vernon Jordan. Thank you for supporting excellence. You get a new look when you have SoulVision.

## | “Leaders often have to do what others don’t to achieve what others won’t.”

Follow BK Fulton on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). To learn more about Soulidify Productions, visit their website [soulidify.com](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

CELEBRITY

## Deborah Joy Winans: More to Come



*Photos by J. Bolin*

| “Always look for ways to grow.”

When Deborah Joy Winans was growing up in the influential and legendary Winans family, she knew that acting would be one gift that she would share with the world. “I am an actor,” she proclaims. “That is all that I have ever loved and ever wanted to do as a career. I got my BFA in acting, spent a month in Moscow training in the Moscow Art Theatre School, and received my MFA in acting from the California Institute of the Arts.” While Deborah Joy trusts her singing ability, her role as Charity on the hit show *Greenleaf* was what got her to reveal her acting talent to the world. Singing (she will be releasing new music in April) is secondary to her acting. “Acting is my passion and love,” she says.

## Deborah Joy Winans: More to Come (continued)



Looking back at her childhood, Deborah Joy remembers the seasons and the extreme temperatures they produced: “The winters were extremely cold and the summers were extremely hot.” The members of her family were hard-working individuals who loved what they did. She remembers the people of Detroit who were “resilient and loyal.” As she navigated through the entertainment industry, she knew that it wouldn’t be easy to land work. “I learned that I am in a career where you get a lot of no’s,” she says, “but you have to keep moving forward if this is something that you love and have been called to do.”

From playing her aunt CeCe Winans in the Lifetime biopic *Whitney* to her role as Charity on *Greenleaf*, Deborah Joy has shown range as an actress. “When

you think you are done growing, I think that means you should look at doing something else,” she says. “There is always room to grow.” As she continues her acting journey, she says she is grateful for the opportunities she has had. She continues to learn from her mistakes and she is aware of the importance of being present in the moment.

When deciding on a role, Deborah Joy considers if the character has enough meaning and substance. The character cannot be one-dimensional. “At the end of the day, you want to make sure that you are doing something that touches people,” she says, “that changes people, that makes them feel good, that makes them start a conversation. You want your art to mean something.” Her fans appreciate this. They have sent Deborah Joy

## Deborah Joy Winans: More to Come (continued)



inspirational messages, telling her how her work has given them a new perspective on life. “It has been beautiful,” she says.

Faith, of course, is a big part of Deborah Joy’s makeup and because of this, faith has influenced her career. “I am meant to bring light and life to somebody,” she says. When Deborah Joy walks into an audition, she goes in with the attitude that what is meant for her will find its way to her. She does not need to be anyone else to achieve success. “You cannot steal what God has for me,” she says. “My faith has allowed me to rest a bit easier and understand that no matter where I go, I can always be kind and I always know my love for God will come through regardless.”

In her new Lifetime film, *The Color of Love*, Deborah Joy plays Monica Henderson, a widow with two kids

who takes in foster children from time to time. After two of the children, Peter and Rachel, flee their current foster home, she takes them in. There is one conflict: Monica and her family are black, and Peter and Rachel are white. Monica’s boyfriend, Theo, thinks they would be better with a family who is of the same race. But this goes against Monica’s belief that love can conquer all.

Deborah Joy was given the script by her dear friend Tamara LaSeon Bass, the director of the recent TV One film *Don’t Waste Your Pretty*, in which Deborah Joy starred as a lead opposite of Keri Hilson. After reading the script for *The Color of Love*, Deborah Joy fell in love with the character and message. “It is about how love, unconditional love, can show through regardless of how people feel or what people say,” Deborah Joy says. “Monica has a really big heart and suffered a lot

## *Deborah Joy Winans: More to Come (continued)*

of loss. She is at a point where she does everything that she can to make not just her home a better place, but the world a better place.” Deborah Joy hopes that viewers can be more tolerant and open towards each other in a time where many of us are having uncomfortable but necessary conversations about race. “This is something that is not often told and is something that people need to hear and see right now,” she says.

Reflecting on COVID and her 2020, she says that, like many of us, she took the time to reflect on what was working and what wasn't. “I've been reflecting and making sure I am where I am supposed to be,” she says. “Not just workwise, but spiritually and physically. There is always something to work on for yourself.”

