

# the **Stand** south side news

[www.mysouthsidestand.com](http://www.mysouthsidestand.com)

Syracuse, NY

**SUMMER 2017**

**Issue 59**

**FREE**

## SPOKEN WORDS

Stroke survivor uses  
new voice to mentor  
youth, promote book

Top educator sets goals

A priority for superintendent: raise graduation rates

I-81  
update

Panel discusses how  
highway plans would  
affect community

**Father: 'Be  
yourself'**  
Malusi Qhobosheane  
shares life with four kids

## POPULAR BAKERY MOVES





# 2 INSIDE | SUMMER

the  
Stand

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IN KEEPING WITH COMMUNITY STANDARDS.

**6** **FEATURES** | Meet Damon Gilstrap, a South Side man who overcame the odds when recovering from brain tumors and a stroke. Now, he is eager to share his story.

**10** **FATHERHOOD** | Malusi Qhobosheane, a father of four, talks about how he handles the different personalities of what he calls his Hit Squad.

**12** **SCHOOL AND YOUTH** | Syracuse City School District Superintendent Jaime Alicea has made significant improvements to the area schools, but he's not stopping there.

**19** **COMMUNITY** | Don't forget to get involved in the eighth annual Photo Walk on July 22. Along with a lesson from professionals, you will be able to take your own photos!

**20** **YOUTH** | Six students capture their lives, likes and interests as part of the new South Side Collective photography class, and they apply their photos to grander themes.

■ Cover photography by Ben Cleeton of Damon Gilstrap

## CALENDAR | SUMMER

**What:** Paint the City – The Vacant Mural Project

**When:** 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 13

**Where:** South Presbyterian Church, 2110 S. Salina St.

**Details:** The Greater Syracuse Land Bank will host a weekend painting event. The community as a whole will have the opportunity to participate in brightening up our city. Paint, plywood and a place to paint will be provided. Completed boards will then be displayed on Land Bank properties throughout the city.

**Cost:** Free and open to the public

**More info.:** Email Liam Kirst at lkirst@SyracuseLandBank.org or Logan Reidsma at lreidsma@SyracuseLandbank.org

**What:** Bike for Brady (and walk, too)

**When:** 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, June 4

**Where:** Brady Farm, 150 Ford Ave.

**Details:** The fourth annual community bike ride supports Brady Faith Center programs, including Pedal to Possibilities. This summer, a 3K walk has been added so all can participate. Bike rides include: 10-, 20- and 40-mile treks through the streets and neighborhoods of Syracuse. Event is co-chaired by Arnie Artessa, David Philippone and Bob Dougherty.

**Registration cost:** \$25 per person

**To register:** Visit bradyfaithcenter.org

**More info.:** Contact Tony Ortega at tjortegabfc@gmail.com

**What:** Project X Stop the Violence Rally

**When:** 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday, June 11

**Where:** The Atrium, 100 S. Salina St.

**Details:** This event is dedicated to those who have lost their lives to violence and those affected. Families who have lost a loved one to violence are encouraged to attend. Bring a candle and picture of your loved one. Guests include Chief of Police Frank Fowler, Mayor Stephanie Miner and other local anti-violence groups.

**Cost:** Free

**More info.:** Contact Project X Founder Shaunna Spivey-Spinner at (315) 760-2037

**What:** Juneteenth Festival featuring Loose Ends

**When:** 5 to 9 p.m. Friday, June 16, and 1 to 10 p.m. Saturday, June 17

**Where:** Clinton Square, downtown Syracuse

**Details:** Many musical performances, including Grammy award-winning headliner Loose Ends. Event will also include crafts, children's games and retail vendors, along with a variety of ethnic foods.

**Cost:** Free

**More info.:** Visit syracusejuneteenth.org

A number of events have been held this spring to unite people and develop action plans for citywide improvement.

Upstate Medical University held its Presidential Symposium at the end of March to examine key issues, including community violence. Another initiative that launched in April, Uplift Syracuse (US), strives to raise the city's consciousness through a series of discussions and outreach efforts. One session brought husband-wife duo Timothy "Noble" Jennings-Bey and Najah Salaam Jennings-Bey to speak about their individual research on the impact neighborhood violence has on students. Lastly, April's Greater Syracuse HOPE — Healing, Opportunity, Prosperity and Empowerment — task force gathered key community stakeholders to address issues of concentrated poverty.

Initiatives such as these have been great to witness. To hear my take on each, visit [mysouthsidestand.com](http://mysouthsidestand.com) and read "Efforts Uniting the Community to Spark Change."

I hope similar outreach continues, attracting an even greater number of residents to be involved.

Recently the Southwest Side also saw the opening of Price Rite. Even before the ribbon cutting of the long-awaited supermarket April 2, shoppers streamed in as early as 8 a.m. until closing. The grocery chain provides a wide selection of fresh foods to an area with limited access, nearly 100 new jobs and, many have said, will serve as an anchor retailer along South Avenue.

Our readers will be interested to know about a soon-to-be published project — #TheyWearBlue — by reporting and multimedia students at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Students have been working with the Syracuse Police Department on stories that feature officers not as one unit, but as individuals with single identities — from Chief of Police Frank Fowler to a rookie officer. The project provides an inside look at the lives of police officers, intending to help the public understand that "the police" are truly a collection of individuals. Visit [mysouthsidestand.com](http://mysouthsidestand.com) this summer for an unveiling of the project, which will give you a peek at life through the eyes of the men and women in blue.

In this summer issue, meet a father who works overnight to provide for his four children, a man who has remarkably recovered from a stroke, a judge who serves as a role model for young girls and much more.

And, as always, go online during the summer months to catch the latest news from the community you call home.

Ashley Kang



## UPCOMING EVENT

### July 22

#### Photo Walk

**What:** Eighth annual South Side Photo Walk

**When:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, July 22

**Where:** Meet at the South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St.

**Contact:** Ashley Kang at [ashley@mysouthsidestand.com](mailto:ashley@mysouthsidestand.com) or (315) 882-1054

**More info:** See Page 19 for full story about the Photo Walk. All are welcome — any age and any skill level.

## WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor can be mailed to:

The Stand c/o Ashley Kang  
South Side Communication Center  
2331 South Salina St.  
Syracuse, NY 13205

or emailed to:

The Stand's director,  
Ashley Kang, at [Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com](mailto:Ashley@mysouthsidestand.com)

All letters must be no more than 200 words in length and must contain the writer's full name, address and contact information.



LEARN  
MORE

These are the plans  
being discussed:

- **No build** — rehabilitate existing infrastructure to current standards
- **New viaduct** — build new viaduct over existing footprint with a wider roadway
- **Community grid** — re-route I-81 over existing I-481, rebuild I-81/I-690 interchange, turn Almond Street into at least a four-lane state route at grade level

## Contact information:

- **Project hotline:**  
1-855-I81-TALK  
(855-481-8255)
- **Email:**  
I81Opportunities@dot.ny.gov
- **Mailing address:**  
NYSDOT Region 3  
I-81 Viaduct Project  
333 E. Washington St.  
Syracuse, NY 13202

## I-81 ALTERNATIVES

Panelists explain their viewpoints on options for changes to highway



> I-81 Viaduct Project Director Mark Frechette discusses potential options for highway construction during a meeting in April at the South Side Innovation Center. | JP Hadley, Staff Photo

By | JP Hadley  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

### Q&A session with officials allows residents to learn more about plans, voice their opinions

Any question about how deeply South Side residents are interested in the future of Interstate 81 ought to have been laid to rest in April when a crowd of residents met with state and local officials offering an update over what to do with the aging roadway.

