

## Living on Mars



**Ava Roberts**  
Pflugerville M. S.

Do you think about living on another planet? Do you want to know if humans can live on Mars? If you want to know the answers to these questions, consider attending Hot Science – Cool Talk on April 27. The topic “Will We Really Live on Mars” will be discussed at Austin ISD’s Performing Arts Center on 1500 Barbara Jor-

dan Blvd.

The guests will be Dr. Joseph Levy and Dr. Jeanette Epps. Dr. Levy is a polar and planetary scientist. He is an assistant professor of geology at Colgate University. He has spent a dozen field seasons in Antarctica at remote field camps since 2004. His research focuses on understanding how matter like rock, water, and life interact in cold deserts across the solar system. Also, Dr. Jeanette Epps will make a special appearance. She is a NASA Astronaut since 2009. She has authored several journals. She also worked at Ford Motor Company and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) before becoming an astronaut.

## Early Birthday Celebration



**Kamryn Mack**  
Kipp Leadership Elem.

On April the seventh I had my early birthday celebration. It was a really enjoyable birthday. We were doing one thing then the next. This article is about my early birthday celebration. I hope you enjoy my article.

First, my grandpa, grandma, my dad, and my

mom, went to IHOP or International House of Pancakes. I ate a whole Belgian Waffle with shelled or scrambled eggs and two pieces of bacon. A big, birthday breakfast! I got to play games with my family and talk. Then, we went to Barn’s and Noble’s. I got four books, *The 39 Clues: One False Note*, *Jacky Ha-Ha: My Life is a Joke*, *Story Thieves: Pick a Plot*, and *The 11:11 Wish*. We got pink, yellow, and blue cupcakes. My family and friends sang ‘Happy Birthday’.

All in all, I had a really happy and enjoyable birthday. I got to do some really fun activities. I hope you enjoyed my article.

## BSCENE’S BLACK FILMS COMING TO THE BIG SCREEN: APRIL SPOTLIGHT



**Austin, Texas** - Capital City Black Film Festival is proud to bring you this monthly highlight of films with Black casts, Black crew and telling Black stories. Here’s April’s Black Films Coming to the Big Screen spotlight:

### Kings

This drama, starring Halle Berry, tells the story of a foster family living in South Los Angeles weeks before the riots break out surrounding the Rodney King trial in 1992. *Kings* is set to be released in the U.S. on April 27.

### Traffik

Starring Paula Patton, Omar Epps, and Laz Alonso, this thriller follows Brea and John, whose romantic weekend getaway in a secluded mountain home turns into a violent encounter and fight for survival against a thieving, biker gang. *Traffik* drops April 27.

Check out Black films right here in Austin

The 7th annual Capital Black Film Festival is coming to you this August. CCBFF showcases independent Black films from local, national and international filmmakers, provides panel discussions with industry professionals and hosts networking mixers and parties for all to enjoy.

## Claudia D. Williams & the St. James Mass Choir Celebrate 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

By Naomi Richard

On Sunday April 8, 2018, Claudia D. Williams and the St. James Missionary Baptist Church Mass Choir of Austin, Texas celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> Choir Anniversary. What an outstanding milestone in the life of a choir and a congregation! The church held its annual choir service to a packed house with special guests — Detroit, Michigan’s national recording artist Dorinda Clark-Cole, and Kevin Lemons & Higher Calling from Atlanta, Georgia. The 2,500 capacity sanctuary *still* required additional chairs to accommodate the growing crowd.

For 41 years, Austin’s own Claudia D. Williams has served as the choir director, and for the past 20 years Williams has held the office of Director of Music for the St. James congregation. Reflecting on her tenure with the music ministry Williams gave thanks, “I am so excited and take pleasure in the celebration of this 60<sup>th</sup> Choir Anniversary. God has been so faithful to us, we indeed owe Him all of our praise.”

“Thanks to the wonderful choir members, dedicated officers, committee members and musicians. I salute President Billy G. Steen and his endeavors to make sure we are always in place to serve,” concluded Williams.