When asked if she had any advice for young people who want to break into the industry, Deborah Joy advises that beyond hard work, having thick skin is a must. “You can never have enough training. They should be willing to work hard and understand that you will get a lot of no's before you get a yes,” she explains. “All that does is help you continue to build who you are and who you are meant to be.”

Deborah Joy Winans hasn't been in the industry for long but she is having a good time following her passion. “I just love what I do and I am always looking for ways to grow,” she says. This is just the beginning for Deborah Joy. “I don't think I will ever say that I've made it,” she says. “I will always say that I am very grateful for whatever job I've done and hope to continue to go further.”

*To learn more about Deborah Joy Winans, follow her on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).*

## Black History 365: A Truthcentric View of History



Dr. Walter Milton Jr. and Dr. Joel A. Freeman. Photo by HMS Elite Photography; photo courtesy of Black History 365.

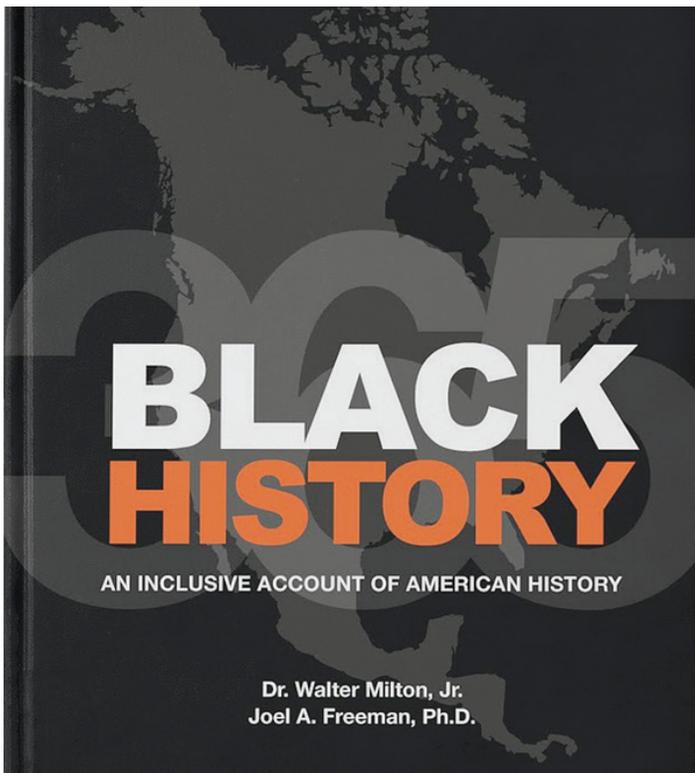
“We are creating a more inclusive account of American history.”

Dr. Walter Milton Jr. and Dr. Joel A. Freeman have known each other for over two decades. In April 2018, Walter reached out to Joel to discuss working on a K-12 black history textbook and curriculum. “I thought Joel would be an incredible addition,” Walter says. “He is the best collaborator that I could dream of.” The two men quickly got to work. “We put in 12-16 hour days, encountering many ups and downs along the way,” Joel says. “We discussed just about every issue one could imagine that has vexed our country for centuries.” A common criticism of school history books is that they are whitewashed. Walter and Joel set out to prioritize a “truthcentric” narrative that would provide an “inclusive account of American history.”

The final result is *Black History 365*, a textbook that is 5.5 pounds, 1,248 pages with 2,567 images. The book includes digital technology like QR codes to create an immersive and innovative experience that caters to the digital-first generation. “For instance, when students are trying to comprehend the difference between the philosophies of W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, they are provided QR codes that guide them to videos, films, and web pages that help them to better understand both views,” Joel says.