“We’re here tonight to weigh the pros and the cons, and to be open-minded — to really see for yourself,” said Angela Wright, executive director for the Syracuse Model Neighborhood Corporation, to the crowd at the South Side Innovation Center. “You know, hopefully your questions will be answered.”

Mark Frechette, the I-81 Viaduct Project director for the New York State Department of Transportation, said the two plans the state is considering call for either a completely new bridge to be built through downtown Syracuse, or to re-route I-81 outside of the city using the existing roadways of I-481. Both would require substantial financial investment, and would take four and six years to complete, respectively. The projects are estimated to cost \$1.7 billion and \$1.3 billion, according to

the Department of Transportation’s website.

The new viaduct plan would make no changes to the actual highway, but would simply replace the current viaduct with a wider bridge with a better design, Frechette said. The community grid plan would increase access to the South Side with the “creation of a new access point” at Martin Luther King East, according to the department’s website.

Some among those present came to advocate for a particular plan.

“Seventeen years ago, I was the first elected official to be interviewed at Adams and the viaduct. I said then, 17 years ago, ‘Tear this wall down,’” said Van Robinson, Common Council president. “And I’m gratified to see the large number of people out here tonight. I’ve said it time and time again. If you don’t speak up, if you don’t stand up, if you do not show your preference, then you are going to be left with the remains or the scraps. Another viaduct, maybe worse than this one, may be put up.”

A six-person panel moderated by Wright debated the two plans put forth by the Department of Transportation. The panel featured Jim Bright, president and owner of Dunk & Bright Furniture; Mark Nicotra, Town of Salina supervisor and representative of SAVE I-81; Peter Sarver, convener for Moving People Transportation





> Lemir Teron, an assistant professor at SUNY-ESF, addresses the audience at the South Side Innovation Center in April. Teron did not state a preference for any plan under consideration to update I-81. | JP Hadley, Staff Photo

Coalition; Bill Simmons, executive director for Syracuse Housing Authority; and Lemir Teron, assistant professor at the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

Bright and Nicotra favored plans to keep the highway in its current footprint, arguing that there would be economic consequences to changing the way the highway works. Every other panel member except Teron supported the community grid because it would remove the physical barrier that the highway viaduct represents.

Teron did not state a preference for either plan.

"What is my take on this issue. I can't have a take on this issue, and I invite you to be very slow to have a take on this issue for this very important reason," he said, referring to a slide showing the lack of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Residents took advantage of the question-and-answer periods built into the session to question Frechette and the panel members on various issues. The questions ranged from topics like how the department planned to improve public transport to an estimated date for the public to review steps of the process.

So far, officials have not announced an estimated date for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Once the statement is released, there will be 45 days of public review. The Federal Highway Administration and the Department of Transportation then will issue a record of decision, thus ending the National Environmental Policy Act process.

## Syracuse University



### Do you have a high school diploma or GED, but no college?

You may qualify for the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) for part-time students at Syracuse University.

**HEOP covers tuition, books, and fees.**

**HEOP provides academic advising and tutoring.**

Are you eligible?

Call **315-443-3261** for an appointment, or visit **[parttime.syr.edu/heop](http://parttime.syr.edu/heop)**.

**"I wanted to be an example to my children."**

Angela Gunn  
Political Science major,  
SU student

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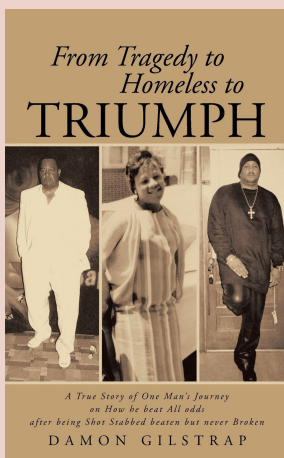
## ABOUT THE BOOK

**“From Tragedy to Homeless to Triumph”**

**Author:** Damon Gilstrap

**Year published:** 2014

**Cost:** \$20



**Book synopsis:** Damon Gilstrap's autobiography reveals his life's journey — how he beat all the odds after being shot, stabbed and beaten but never broken. After losing his mother at an early age due to a drug overdose, Gilstrap spent the majority of his youth shuffled between youth homes and the hard streets of Washington, D.C., until a stranger bought him a bus ticket that brought him to Syracuse.

# STANDING STRONG

*Internal and external battles prove this man's resilience and drive*



> After 17 years at Damon Gilstrap's side in times of sickness and health, Angela Wilson stands in support of his fight from a stroke to become himself again. He is working to prove his worth by giving back to the community. | Ben Cleeton, Staff Photo

By | Ashley Kang  
*The Stand* director

## After struggling on the streets and fighting brain tumors, Damon Gilstrap defies all odds

**O**n his first date with the woman who would become his fiancé, Damon Gilstrap detailed his entire past — the group homes, the drugs, the violence, being homeless and time incarcerated.

He was completely transparent.

“I didn’t know if he was trying to run me away or what,” said Angela Wilson, who added that looking back on that evening, it was not typical first-date etiquette. “But he told me, ‘I’d rather you hear about my past from me, than from someone on the street.’”

Wilson admired him for his openness and said she found him intriguing and someone she could build a life with. That life has now spanned 17 years — in sickness and in health.

## THREE BRAIN TUMORS

Ten years ago, Gilstrap suffered a stroke as a result of three benign brain tumors. Wilson remembers the night she found him on the couch, speaking gibberish. “I took it as sleepy talk,” Wilson said about the unrecognized

able drivel. “The next morning, he was talking the same way. When he stood up, he was all wobbly like a baby deer.”

Despite his objections, she rushed him to the hospital.

The three tumors were positioned around his brain, pressing into areas that control motor function and speech.

Just months before the stroke, Gilstrap had been found wandering the street disoriented, naked and combative. Police restrained him and took him to the hospital, admitting him as a John Doe.

Doctors ran tests, diagnosing him with meningitis. He bounced back quickly, says Wilson, who did research on the disease, learning it can be fatal. She said she kept an eye on him, but they quickly resumed their regular routines. A week after being hospitalized with the infection, Gilstrap returned to work cutting grass and performing other maintenance duties with Syracuse Housing Authority, where he had worked for 20 years.

“We’re not 100 percent that the tumors were separate and came after the meningitis,” Wilson said. Doctors explained that his type of tumors can remain dormant. “But it seems three brain tumors can’t just happen from





> Damon Gilstrap works to earn his High School Equivalency Diploma with tutors at the Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center. He believes his education will make his next book stronger and help him to be a better mentor. | Ben Cleeton, Staff Photo

Thanksgiving to January.”

Hearing that the tumors were benign was a blessing. But the news was shocking. Wilson says his diagnosis left her in denial. “We’d been together for seven wonderful years and now get this devastating blow,” she said. At that time, she was 35 and Gilstrap was 40. As their life grew together, such a major health scare — a second one — was more than unexpected.

