



# THE HIGHLIGHTER

*A Bi-Monthly Newsletter*

## WOMEN'S HOUSING COALITION

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The next installment of  
**CONVERSATIONS - The Lived Baltimore Experience**  
our virtual fundraiser/speaker series is in June!

Our next guest is writer/director  
**FELICIA PRIDE!**



**CONVERSATIONS**  
The Lived Baltimore Experience

Many thanks to those who joined us as we talked to Kevin Shird as our first guest at our first virtual fundraising event - **CONVERSATIONS – The Lived Baltimore Experience**. And many thanks to Kevin for sharing with us!

The year-long virtual speaker series spotlighting guests with deep connections to Baltimore. These conversations give voice to personal accounts of successful Baltimore natives, and how their successes are rooted in their lived Baltimore experiences. Our next installment will take place on **Thursday, June 24, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.**, and our speaker will be author/television writer/filmmaker **Felicia Pride**.



Baltimore native Felicia Pride is a writer and an award-winning filmmaker. She wrote on two seasons of Ava DuVernay's **QUEEN SUGAR** and currently writes on

GREY'S ANATOMY. She's sold pilots to Bravo, 20th Television, and Netflix. She's also sold features to Universal Pictures and is the co-writer and executive producer of REALLY LOVE, which won a Special Jury Prize at SXSW. She recently made her directorial debut with the short film tender, which she also wrote, which won a Lionsgate award at BlackStar Film Festival and is currently airing on STARZ. Felicia was a Film Independent Screenwriting Lab Fellow and a graduate of NBC's Writers on the Verge program as a comedy writer. Felicia started her writing career nearly twenty years ago as an entertainment journalist before going on to write several books, including the essay collection, The Message: 100 Life Lessons from Hip-Hop's Greatest Songs. Prior to transitioning to screenwriting, she worked as a film distribution exec and an impact producer. Felicia holds an M.A. in writing from Emerson College and runs The Create Daily, a resource for underrepresented storytellers that she founded in 2012.

Pride began her writing career as an entertainment journalist, contributing stories to VIBE, The Root, The Baltimore Sun, Baltimore City Paper, and others. After graduating from Emerson College with her master's degree in writing, literature and publishing, she worked in New York's book publishing scene, pre-Kindle era, before carving out a niche for herself advocating for and covering the literary world from an African-American perspective. Soon after, she landed her own blog on AOL Black Voices, became a regular contributor to Publishers Weekly, and a columnist for The Root.

Read more about Felicia's recent accomplishments in this article from Variety [here](#).

Many thanks to [Whiting Turner](#) for supporting this event as lead sponsor.