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## *Black History 365: A Truthcentric View of History (continued)*

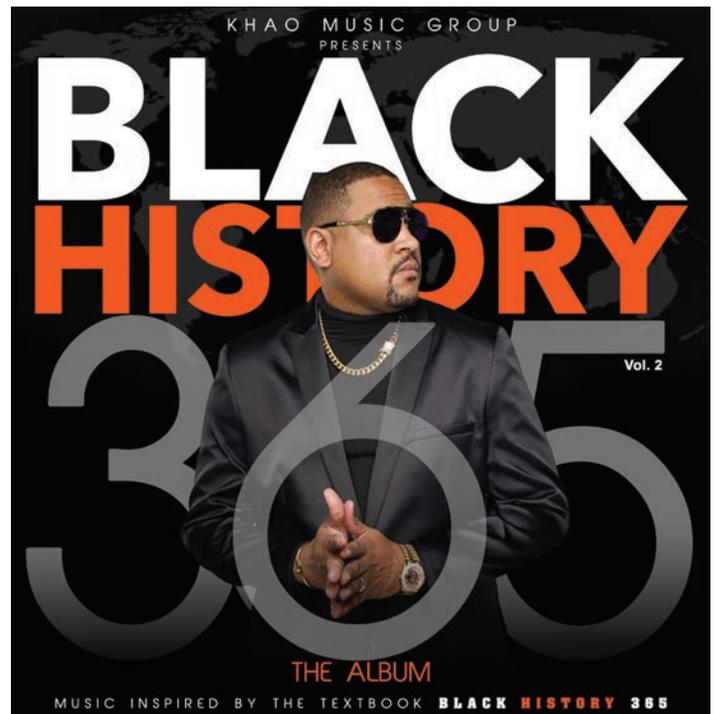


*Black History 365 National Textbook. Courtesy of Black History 365.*

Making sure they covered all of their bases, Walter and Joel partnered with multi-platinum and Grammy-nominated producer Dr. Kevin “Khao” Cates to create a 41-song, two-volume soundtrack that summarizes each chapter of the textbook. “Students will be able to write papers, parsing every word as they seek to understand the history contained in the lyrics,” Walter says. “We are currently working on building out a curriculum for K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 graders.”

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Walter and Joel’s next project will be *The Elephant Experience*, an illustrated book that will discuss topics like



*Black History 365 – The Album, produced by multi-platinum and Grammy-nominated producer Dr. Kevin “Khao” Cates. Courtesy of Black History 365.*

Uncle Tom, the Three-fifths Compromise, reparations, the N-word, and scientific racism. “We want a discussion to come out of this,” Joel explains. “Where there is a binary choice, we will provide both views in the form of QR Codes embedded in almost every page.”

Their foundation, The Black History 365 Education Foundation, will be launched to raise at least \$100 million to put a copy of the textbook in the hands of every police officer in the country as well as in every prison in America. The Foundation will also create a curriculum for underserved communities. With Black History 365 in the hands of the next generation and those who need it the most, we will be better equipped to address racism and bias and understand black people’s contributions to the great experiment that is America.

*To learn more about and “Black History 365” and get your copy of the textbook, visit their website and follow them on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). Stream/download both volumes of the soundtrack here: [Vol.1](#) & [Vol.2](#).*

MOVIES

# Michael “Boogie” Pinckney: Creative Empowerment



*Photo by Wesley Volcy*

“We are fighting for more access and opportunities for creatives.”

Michael “Boogie” Pinckney was an assistant director on movies like Spike Lee’s *Inside Man* and Lee Daniels’ *Precious* and TV shows like *Broad City* and *Law & Order: CI* before he ventured out on his own to write and direct. “I’ve lived in Bed-Stuy for most of my life,” he says. “As a black creative, we often have slashes in our titles. I’m a Directors Guild of America (DGA) director/creative producer/writer/mixed media painter/founder.” Through his work and initiatives, Michael “Boogie” Pinckney is creating opportunities for creatives who have not been given opportunities in the past.

For Michael, keeping himself working is essential. He is always working on a project and loves to see where he can take his ideas next. “I love developing projects and seeing them through to fruition,” he says. He is currently working on getting distribution for a few pivotal projects: *Blue Fame*, a TV show about an all-female undercover unit in New Jersey, and *SoleKings*, a series about the life of “sneakerheads” in Brooklyn. The series first appeared on BRIC TV.