“We learned the tumors weren’t growing, but were actually shrinking,” she said.

Now, the three masses have shrunk to the point where they are no longer a concern, but the effects from the scarring on his brain remain. Doctors told the couple: This is his new normal.

## BEATING THE ODDS

After the stroke, Gilstrap remained in the hospital for a week; then staff encouraged Wilson to move him into a nursing home.

He adamantly refused, telling Wilson: “You know my story. I’m going to beat this.”

She told him — all 6 feet 3 inches of him — that he was not to fall on her, and he would have to make it to the bathroom. “If you fail even once, I’ll send you off to the home.”

Gilstrap proudly confirmed, “I never fell and had no ‘accidents.’”

Wilson enlisted a team of 10 — close family and friends — to provide around-the-clock care.

“The village came through,” she said.

## ROAD TO RECOVERY

Months after the stroke, Gilstrap would get dizzy and walked with a cane. He kept on a physical therapy schedule to build strength. “While Damon was able to do some things, he was not able to do what was needed at his former job,” Wilson said. He went on workers comp for a year and then was deemed permanently disabled.

“Doctors told me I would never talk. I would never walk ... that I would never do a lot of things again,” Gilstrap said. “But I proved them wrong. I’m walking. I’m driving. I’m talking ... a little different, but I can still talk and have my mental faculties.”

After graduating from his prescribed physical therapy, he continued to push himself. “I turned the backyard into an obstacle course to relearn to walk and build my coordination,” he said. “Everything the hospital told me I wouldn’t do again, I would practice.”

Wilson says Gilstrap would repeatedly do coordination moves like running in place, to regain use of his left side because it had been compromised by the stroke. Doctors also encouraged him to join a gym for the social aspect because the stroke immobilized his left vocal cord, which made him self-conscious when talking.

Initial recovery was slow. He could not pick up a coin with his left hand or feed himself.

A friend became his personal trainer. Gilstrap started with 10 pounds and worked his way up to get his left side as strong as his right. “I would practice for hours and hours, and now I lift weights on my own at the Y regularly,” he said.

## GET A COPY

### PURCHASE:

**Email:** Contact Damon Gilstrap directly by emailing him at [damongilstrap@yahoo.com](mailto:damongilstrap@yahoo.com)

**Mail:** Send a check for \$20 made out to Damon Gilstrap to P.O. Box 722, Syracuse, NY, 13206, and include your mailing address

**In person:** Visit the Dunbar Center, at 1453 S. State St., from 1 to 4 p.m. **Saturday, May 13.** As part of a bigger Mother’s Day event, Damon Gilstrap will be available at a table to sign copies.

### READ FOR FREE:

Visit the **Onondaga County Public Library**, which has two copies that can be checked out.

### FIND AT YARD SALE:

During the annual **Hawley-Green Neighborhood Garage Sale**, homemade signs throughout the neighborhood will direct interested readers to Damon Gilstrap’s home, where he will be participating by selling and signing his book.

The sale will run from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. **Saturday and Sunday, May 20 and May 21**, at various houses in the Hawley-Green Neighborhood, which is bordered by James and Lodi streets and Burnet Avenue.



## WRITING RECOGNIZED

In 2015, Damon Gilstrap's book, **"From Tragedy to Homeless to Triumph,"** was nominated for the best nonfiction book for the YMCA CNY Book Awards.

Each year, the YMCA's Downtown Writers Center recognizes the best books published by Central New York authors.

Submissions for the sixth annual CNY Book Awards are now open.

An award plaque, along with a check for \$350, is provided to the winner in each genre.

**The nomination deadline is July 1.**

To request a nomination form, contact Director Phil Memmer at (315) 474-6851 ext. 328.

Awards will be announced at a reception to be held in November.



> Damon Gilstrap continues to work out every week at the YMCA even after being told by his doctors 10 years ago that his stroke would permanently impair his abilities. | Ben Cleeton, Staff Photo

## SILENT PROMOTION

"If he gets excited, then he speeds up (his speech)," Wilson said. "I can tell no one is understanding him. They get a little smile on their face and just start nodding. Once he gets talking too fast ... I can see the disconnect."

Doctors tried to expand the opening and aid his speech by injecting Gilstrap's left vocal cord with calcium. The couple watched the procedure on a TV screen captured by a camera that doctors had slid through his nose. The up-close view confirmed his left side is paralyzed. "The right one was just going to town, vibrating like crazy," Wilson said. "But his left looked like it was saying, 'No I'm good. I'll just stay still and hang out over here.'"

The procedure offered limited relief. The existing damage is irreversible, Wilson said. "His speech will forever be impacted."

While his speech did not hamper his physical recovery, it did prevent Gilstrap from engaging much socially and from promoting a book he had started writing about two years after his stroke.

His close friend, Greg Hall, kept telling him he had a tremendous personal story, and he should stop hiding and share it with people.

Hall and Gilstrap met in 1999 at '410' — short for 410 South Crouse, the Chemical Dependency Treatment Services center run by Crouse Hospital. Both were attending narcotics anonymous meetings, and at that

time, Gilstrap's reputation was as a drug dealer.

Gilstrap explains he turned to selling drugs as the best way to provide for his family. His book details how he tried legitimate jobs, but could best provide for his four children — and even help others cover their rent or bills — by selling drugs.

"He's like a family member to me," Hall said, noting Gilstrap has helped him many times with a place to stay, a meal and more. "Too often I've gone back to drugs ... and not been there when Damon needs me. I have vowed not to go back that way." He adds he now wants to push Gilstrap because he believes his friend's story can help others.

"The reason I help him now is because he's always helped me," said Hall, who regrets drifting away from Gilstrap in years past. "He's never given up on me."

In 2014, Gilstrap's autobiography "From Tragedy to Homeless to Triumph," was published. Gilstrap spent three years writing it as a way to reflect on his troubled past. He said he felt forced to make certain decisions in order to survive while he grew up in the system, describing his youth as being "warehoused," bouncing from group homes to the streets of Washington D.C.

"We had to turn from sheep to wolves in order to survive," Gilstrap writes in his book, describing the childhood he shared with his brother.

Writing was not easy for him. At that time, his education went to about a fifth-grade level and drafting his book required nearly constant stops to check spelling or



ask about a word.

"I didn't know anything about run-on sentences," he said. "And if I didn't know a word, I would even call my brother and ask him to spell it to me."

He was so excited and kept talking about this book, Hall remembers. "I didn't have the courage to tell him I didn't think he could do it, and good thing I didn't, because I would have been wrong."

## GREATER LATER

After the book release, Gilstrap did one book signing. But the hype faded quickly because he was so uncomfortable with how he spoke.

"He was insecure," Wilson said.

With encouragement from family and close friends, Gilstrap has recently changed his mind and is stepping out to share his story. He also says he has completed a second book.

"The second focuses on how I defeated brain tumors and now use my head rather than violence," he said. "I want to show people how I became a homeowner from once being homeless."

But the second book will not be released just yet, Gilstrap says, because he wants to ensure it has no mistakes. Currently he's working to earn his high school equivalency degree by working with tutors at the Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) four days a week. He also completed a writing course with the YMCA's Downtown Writers Center.

"If I get my education," he said, "I know I can make

my next book even better."