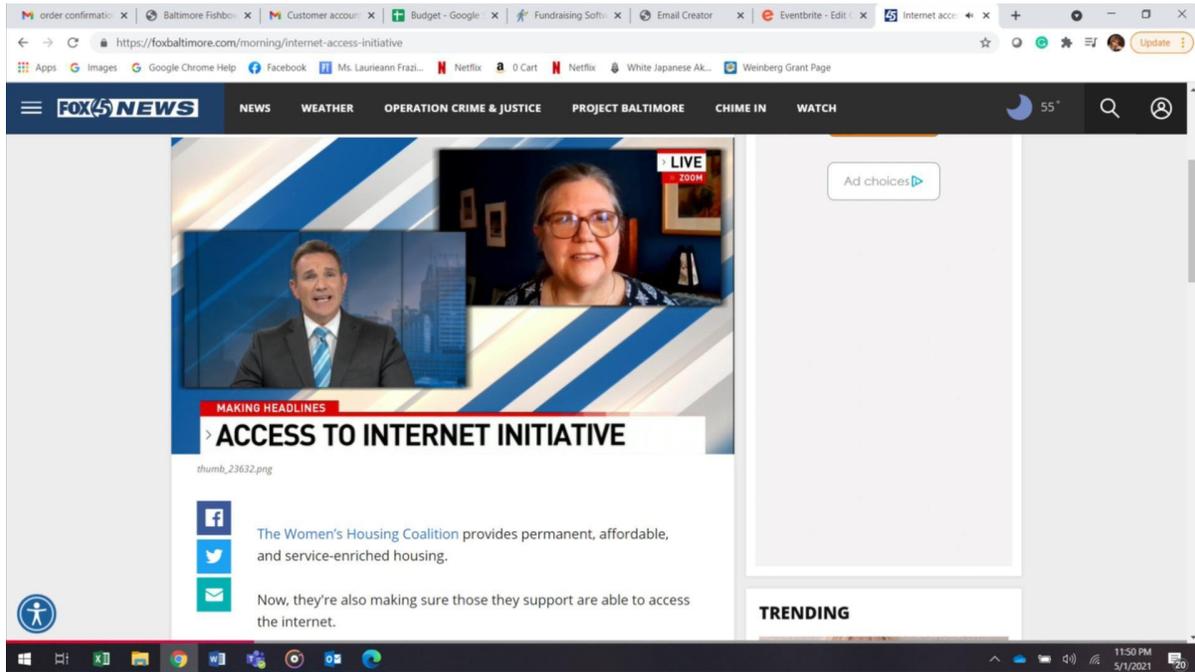


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[Check out our fearless leader Beth Benner talking about our wi-fi initiative on Fox 45 News](#)



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[Read about our Internet access initiative in Technical.ly Baltimore](#)



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## WHC Holds COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics For Residents, Staff, and Families

Working in tandem with fellow local healthcare provider Alliance Associates, who provide in-house healthcare, WHC was able to obtain and distribute the first dose of the Moderna vaccine to over 40 of their residents as well as schedule their second dose. WHC covered the transportation costs for residents by paying for Uber and Lyft rides, and provided a small pop-up store at the Bennett House location to provide personal care and household items donated by IKEA and United Way for residents after receiving the vaccine.

As thousands around Baltimore flock to mass vaccination centers, WHC's efforts show the value of smaller-scale outreach in ending the COVID-19 pandemic. Reaching the especially vulnerable impoverished populations in the city has proven a challenge as many lack the time or means to schedule and reach vaccination centers, and general unease about the vaccines remains an issue. At WHC, case managers have answered residents' questions about COVID throughout the pandemic, and have always given residents whatever kinds of supports they needed over the past 14 plus months. This included providing weekly newsletters with the most up-to-date information about what was happening with the pandemic nationally as well as locally. When the vaccine became available to WHC, case managers have worked hard at providing the residents with accurate and detailed information about the vaccine, its purpose, and potential side effects. They have addressed concerns whenever they have been expressed by a resident. Through the case manager's tireless work, WHC has been able to assuage the concerns many have had about the vaccine, and is confident that the majority of the individuals and families they provide care for will choose to receive the vaccine.



“The large-scale efforts being undertaken across the country to end this pandemic are an incredible accomplishment and should be commended, but those aren’t necessarily an option for people who are worried about more basic survival needs,” says Beth Benner, executive director of the Women’s Housing Coalition.

“In order to put vaccines into as many arms as possible, we believe that a more individual approach will be required in some areas, and we’re proud to be able to provide that.”

WHC plans to maintain their vaccination efforts for their residents until the COVID-19 pandemic is officially ended.

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## **\$20K FRANCE-MERRICK FOUNDATION GRANT HELPS WHC BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE**



Because Baltimore City lags behind other cities when it comes to digital access for its low income citizens (check out The Abell Foundation’s report, [\*\*Baltimore’s Digital Divide: Gaps in Internet Connectivity and the Impact on Low-Income City Residents\*\*](#) by John B. Horrigan, Ph.D. for details), most of our residents have the additional obstacle of not having consistent high speed Internet access. This has made our resident’s lives increasingly difficult, especially during the pandemic when online learning became the norm and more and more human services organizations began conducting their day to day operations exclusively online. And applying for work is all but impossible without Internet.

With all these things in mind, WHC crafted a three-step approach to help our residents cross the digital divide: 1 - wire all four of our SRO buildings for wi-fi access; 2 - purchase a library of devices to make available to our residents, either as "loaner" devices, or allow residents to earn device ownership by taking computer courses and achieving related goals; and 3 - bringing on an instructor to teach our residents about safely using the Internet. We were able to achieve step 1 through the generosity of a grant from the Abell Foundation (many thanks to them!). Thanks to the generosity of the France-Merrick

Foundation via a \$20,000 grant to WHC, we can now activate step 2 of our plan by purchasing devices like laptops, monitors and printers. We greatly appreciate our philanthropic partners like France-Merrick who help us give our residents tools they can use to improve their lives.

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