## Michael “Boogie” Pinckney: Creative Empowerment (continued)



Michael’s mixed media art encapsulates black culture. His painting Three Rings depicts a LeBron James signed Cleveland Cavaliers jersey. It was to celebrate Lebron winning three championship rings. Another painting called Get Out was inspired by the Jordan Peele film of the same name. The painting features a black figure in a suit that is cartoonishly disfigured. Words like “mental,” “fear,” and “pain” are crossed out. He was particularly interested in how the film explored racism and how it affects the “black psyche.” He says he created the painting to shed light on this unique trauma that affects black people.

Beyond creating, Michael is the founder of Blackville, a creative community that empowers black creatives. The purpose is to push Hollywood to be more inclusive and purposeful in looking for black talent behind the scenes. “We are fighting for more access and opportunities for creatives,” he says. He is also preparing to launch a black-owned online coffee company called Blackville Coffee Co. “We’re trying to take 2021 by storm, redefine the narratives, and create our own table,” he says.

To learn more about Michael “Boogie” Pinckney, visit his [website](#) and follow him on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).



Photos by Beth Brown

ART

## Baxter Perkinson Jr.'s Spontaneous Art



*Photo by BK Fulton*

### | “Don’t be afraid to do things differently.”

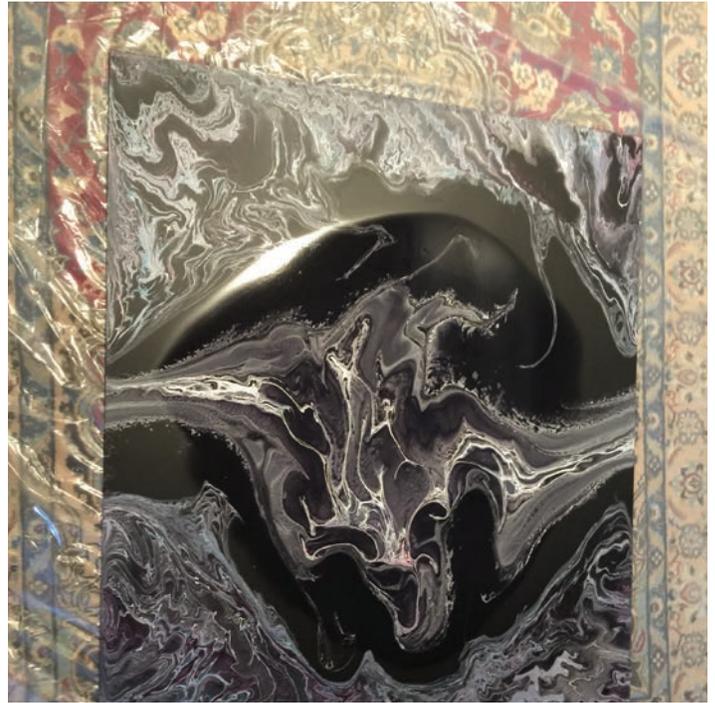
Baxter Perkinson Jr. works as a dentist by profession but has an artistic side that is extraordinary. He’s lived in Richmond, Virginia, his whole life and started painting at the age of 35. “I’ve never been away from home more than two weeks,” he adds. His paintings have never been sold for monetary gain. Instead, his paintings have been sold by charities and nonprofits, and have been gifted to public institutions like Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), his alma mater. “All of my art is emotionally based and I only paint what I like. I never do commissions,” he says. “That is the value in not selling my art but giving it away. People don’t turn down a gift. They may regift it or throw it away but honestly, I wouldn’t know if they did.”

Believers in the importance of community, Baxter and his wife Elaine placed their support behind the creation of the new [Baxter Perkinson Center for the Arts and Education](#), a community arts center located in Chester, Virginia. The center will feature performers locally and from around the world. The center is dedicated to Baxter and his late father, W. Baxter Perkinson Sr.

## *Baxter Perkinson Jr.'s Spontaneous Art (continued)*



*Baxter points to his first-ever water-color. Photo by BK Fulton.*



*Artwork by Baxter Perkinson Jr.*



*Artwork by Baxter Perkinson Jr.*

His latest work consists of pouring acrylic (latex) paint. He says he isn't using any brushes to complete his work. He is simply seeing where it takes him. "It is spontaneous, unplanned, and comes from me in a most individual way," he says. While he began his artistic journey painting on canvas and then transitioned to paper, he is now experimenting with glass. "The risk of getting sliced and diced adds energy to the art," Baxter says. He is now doing large pieces—32 x 40 inches—and plans to make a few that are larger. "I have even purchased a piece of glass 40 x 60 inches which will really add risk to my craft."