Returning to school is also a way for him to encourage youth whom he mentors. Gilstrap has served as a mentor with the 100 Black Men of Syracuse, Inc., for the past two years and with The Grace Project for three years.

The Grace Project works with teens in jail and also with those who recently have been released. The young men have a hard time breaking out of the cycle they are in, and many don't have their high school degrees, says Dr. Sarah Reks, an outreach member.

Reks has known Gilstrap since he joined the Grace Episcopal Church's jail ministry, which she has been a part of since the project's inception in 2013. She notes Gilstrap adds so much to the program by connecting to the young men — the majority of whom are also African-American — and relate to Gilstrap's traumatic youth. She says his story demonstrates how someone can change — not having to be defined by one's mistakes.

"Having a black man who can model and mentor to them is critical," she said. "It's incredible how Damon is serving as a role model not only by sharing his experiences but by working toward earning his degree."

Even at the age of 50, she adds, he is displaying that desire to better himself.

Gilstrap explains why he works so hard.

"I say, how can I tell these kids to stay in school if I haven't done it. If I don't finish, how can I tell them to do it?"



> Teens enrolled in the 100 Black Men of Syracuse mentoring program listen to Damon Gilstrap during a presentation. He has been a mentor with the local group for the past two years. | Ben Cleeton, Staff Photo

## SILVER LINING

Over the years, Damon Gilstrap has come to see his speech as an asset. He says that if he didn't speak the way he does, the youth he mentors might not hear his message.

Gilstrap currently is mentoring nearly 10 at-risk youth with both the **100 Black Men of Syracuse, Inc.**, and **The Grace Project**.

"They hear me and ask, 'What happened to you?'" he said. "They have to really focus on what I am saying because of my speech."

He says he tells them they can go left or right in life ... "but I already went to the left and this is why you shouldn't go down that path."

- **The Grace Project** works with 16- and 17-year-olds by providing weekly programming in the Justice Center as well as by helping those recently released
- **100 Black Men** serves young men ages 10 to 18 years old through group mentoring techniques



# Malusi Qhobosheane

*Nominated by Twiggy Billue*



**MEET FATHER MALUSI:** Qhobosheane, 37, has four children he refers to as his Hit Squad. He's been married to Marquisha Westbrook since 2011. | Perry Aston, Staff Photo

By | Ashley Kang  
*The Stand* director

*Q: What did it feel like when you first became a father?*

A: I'm in a unique situation because I have a goddaughter that is three years older than my oldest child. So I had — *kind of* — already been through the parenting stage of handling an infant for the first time before I had my own.

*Q: What was that like, being asked to be a godfather?*

It was humbling. When my goddaughter came, I had to shake off some of my rough edges and become more gentle, especially because that child was a girl. Even with my own, I had to slow myself down. My longtime friends have noticed that even at work or church, I take my time. Children made me a more conscious person.

*Q: What can you share about your four children?*

A: The oldest is Jaaziah, 7, who is in first grade. He's

definitely a nerd. Very intelligent and very protective, which surprised me because he bullies his siblings. But when they are out in the world, he does not allow anyone else to bully them. He's also very, very athletic — constantly climbing. All around a beautiful, healthy, happy baby. Number two is Akeli, who is 5. I call her my first lieutenant — she runs the ship. She makes sure everybody brushes their teeth, wears their seatbelts, sits in the right place at meal time ... She's definitely the commander-in-chief of the household. I see it as her way of loving, to ensure there is structure in our lives. Number three is Giacobbe, 3. He's the emotional one. He's very affectionate and at the same time can flip the switch at any time. Overall, he's very loving, caring and affectionate. The last, Zakari, 2, is the dictator. He can be a grouch, the ruler, the controller. We love him to death, but he can have his evil streaks. He also has the biggest appetite in the household and is the fighter out of the bunch. I credit that trait to him making sure he's not bullied since he's the baby.



*Q: Is one most like you?*

A: The oldest — I'm a nerd too.

*Q: And which is most like your wife?*

A: Number three. They are both excessively loving individuals.

*Q: What was your relationship like with your father?*

A: We didn't have as much of an opportunity to spend time together as both of us would have liked. He worked as a truck driver. On top of that, I went to a boarding academy. When we did have opportunities, it was great. Many memories of watching football together. My favorite team is because of him. He's a Buffalo Bills fan, and back then I was a Houston Oilers fan. One of the things the Bills are famous for is going to the Super Bowl and losing four straight times. Every year they seem to go through Houston, and that's how I became a fan of theirs.



> Malusi Qhobosheane engages in some horseplay with his four children. | Perry Aston, Staff Photo

## *“Consistency is key”*

*Q: As a father, is there anything that you do that would surprise people?*

A: How much of a dictator I am. Especially when we're out. I refer to them as the Hit Squad. Because I have four children, referring to all of them by each individual name, isn't fast enough. A lot of people are taken aback by that — in a positive way. I can just say, 'Hit Squad, fall in' or 'Hit Squad, suit up' — meaning put their jackets on. It's just too many kids to be calling all their names. It's easier to use one mantra to get all of their attentions. So I think others casually applaud that system of control I have in place. The name Hit Squad comes from a rap group from the late '80s, early '90s. It was my brother's favorite growing up.

*Q: What is your opinion about commonly held stereotypes about black fathers?*

A: The typical one, that we are absent, deadbeat dads, does not resonate with me. Out of 20 guys in my crew, I'd have to admit that maybe there is one. Even as I drive down the street, I see fathers walking with their children, wishing that I was a millionaire so I could buy them a car so they wouldn't have to trudge through the snow with their kids. More so now, black fathers are there. It's agitating to hear that narrative that they are absent. Especially if you are to consider the full situation — those that are absent may be 'caught

up in the system' ... oftentimes a black male could end up spending years in prison over even a small drug charge. Now that person is out of their children's lives for something real little. The world that we are subject to automatically places us into a negative narrative. This makes it difficult for black fathers to be successful. It's constantly an uphill battle. Not all are successful, but it is disheartening that the narrative pushed paints a picture of somebody that has quit. The whole story often isn't revealed — it could have been through all types of ups and downs and lefts and rights ... after being damaged by life and society.

*Q: Any advice for first-time dads?*

A: Be yourself. As a parent, you're only the first personality that your children meet. You become that foundational voice in their head, but it pretty much ends there. Then the world molds them. It can be bad, but it's good, too, because you want your children to be able to navigate the world. Also, consistency is key. I think that has helped me a lot in grooming my children in becoming respectful adults. Being consistent in what I say and do helps them know what to expect. Like with the Hit Squad mantra, at certain points in the day, if I say it, they know exactly what's happening. If it's bath time, they all will go directly upstairs. If it's meal time, they know to run to the dinner table. That makes it easy to negotiate the day.

