



Baltimore-based Community Project, The Black Butterfly Network, Launches Comprehensive New Platform to Uplift Local Black Businesses

Baltimore, MD, November 19, 2021 – The [ESHIP Communities Baltimore](#) Stewardship Council has spent the past two years planning for the launch of the Black Butterfly Network and the associated [Black Butterfly Exchange](#), a comprehensive platform for information and support for Baltimore's Black-owned businesses. Funded by the [I. Rowe Price Foundation](#) and the [Open Society Institute - Baltimore](#) – and aligned with, supported, and funded in part by [ESHIP Communities](#) – the Black Butterfly Network exists to put wind under the wings of Black business owners across the City with free resources, training, educational materials, one-on-one support, and an ever-growing business directory that can be accessed by the public to easily find and patronize Black businesses in Baltimore.

The Black Butterfly Network launched its Pioneer Cohort of Black business owners on October 24 at [Busboys & Poets in Baltimore](#). The event was attended by Dr. Lawrence Brown, author of [The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race & Space in America](#), which inspired the naming of this initiative. Dr. Brown said of the event, “Oh what a delight and joy to attend the baby shower for another beautiful Black Butterfly tonight! Paulo Gregory and his team are launching an effort to connect, accelerate, and amplify Black businesses in Baltimore. It’s called the Black Butterfly Network!”

During the planning process, ESHIP Communities Baltimore, in partnership with [Startup Maryland](#), conducted a tour of Black restaurants and retailers who were hardest hit by the pandemic to ascertain the experience of starting and growing a business in Baltimore and what is needed by the ecosystem of Black entrepreneurs in order to thrive. The results yielded that Black business owners most need access to information that seems to bypass them, a real network of support from other experienced Black business owners, innovative and secure business structures and planning support, finance, marketing, tax planning, team development, and web support.

The Black Butterfly Exchange, highlighting more than 200 businesses and more than 325 resources and supports aimed at supporting the network businesses was developed based upon these needs to serve as a one-stop source of early information



on opportunities and support, particularly as the pandemic is still stressing businesses. In addition, members will be able to access just-in-time training in critical areas of business and news impacting small businesses. They will also be able to easily network with each other directly through the platform to share challenges and solutions.

Bianca Brown, owner of [The Bee's Knees Organics](#), and Pioneer Cohort member said, "I am committed to full engagement in the Black Butterfly because I am excited about being a part of a community willing to pour into, not only me and my small business, but to the other selected businesses. We will all be a part of a community that has information and resources directed at helping us all thrive. Someone saw something in me and my business and I would love to be able to pay that forward and help others with the knowledge that I gain."

Paulo Gregory, ESHIP Communities Local Organizer and facilitator of the creation of the Black Butterfly Network and Black Butterfly Exchange states, "Baltimore's Black community has struggled for generations under system-wide economic and social oppression leaving our neighborhoods virtually devoid of economic opportunity, and lacking even the most basic access to the essential elements of thriving communities. The Black Butterfly Network is dedicated to reversing these impacts by creating the opportunity for the creativity and innovation spawned by this struggle to be freed and resourced so that Black business owners, dedicated to community development, can bring the resources back to the community providing a pathway for current and future aspiring entrepreneurs to follow and help build to create sustainable and thriving communities in Baltimore and beyond."

The Black Butterfly Network is hosting a celebration and press event on December 19 from 3:00-5:00 p.m. at a location to be determined. The Black Butterfly Commencement Event will include the strategic outreach plan developed by the Cohort members to expand the network of businesses and outreach to the next Cohort.

List of Cohort Members:

Nicole and Dwight Brock, [Cajou Creamery](#)

Alisa Williams, [Drama Mama Bookshop](#)

Nilajah Muhammad, [Flourish](#)

Melanie Redmond Bagby and Dasia , [Ice Queens LLC](#)



Kelli Smith, [Mova Nature](#)

Debonette Wyatt, [My Mama's Vegan](#)

Candice Brown, [Old Major](#)

Cleaveland Bruno, Perfect Alignment Realty

Kondi Kabia, Proactive Wellness

Tasin Wyatt, Tendea Family/ The Fruit Creamery

Bianca Brown, [The Bees Knees Organics](#)

Lorenzo Williams, [Wilde Ital CBD](#)

LaQuicha Walters-Smith, [Berries By Quicha](#)

Media Assets:

Black Butterfly [Images and Logo Folder](#)

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[Cohado, Inc.](#) organizes and facilitates the ESHIP Communities Baltimore initiative. Cohado is the generator of collaborative community solutions including training and facilitation of connective impact efforts, teams, and community-building initiatives. In addition Cohado develops tools, media, and other products that support the understanding of the power of the collective mindset critical to creating sustainable social and environmental regeneration.