Taking risks is natural to Baxter. He's never been afraid to paint with different strokes. "I have always done things differently (even dentistry), so my art just lets my personality shine," he says. "My future is open and I will keep my eyes and ears open and ready, looking for the next idea or opportunity. I am always on G waiting for O. That has always been me."

## Rita Addico Cohen: Healing Through Art & Dance



*Photo by In His Image Photography*

### | “Bringing people together through culture.”

Rita Addico Cohen is a multi-hyphenate who has dabbled in just about everything. She was born in Accra, Ghana, and migrated to the States as a child. She speaks 10 different languages. Not to mention, she is a dance fitness instructor/artist, has a Bachelor of Arts in classical music from the University of Virginia (UVA), a Master of Music in Classical Voice from the Manhattan School of Music, and has sung with the Virginia Opera. In 2009, Rita wanted to address the issue of health disparities in the African-American community. So she became a Zumba instructor to help African Americans prioritize a healthy and active lifestyle. Incorporating African rhythms, Rita infuses her own culture into a fitness program with origins in Latin America.

Working in the nonprofit space also is important to Rita. She is the Founder/Executive Director of the Tidewater African Cultural Alliance (TACA) which celebrates the African diaspora. “We strive to bring Africans and others in the greater Tidewater area together through community outreach, community service, educational programs, and cultural arts and events,” she says.

## Rita Addico Cohen: Healing Through Art & Dance (continued)



Rita Addico Cohen leads a group of women during her “AKWAABA: Welcome to Ghana!” session at the Zumba Instructor Convention in Orlando, Florida, in July 2019.

Photo by Z Best Photo.



Rita Addico Cohen gives convention-goers a taste of the “AKWAABA: Welcome to Ghana!” session at the Zumba Instructor Convention in Orlando, Florida, in July 2019.

Photo by Z Best Photo.

Through her work at TACA, Rita created and has been delivering a program called African Story Time, a virtual program for those underserved families in the ForKids organization which advocates for homeless children. “We are also on the Virginia Commission for the Arts’ Teaching Art Roster for the next 3 years, so I’m excited that we’ll be able to bring African educational arts programming for children and adults to the whole state,” Rita says.

TACA also will partner with Teens With A Purpose on a project called “The Healing Quilt.” It will be an interactive multi-disciplinary performance piece that will show how teens and adults deal with the issue of race in the Hampton Roads area from a personal perspective. “We received a \$10,000 grant from the Virginia Humanities and the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, and cannot wait to share the experience,” Rita says.

To learn more about Rita Addico Cohen, visit her [website](#) and follow her on [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). To learn more about the nonprofit TACA, visit their [website](#) and follow them on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

CHEF'S CORNER

# Chef JJ Johnson



Photos and recipe courtesy of chef JJ Johnson/Cleo TV's "Just Eats with Chef JJ."

“Juicy and tender chops that you can cook in 15 minutes or less.”

## Pan-Fried Pork Chops

Course: American

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Total Time: 15 minutes

Serving Size: 4

### Ingredients:

- Vegetable oil
- 4 bone-in pork chops
- Kosher salt
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tbsps cayenne pepper
- 4 sprigs oregano, chopped

### Preparation:

1. In a large cast iron pan, add enough oil to measure a quarter halfway up the side and turn on the heat to medium-high.
2. Mix the cayenne pepper into the flour.
3. Season the pork chops with salt and fresh oregano.
4. Dredge the pork chops in the flour, tapping off the excess and place right into the hot oil.
5. Cook until the pork chops are golden brown on each side.



JJ Johnson is a James Beard Award-winning chef best known for his barrier-breaking cuisine connecting the foodways of West Africa and Asia to the Americas. He is the host of [“Just Eats with Chef JJ”](#) on TV One’s Cleo TV and founder of [FIELDTRIP](#), a quick-casual rice bowl shop with locations in Harlem, Long Island City, and Rockefeller Center.

COMMUNITY

## Page Turners Make Great Learners: The Joy of Reading



*FeFe Handy, founder and executive director of Page Turners Make Great Learners. Photo by Christopher Moore.*

| “Reading sparks creativity and imagination in our children.”