ON THE SIDE

# ALICEA AWARD

**What:** 38th annual Freedom Fund Dinner

**When:** Reception at 5 p.m.; program and dinner starting at 6 p.m. Thursday, May 18

**Where:** Holiday Inn Liverpool, 411 Electronics Parkway

**Details:** Keynote speaker former Gov. **David A. Paterson** and presentation of a number of local awards, including the **Mary McLeod Bethune Educator Award** to Alicea

**Cost:** VIP reception and dinner is \$125 per person or \$240 per couple; dinner only is \$85 per person or \$160 per couple

**More info.:** Email [syracusenaacp@gmail.com](mailto:syracusenaacp@gmail.com)

## MORE HONOREES

- **The Rev. Phil M. Turner** to receive the Harriet Tubman Freedom Fund Award
- Price Rite President **Neil Duffy** to receive the Earl G. Graves Sr. Corporate Award
- **Shirley and Tyrone Goddard** to receive the Madame C. J. Walker Small Business Award
- **Ann Marie Taliercio** and **Mark Barbee** to both receive the A. Philip Randolph CNY Union Award
- **Floyd D. Little** to receive the Muhammad Ali Iconic Sports Award

# EDUCATOR-IN-CHIEF

*Superintendent aims to keep students in school, raise graduation rates*



> Syracuse City School District Superintendent Jaime Alicea meets elementary school students enrolled in his district on the first day of school. | John Berry, Syracuse City School District

By | Dana Matuson  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

After decades of work in schools, Jaime Alicea has a chance to make a mark in the top job

In the past three years, the Syracuse City School District has added three new schools, a districtwide discipline overhaul and, most recently, a graduation rate that has exceeded 60 percent — a rate not seen in almost nine years. While some would see these as areas of success, superintendent Jaime Alicea, who took over the position in March, sees these only as stepping stones for greater district growth and improvement.

“I have worked in the Syracuse City School District for my entire career, and I believe in our students, our families and our staff,” Alicea said. “I believe that if we all work together that we can really turn this district around and start to see some really great improvements.”

Alicea has spent the past 34 years dedicated to improving schools and advocating for the children of the Syracuse district, he said. During this time, he worked with students as a teacher, a principal and chief operations officer. After the departure of former Superintendent Sharon Contreras last summer, he served as interim superintendent. Because of his work as an advocate and

“Our future ... is our students and families.”

— Jaime Alicea

a leader in the classroom, Alicea was recognized by Syracuse University Chancellor Kent Syverud with the Chancellor’s Citation for Public Education in 2015 as well as numerous other diversity achievement awards, including an upcoming Mary McLeod Bethune Educator Award from the Syracuse/Onondaga County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Alicea received a unanimous vote for installation by the Board of Education following success in his short-term goal of boosting literacy rates. During his seven months as interim superintendent, Alicea worked to hire more teachers to work with students, said Board of Education member Rita Paniagua.

“All of us are very focused on the timeline of the



children coming to the district,” Paniagua said. “In third grade, we have goals of reading to learn, not learning to read, and he really pushed this idea.”

However Alicea’s role as an educator extends far outside his job. On his first official day in office, Alicea hosted a luncheon at Le Moyne College to honor city educators.

“Our future in this city and school district is our students and families,” Alicea said. “I am working to establish a positive, respectful districtwide culture.”

Alicea has always been heavily involved with school affairs, attending as many sporting events, parent-teacher meetings and community forums as possible. Because he has a hands-on approach to leadership, one of Alicea’s strengths as superintendent is his desire for communication and transparency, according to Board of Education member Katherine Sojewicz.

“He wants to hear what everyone has to say,” Sojewicz said. “Jaime has the respect of the community because of his commitment and relationships he has built throughout the city during his career. We appreciate that as a board and have seen a dramatic increase in morale and engagement from our staff and community as a whole.”

Moving forward, Alicea will continue to work closely with the seven Syracuse School District Board of Education members to improve graduation rates and reduce dropout rates, Sojewicz said. Together, they have plans to continue the drone technology program that educates students about construction and regulation of drones in engineering and manufacturing careers, expand the suc-



> Jaime Alicea, left, is seated with Syracuse University Vice President for Community Engagement Bea Gonzalez, center, and SU Chancellor Kent Syverud at a recent Pathways in Technology Early College High School event. | Zau Jat N-Hkum, ITC Student

cessful career and technical education programs existing in all five high schools and host more frequent community forums. The district is also finishing up its five-year plan, focused on building a better district culture, hiring and retaining effective teachers and providing better access to instructional materials.

In the 2015-2016 school year, the district had an enrollment of more than 19,000 students, with the number increasing this past year because of an influx of refugee students from seven Muslim countries.

“I’m excited to work with him because he listens, he’s tough,” Paniagua said. “And that right there is half the battle — when you’re inclusive of people, you get the job done.”

## ABOUT ALICEA



Jaime Alicea is no stranger to Syracuse. After moving to the United

States, Alicea received a master of arts in **foreign language education** from Syracuse University in 1988. Having been **born in Puerto Rico**, English literacy has always been a passion of his.

Alicea began his educational career at **Seymour Elementary School**, then became principal of **George W. Fowler High School**. Next, he worked to improve security, health services and facilities as chief operations officer until his newest role as superintendent.

## Summer enrichment program registration now open

The Literacy Empowers All People (LEAP) program is a summer enrichment program for students who have finished second grade but not yet started third grade.

LEAP will start July 5 and run through Aug. 4. The program will meet from 9 a.m. to noon Monday through Friday at Great Grace Church, 410 Oswego St. Classes are small. Each teacher works with four or five students, so each child gets individual attention.

The LEAP program uses literature to teach writing and problem solving. Students in LEAP choose a problem in their world and work to find solutions to it. The solutions are then passed on to stakeholders in the community so that the children’s ideas can be put into action. Everything LEAP does is student-centered. LEAP teachers believe that these are smart children who have a lot to say. The project’s goal is to show young students that reading and writing well will help them use their voices to change the world.

Registration for the program is now open. The deadline for applications is June 1.



> Girls in the Literacy Empowers All People (LEAP) program pose with Director Ashley Kang of The Stand and their teachers as part of News Engagement Day in 2014. | File Photo

To apply, contact Dr. Tabor Fisher, director of LEAP at Le Moyne College (315) 445-4256 or by email at [fisherct@lemoyne.edu](mailto:fisherct@lemoyne.edu)



## VISION BOARDS

Creative minds were working as **Robyn Mitchell**, entrepreneur, facilitated the development and inward desires of the girls attending the **Empowering Girls at the Roundtable** event in March.

Each girl created her own **vision board**. The girls were encouraged to have and to keep a vision for their lives and dreams in front of them as they pursue their goals.

The message to them: **Keep your eyes on the prize** so your dreams do not perish in the transitions of life.

# EMPOWERING GIRLS

*City Court judge urges them to stay in school, follow their dreams*



> Angela Wright, executive director of the Syracuse Model Neighborhood Corporation, left, poses with City Court Judge Vanessa E. Bogan, center, and Camille Coakley, a Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today delegate. | Provided Photo

By | Lou Carol Franklin  
*Guest columnist*

A roundtable event promoted the importance of education, persistence and confidence

City Court judge Vanessa E. Bogan addressed a room of girls during an Empowering Girls at the Roundtable event on a spring Saturday in the newly renovated Community Café, 1555 S. Salina St.

It wasn't a courtroom, but a place full of possibility, hope, vision and love.

The roundtable was presented March 18 by Southside Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT) Youth and Education Task Force, and it was sponsored by Syracuse Model Neighborhood Corporation.

At the beginning of the roundtable, Bogan casually mingled with attendees in a personal way. Sue Wood, chair of the Southside TNT Youth and Education Task Force, welcomed everyone to the first roundtable and then introduced Bogan.

As the judge changed her appearance by placing on her judicial robe, she began by asking how many know what the judicial system is. The most prevalent answer was jail.

Bogan explained the judicial system and emphati-

***“Stay in school.”***

***— Judge Vanessa Bogan***

cally told the young girls, “Stay in school,” adding that this is the most important thing they can do for themselves. When Bogan put on her robe of authority, it became a powerful visual that people can change their lives if they “just keep trying.”

Bogan spoke candidly to the girls, explaining that she grew up in an area of New York City where crime, drugs, poverty and the like existed more than what these young girls may be experiencing. Yet, she explained, with hope, dreams and determination — and through various paths of life — she now places on the robe of authority and insisted that they, too, could be anything they envisioned. The key to achieving is education, not quitting and to just keep going, she said.

She asked the girls to share their dreams, and among the answers were doctor, teacher and nurse. Bogan emphasized that the girls should get involved with something that makes them happy, perhaps sports, so that they



can gain confidence in competing with others. She told the girls to never let anything or anyone stop them even when it's hard.

Then the judge issued each young girl an oath of sorts by face-to-face asking, "Are you going to stay in school?" As each girl answered yes, Bogan responded with, "You promise?" Each answered, "I promise."

Bogan ended by telling them that the law is "a mechanism for social change."

Also during the roundtable, the girls were encouraged by the powerful chant of "girl power" led by Angela Wright, executive director of the Syracuse Model Neighborhood Corporation.

Wright explained that girl power means building confidence and accomplishing dreams, and this can be accomplished by staying in school. This message was delivered not only for the benefit of each young girl in attendance, but also to motivate the girls to encourage others to stay in school.

Tierra Franklin, 17, a member of Southside TNT Community/Media/Special Events Task Force and a Henninger High School student, addressed the girls as to what is really important. She said it's not all about the hair and the nails. Yes, she said, look good — but for yourself, not to impress others.

"I'm just gonna put it out there," she told the girls. "I dropped out of school in the ninth grade because of various reasons, but after realizing that if I wanted to be anything in life, I needed to get back in school."



> Judge Vanessa Bogan, center, surrounded by girls at the Empowering Girls at the Roundtable event. | Provided Photo

She said many people encouraged her and are still helping her, and she was excited to tell the girls about her upcoming graduation from Henninger in June, with plans to attend college.

She told the girls they can do it, too, and not to let anyone tell them they cannot. She said it might be hard but to just keep trying.

The event then became a powerful question-and-answer session. Girls flooded Franklin with questions, such as had she ever been bullied, and a bond was formed as many names and numbers were exchanged among them.

*Lou Carol Franklin is co-chair of Southside TNT and Communications/Media/Special Events Task Force*

## PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of **Empowering Girls at the Roundtable** is to get young girls between the ages of 9 and 18 active and involved in their communities through mentorship, community activities and exposure.

Roundtables will be held monthly at a date and time to be announced.

**For more information,** call (315) 448-8178 or [southsidetnt@gmail.com](mailto:southsidetnt@gmail.com)

ON THE SIDE

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Sunday (bakery)
- Noon to 9 p.m.  
Sunday (liquor store)

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- Bakery  
(315) 473-2948

# ICONIC SHOPS MOVE

*Brighton Bakery, Brighton Discount Liquor officially open in new place*



> Owner Mark Stefanski stands outside Brighton Bakery, now located at 466 E. Brighton Ave., about a mile down the road from his previous property. | Nate Band, Staff Photo

By | Nate Band  
*Urban Affairs reporter*

## South Side favorites can still be found a mile from original location on Brighton Avenue

For the past 90 years, Brighton Bakery has been a Syracuse staple, with its baked goods and proximity to local businesses. After nearly a century of the bakery operating out of the same location — 335 E. Brighton Ave. — the shop recently moved about a mile up the street to 466 E. Brighton Ave. The move took nearly a year to complete.

The bakery dates back to 1928 and was opened on the North Side by owner Mark Stefanski's grandfather. The bakery has seen steady business, except for a brief period in the 1980s, before Stefanski took ownership.

Stefanski added an adjacent liquor store some years after purchasing the property. He attributes the legal ramifications of owning a liquor store as one reason the bakery relocation took as long as it did.

"Really the most logistically difficult part of this whole process was transferring the liquor license to our new location," Stefanski said. "The new building that our stores were going to run out of wasn't ready yet, and that led to the liquor store being closed for about 10 months.

So that is a reason the move took much longer than we had expected."

The prolonged transition didn't scare Stefanski. Bakery employee Sallie Cuyler said that Brighton is too well-known to worry about losing customers.

"This is the neighborhood's bakery," Cuyler said. "We have customers that came here years ago while growing up with their parents or grandparents or even some who have worked here before. Aside from the location move, there hasn't been much that has changed within the bakery."

Fittingly, the new location offers more space for Brighton Discount Liquor than for the bakery, in keeping with efforts to expand the store's variety, Stefanski said.

In the early 1990s, Stefanski had converted the garage of Brighton Bakery to a liquor store once the bakery had begun to cut back on delivery services; for years, it had delivered breads and other goods to local businesses.

Today, the bakery still delivers bread to some, like Varsity Pizza, but has cut back its delivery service significantly.

"After we stopped most of our deliveries, I had to think of a way to start making up for the profit we weren't making anymore," Stefanski said. "That's when I



decided to turn the garage into a liquor store."

Stefanski and Cuyler run the shops and are there pretty much every day. Stefanski has earned somewhat of a reputation on the South Side, serving as a major reason he didn't want to move the bakery too far away from the community he has called home his entire life.

"I lived next door to the bakery until I was 6 years old," he said. "I didn't want to move away from my neighborhood and a place where people know me."

Cuyler compared Stefanski's role to that of the neighborhood barber, while loyal customer and South Side resident Carol Bryant described him as a known and respected figure within the South Side community.

Stefanski sold the former location of the bakery to allow for a student housing project to be built. As a former student of Syracuse University, Stefanski had always maintained a strong relationship with students who would visit the bakery on a regular basis.

For those students who know Stefanski, however, the move is simply just "a slightly further drive," as SU senior and Manlius resident Cain Goode put it. Goode had been going to Brighton Bakery since he was in high school.

Stefanski splits his time at the store between baking pastries and selling liquor, and the two go well together because demand for the items shifts. The bakery is usually busier in the earlier hours of the day, while the liquor store starts to attract customers toward the evening.



> Brighton Bakery sells breads, pastries and more at its new location at 466 E. Brighton Ave. | Nate Band, Staff Photo



> Large cookies are a specialty baked at Brighton Bakery. | Nate Band, Staff Photo

## DUCK RACE

**When:** Noon to 4 p.m.  
Saturday, June 10

**Where:** Inner Harbor, 390 W. Kirkpatrick St.

**Details:** This family festival features children's entertainment, community information booths and duck races galore. It is a celebration with people of many backgrounds and walks of life. Raffle tickets are \$5 each to participate in the general public Community Duck Race, featuring prizes and gifts.