Each month we highlight a community program that aligns with the values of SoulVision Magazine. We believe engaging with one’s community is critical to fostering positive change in the world.

Page Turners Make Great Learners was created by Founder and Executive Director FeFe Handy. Page Turners is a literacy nonprofit partnering with elementary, middle, and high schools in the Atlanta area. “An integral part of our work includes hosting award-winning author visits (in-person before Covid-19 and virtual), read-a-thons and book clubs, and providing books for children who live in low-income communities,” FeFe says. Authors that she has hosted include Jason Reynolds, Jeff Kinney, Sharon Draper, Meena Harris, Raina Telgemeier, Angie Thomas, and others. This past summer, Page Turners hosted and interviewed award-winning actress and activist (and now children’s book author) Gabrielle Union in support of her first children’s book, *Welcome to the Party*.

The idea started from FeFe wanting to get her daughter to read more books. So FeFe did what any good mother would do—make it fun. She started a book club to get her child excited about reading. She brought the idea to her daughter’s school and they loved it. It turned into not simply a book club, but an opportunity for field trips and visits from guest authors to talk with the students. In 2005, FeFe filed for 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, and Page Turners in its current inception was born.

## Page Turners Make Great Learners: The Joy of Reading (continued)



*Page Turners Make Great Learners partners with Mercedes-Benz to encourage students to read by acknowledging students who read at least 1,000,000 words. Lillian was selected as a Mercedes-Benz Literacy Ambassador. Photo courtesy of Page Turners Make Great Learners.*



*Page Turners Make Great Learners donates books to students/families at schools that were set up as food distribution centers during the pandemic. The objective: "feed bodies and brains." Photo courtesy of Page Turners Make Great Learners.*

In light of schools closing due to the pandemic, Page Turners hosted a virtual book club program. Over 550 elementary-age students throughout metro Atlanta participated and each received two books to help with building their home library. Teachers were encouraged to have their students discuss and write about the text so they could get a more comprehensive understanding of what they read.