**More info.:** Gwen Sanders (315) 449-3552 ext. 119 or [gsanders@interfaithworkscny.org](mailto:gsanders@interfaithworkscny.org)

ON THE SIDE

## Do you need help with your breast cancer bills?

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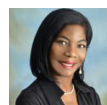
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# Our cops, our community — an *inside* look



**Michael Santiago** / Officers Ahmad Mims (right) and William Lashomb, members of Syracuse Police Department Crime Reduction Team, talk over the next steps after processing contraband found during a traffic stop. The Crime Reduction Team polices in high-crime areas throughout the city of Syracuse.

## Coming soon in May 2017: #TheyWearBlue

Get alerts at [www.mysouthsidestand.com](http://www.mysouthsidestand.com)



# SUMMER IN PHOTOS

*The South Side Newspaper Project's most popular event returns*

From professionals to those who don't own a camera, all are invited to snap pictures July 22

**T**he eighth annual South Side Photo Walk will capture a day on Syracuse's South Side.

Photos captured each year showcase families, events, fun and touching moments within the community. Some even document the activity at local barbershops and salons. The final images are often ones not typically displayed in the mainstream media.

While the Photo Walk brings in a large crowd each year, the real success is the range of people who participate in this annual summer event.

Professional photographers lead the walk, providing tips and guidance along the way. Some participants are amateur hobbyists, and others might be learning how to take pictures for the first time. Participants range in age from youth to retirees.

The Photo Walk is also a great way for everyone to engage with readers of The Stand by meeting them directly — where they live!



> A past year's Photo Walk participant shows young girls the images she took of them playing. | File Photo

## AUGUST GIVEAWAY

**What:** 15th annual Mary Nelson's School Supply Giveaway

**When:** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 19

**Where:** Corner of South Salina and Wood Avenue

**Details:** Parade for youth at 11 a.m. Then backpacks with school supplies will be given out to registered youth. Event includes food, entertainment, games. Needed: volunteers, school supplies, food.

**Cost:** Free; students must be preregistered to receive school supplies

**More info.:** Visit [youthdaybarbecue.com](http://youthdaybarbecue.com)

## IF YOU GO:

**What:** Eighth annual South Side Photo Walk

**When:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, July 22

**Where:** Meet at the South Side Innovation Center, 2610 S. Salina St.

**Details:** The event will open with a photo lesson by professional photographers Kate Collins, who is a photo and video manager at [syracuse.com](http://syracuse.com), and Marilu Lopez Fretts, who is a freelance and multimedia photographer ([mlfphotography.com](http://mlfphotography.com)). After the walk, all participants will share their photos, and the best shots will be published in the September print issue of The Stand.

**Cost:** Free and open to all ages of any skill level

**To reserve a camera:** Cameras are available for loan, but the number is limited. To request to borrow a camera, contact Ashley Kang via email at [ashley@mysouthsidestand.com](mailto:ashley@mysouthsidestand.com) or call her at (315) 882-1054

**More info.:** Visit [mysouthsidestand.com](http://mysouthsidestand.com)



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ON THE SIDE

## VIEW MORE PHOTOS

Photos on these pages were taken by students as part of a new photography class. Visit Facebook and search South Side Collective to view more.

### MEET THE STUDENTS



Ronnaeysia Goodwin  
Nottingham High School



Nyshaun Joe  
JT Roberts School



Tilden McCullough  
Danforth Middle School



Nijereya Harris  
Grant Middle School



John'daezia Goodwin  
Ed Smith

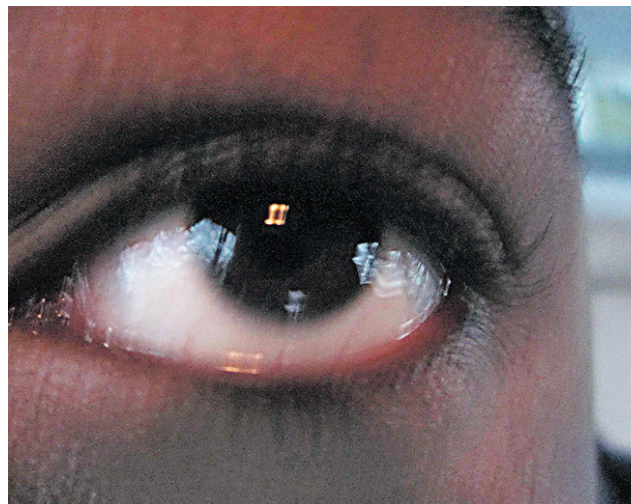


Nadia Joe  
JT Roberts School

To donate materials or for more information, email [dahildeb@syr.edu](mailto:dahildeb@syr.edu)

# A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Young students learn to look at world differently through photography



| Nyshaun Joe



| Nadia Joe

By | Dominique Hildebrand  
*Guest column by staff photographer*

## Newhouse master's student explains her passion for South Side Collective class that she started

Six students who make up the South Side Collective — a new photography class that provides children with tools to communicate visually — are creating something that is all about them: their lives, likes and interests. And every week they are excited to share those images with one another.

"What do you think this is?" asks one student, Nijereya Harris, as she shows a small LCD screen to anyone who is around. Others in the class crowd around, asking questions, such as "How did you do that?" Their uninhibited curiosity allows their minds to consider all the possibilities. They try to guess what is happening in the photograph and what it means.

I created the South Side Collective photography class so students can share their own stories and sculpt their narrative in society. Currently, six middle and high-school students make up the class, which is held at the South Side Communication Center. They are experimenting with photography and how documenting daily life can cause a lasting impression.

Photographic education programs for children have shown to be successful in a host of ways. Photographers and educators like Brendan Bannon and National Geographic photographer Reza, have worked with refugee children to provide a tool to share their voice, while also utilizing the images to increase grant funding and community awareness. The images created in these types of programs are sharing an intimate portrait of daily life.

They are allowing children, who are often overlooked, to share their voice. Students are exposed to a life skill that could lead to a career. One of the most fascinating elements of a student photographic program is that only that student could record that specific moment in time. It is their piece of history to keep.

The main goal for the South Side Collective is allowing freedom of expression and communication to a group of children while giving them the opportunity to feel empowered through the work they produce.

I became interested in the idea of creating this visual communication program after seeing the work from the above-mentioned programs. My intention was to go beyond providing a tool for visual communication. I wanted the students to understand the value in a photograph, and the long-term value in making their own images. They are growing up in an age where photographs are not only important visual cues, but also are the primary way to communicate. And with social media, it is easy for six young photographers to share what life in Syracuse is like through their eyes.

Through this program, I also hope to better link the photography program at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and the South Side community. At Syracuse University, there is an abundance of young photographers creating community-centered documentary storytelling. I want to encourage these photographers to become more engaged with the communities they are documenting so they can understand the impact they have within the communities they document. An increase in community engagement will benefit the students of the South Side Collective and the Newhouse School alike.