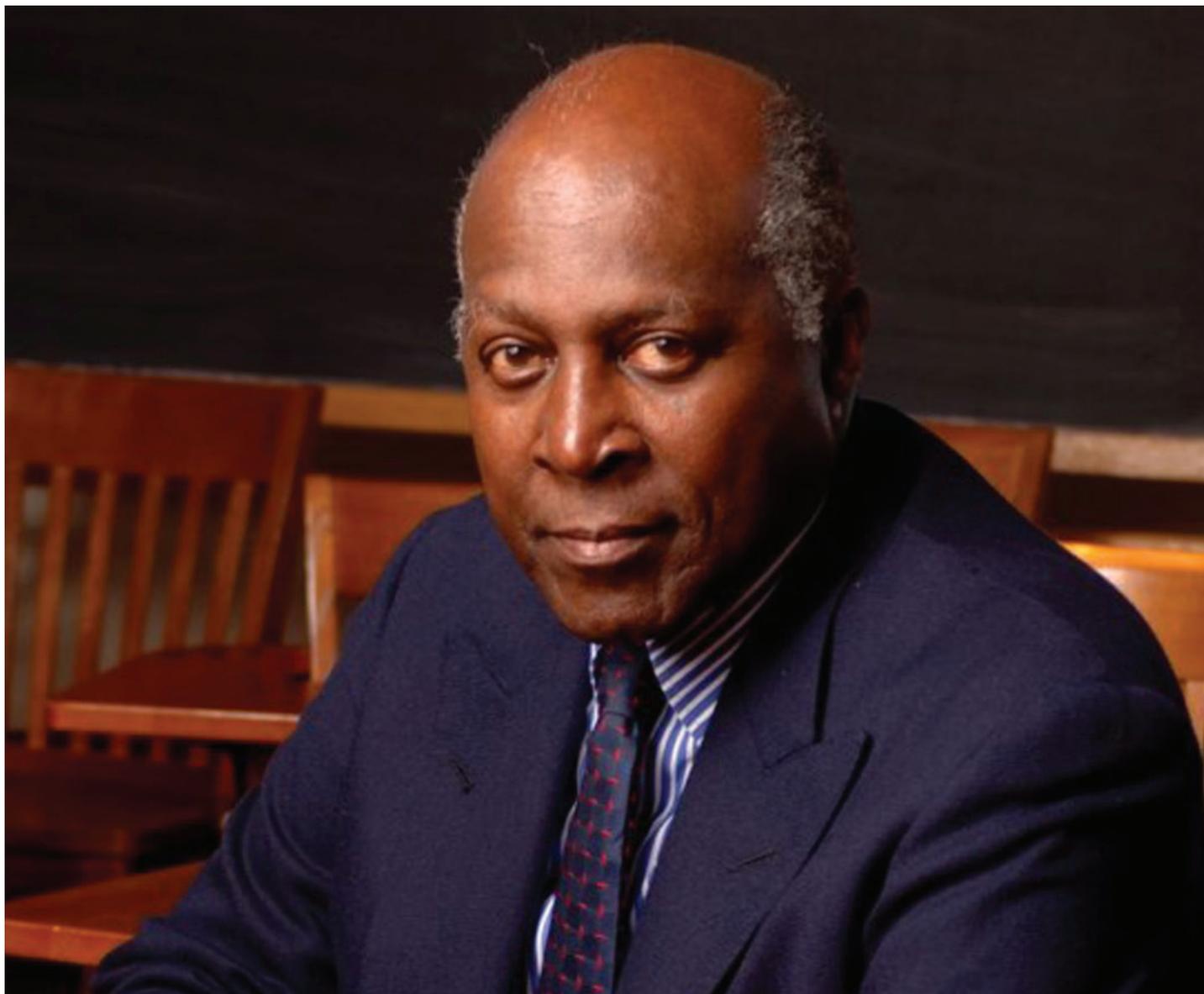
FeFe is looking at new ways to engage educators as well. As an extension of her work with Page Turners, FeFe says she is launching a podcast called Pass the Book to FeFe. The podcast is geared towards educators and librarians. "I will talk with award-winning authors, literacy specialists, and librarians about books and reading," she says. "Doors of opportunity continue to open. I am so excited about my upcoming interview and virtual visit with poet, activist, and author, Cleo Wade, the 'Millennial Oprah' according to New York Magazine."

All in all, FeFe wants reading to be a favorite activity of all children. "I will continue to grow the Page Turners Make Great Learners brand and work to become an influential champion of reading for black and brown children."

*To learn how you can support Page Turners Make Great Learners, visit their [website](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).*

LEGENDS

# Vernon Jordan



*Photo courtesy of Google*

In a time that has been historical in more ways than one, we must acknowledge the great significance of the current White House administration. Specifically, noting the

Vernon E. Jordan Jr. was a larger-than-life figure who created opportunities for the next generation of black leaders. He was pivotal in getting black executives a seat at the table of boardrooms and into the C-suite of major corporations. In early March of 2021, Jordan passed away at the age of 85. He left behind a legacy of fighting for civil rights and ensuring that the interest of black people was seen and heard by the country's top decision-makers.

## *Vernon Jordan (continued)*

Born in segregated Atlanta in 1935 to a dad who was a postal worker on a military base and a mother who ran a catering business, Jordan went to DePauw University where he was the only black student in his class. After graduating from DePauw University, he went on to Howard University School of Law in 1960. He then returned to Atlanta to join a civil rights law firm led by the influential lawyer Donald Hollowell. Jordan was his law clerk. The firm sued the University of Georgia (UGA) for discrimination in its admissions policies and won. Jordan escorted Charlayne Hunter into the University in 1961 in the midst of hostile crowds. Charlayne Hunter was one of UGA's first black students.

After leaving the law firm, Jordan went on to work for the NAACP and the United Negro College Fund. In his 30s, he became the president of the National Urban

League, where he would travel across the country rubbing shoulders with corporate leaders to raise money for issues like job training, early childhood education, and other programs that would help the black community. Jordan also was responsible for expanding the organization's focus to include voter registration.

**“Whatever you do, run toward justice, because the fight for justice is not a sprint, or even a marathon, but a relay race in which your generation now has the baton. It is up to you to protect the progress we have made and advance that progress into the future.”**

**– Vernon Jordan**