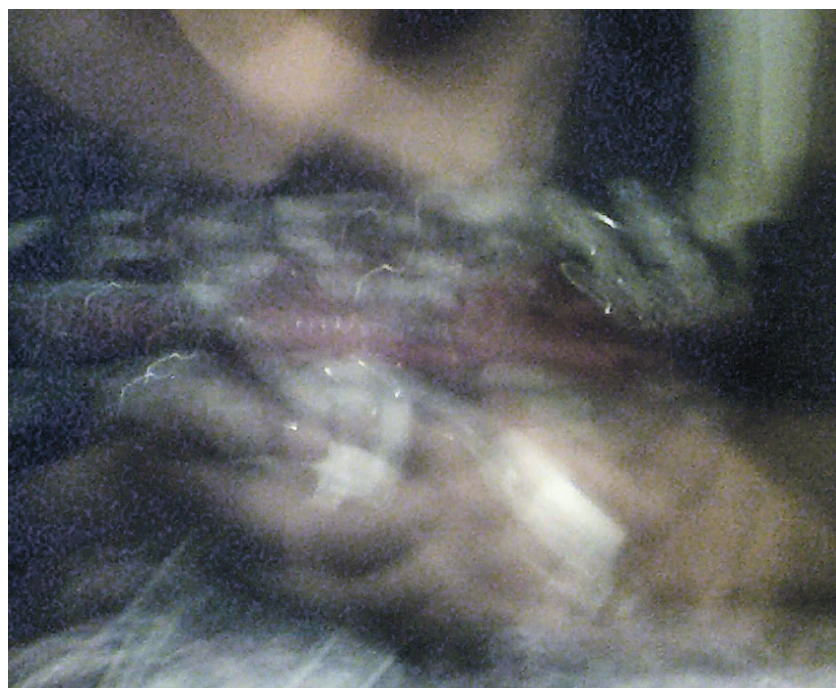
| John'daezia Goodwin



| Ronnaeysia Goodwin



| Tilden McCullough



| Nijereya Harris

While they might not yet realize it, the South Side Collective students have experienced tremendous growth that goes beyond just making a photograph. We take on weekly topics and think about how we can apply a grander theme to their images. One assignment was to photograph things they think are boring. This required the students to become more mindful. They had to consider things they usually overlook, like a pile of sticks, and even try to enjoy something they never think twice about, possibly even dislike. This process builds awareness — of oneself and one's environment.

The hardest logistical challenge was collecting the cameras. We are not a nonprofit, yet. I hope to get this program to that level, but without the financial status behind a nonprofit, I couldn't get companies to support us with gear donations. With the help of my peers in the Multimedia, Photography and Design program, we were able to crowdsource through Facebook

and other social media. My goal was to get a camera in the hands of every student at the South Side Communication Center who wanted to take the class, and we were able to meet that goal.

I have never taken on a challenge like this before. I love teaching and empowering youth, but the challenges faced through this project made the rewards even sweeter. The students have a clear visual voice that is unique to them. They are uninhibited and ready to try anything. Using photography, the students are getting the chance to express their visual voice and to be heard. They are claiming and taking control of their narrative in society.

*Dominique Hildebrand is a staff photographer with The Stand, a Newhouse School master's student and the creator of the South Side Collective*



# RHYTHM OF THE FUTURE

*Accomplished artist shares her passions through performance and as community mentor*

By | Tammy Reese  
*Community correspondent*

*Meet Katishma Grey, a local actress, singer and choreographer who is a teaching fellow and performer at The Redhouse Arts Center. She embodies creativity, knowledge and humility with all of her talents.*

**Q: What is your role at The Redhouse Arts Center?**

A: My role with The Redhouse Arts Fellowship program has been constantly evolving since my start in 2014. The program has given me opportunities such as assisting with choreography, casting in Redhouse Stage productions, helping to bring “The Little Mermaid” on tour through SCSD (Syracuse City School District) schools and watching the students’ faces light up from their newfound love of theater. I have been a teacher over my three years in the fellowship, teaching self-love, self-respect and community building through dance and design. The Redhouse Program has shown me the value of art and education.

**Q: What are some memorable projects?**

A: During my time with Redhouse, I have been honored to be part of “Dreamgirls,” “Madea The Greek Myth by Euripides,” “Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens” and “Ragtime.” I had the role of Squeak in “The Color Purple” and have been in two commercials for a local credit union. Each opportunity has been amazing and eye opening but nothing more so than being a part of the Redhouse Fellowship. The people I have met and the things I have learned and continue to learn have been invaluable. Everything from the students, teachers, Redhouse administrators and the unique group of ever-changing co-fellows ... did I mention my students — I just love! I cherish this experience and continue to push through all the politics of education to speak to the hearts of our children.

**Q: What made you want to get into entertainment?**

A: The rhythm of the drumbeat made me want to get into entertainment. It’s what we live by — our heartbeat. The rhythm of a perfectly delivered monologue. The drumbeat in my favorite song. It all moves me and inspires me to want to share that dynamic energy.

**Q: What are some major accomplishments you achieved?**

A: My biggest accomplishment is any relationship I can cultivate with a child on this planet. Working in the SCSD I have met some incredibly talented, streetwise and intelligent students — children that are so pure of heart, you can’t help but to hug them, support and defend them, just become a soldier for them. The world can be so cold, so when a student trusts me enough to seek me out to help them, I don’t take that for granted. Each connection cultivated with the future (the children) is my greatest accomplishment.

**Q: What has the entertainment industry taught you and what advice can you give to others?**

A: The entertainment industry has taught me that although (at times) you may be fighting for your dreams alone, your dreams are not yours ... alone. There are people you are meant to inspire, motivate and educate, simply ... but not so simply, by fighting for and living your dreams. The picture is so much bigger than our worldly desires, bigger than you. Play your part and go after yours!



> Katishma Grey | Provided Photo

**Q: Do you have a motto or quote for inspiration?**

A: I have two. The first happens to be the best advice Oprah said she was ever told, which I recall as “Believe people when they tell you who they are” (which comes from her friend, the late Dr. Maya Angelou.) This is so important because it can save you a lot of time and energy. The second is “forward movement.” We don’t have time to dwell in the moment. The time is now for political action, spiritual action, physical action, action for the food we eat, the air we breathe, our children’s education. The time is now. So, forward movement.

**Q: What’s your advice for those who aspire to be an actress, singer or dancer?**

A: Define what you are, and be that. Own it — good, bad or ugly. Hold yourself accountable for what you define yourself as, and listen to your inner voice first. The world is yours!

**Q: Any shoutouts?**

A: Shoutout to The One, The All, The Universal Creator. I am humbled and thankful for your direction. Pure love as I stand in my light. (To) my ancestors for clearing the path for my mission. To my father, Bunga Grey. Thank you for loving me unconditionally. To my children, Jazzmyn, Celese, Isis and Ra. Who am I without you? To say I love you is an understatement! Shoutout to the staff of Frazer and Danforth middle schools and my entire Redhouse crew. It’s not easy, but it is worth it. Keep pushing, guys! Shoutouts to friends and family who support and believe in me. Thank you with all of my heart! I will make you all proud. I love you!

*Tammy Reese is a CNY award-winning writer and actress.  
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# CANCER SCREENINGS



SHERRI LALONDE AND  
SEKOU RAWLINS, MD,  
IN THE COLONOSCOPY  
SUITE WITH A PATIENT

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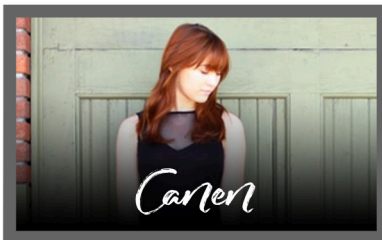
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