The Reverend Dr. B. W. McClendon, Church Pas-



**Pictured l-r: Pam Watson, Claudia Williams, Pastor B. W. McClendon, Dorinda Clark-Cole and Kevin Lemons. Photo by I Linda Williams**

tor, expressed his excitement, “To God be the Glory for the marvelous things He has done... Every Sunday, the congregation is moved by the melodious voices of the St. James Music Ministry. From the children, to the Seniors, to the Male Chorus, Praise Teams and Mass Choir, St. James is known for their GREAT MUSIC!”

Great music indeed! Sunday’s celebration brought concert-goers to their feet, to the aisles and to the altar. The toe-tapping, foot-stomping and hand-clapping songs included *He’s Coming Back Again* (songwriter Kenneth Brown), *Not to Us* (songwriter Ricky Dillard), *Good God* (songwriter Kurt

Carr), and *I Know What Prayer Can Do* (songwriter Kevin Davidson), to name a few.

Mrs. Pamela Watson, Legislative Administrator for Rep. Senfronia Thompson, delivered proclamations to Claudia Williams, Dorinda Clark-Cole and Kevin Lemons on behalf of Texas State Representative Dawanna Dukes.

Rep. Dukes wrote, “The St. James Mass Choir garnered attention from the gospel community after recording an album, *The Church House*, in 2009 and embarking on a series of tours to share their message of faith; with a reputation as one of the best choirs in Texas, the group has had the distinc-

tion of performing with such acclaimed gospel artists as Albertina Walker, Donald Lawrence and the Tri-City Singers, Kurt Carr, The Clark Sisters, Keith Pringle, Beverly Crawford, Le’Andria Johnson, James Fortune & FIYA and Bishop T. D. Jakes.”

Music and expressions like those flowing from the St. James Missionary Baptist Church Mass Choir — the joyful, proficient, overflowing, ebullient, faith-filled, passionate, highly interactive, worshipful experience — should be on everyone’s bucket list. It will be remembered for the rest of your life, even as its message has the power to change your life.

## HOWARD’S PR DIRECTOR INSPIRES YOUNG, BLACK MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

By Lauren Poteat  
(NNPA Newswire Contributor)

As a rising star in the public relations field, Alonda Thomas has always sought to inspire young, Black women who want to break into the industry.

Earlier this year, Thomas was named the Director of Public Relations in Howard University’s Office of Communications.

“At Howard, my goal is to continue to promote the brand of this amazing institution,” Thomas said. “[Howard University] has a lot of really great things happening that the public and media don’t know about and my mission is to really bring those things to the forefront and shed additional light on such a dynamic institution.”

Prior to joining Howard University’s staff, Thomas worked as the senior public relations manager at TV One.

In 2017, Thomas was honored as one of the “Top 25 African American PR Millennials to Watch.”

“One of my favorite quotes is by Henry David Thoreau: ‘Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you imagined,’” Thomas said. “I discovered this quote



**Alonda Thomas, the director of public relations in Howard University’s Office of Communications, was named one of the “Top 25 African American PR Millennials to Watch.” (Howard University)**

back in high school, and it always reminds me that I have to be a willing and active participant in making my dreams come true. Since there is a plan already designed for my life, why wouldn’t I move confidently in the direction of making those dreams attainable?”

Hailing from Miami, Florida, it wasn’t until Thomas attended the historically Black college Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), that she knew that she was destined for a career in public relations.

“PR was a passion I stumbled upon while attending Florida A&M, after a fellow classmate told me

they thought I would be really good at the job,” Alonda said. “I pretty much took off from there. College was where I got my start, however I believe my success comes from my willingness to continuously keep learning.”

Thomas said that young, Black women who are considering a career in public relations, shouldn’t be afraid to take direction and try something new.

“I went through a lot of internships and worked for free many times, but it was all worth it,” Thomas said, advising Black millennials to, “Zoom into what you want and then go for it.”

Thomas’ resume in-

cludes work on successful projects like ABC’s “black-ish,” Spike Lee’s “Chi-raq,” and CNN’s “United Shades of America with W. Kamau Bell.”

The Miami native said that working at TV One was an amazing opportunity, where she was able to grow and learn.

Thomas also booked actor and hip-hop legend Ice-T’s first-ever interview with *Essence* magazine.

Thomas said that she is heavily-inspired by media mogul Cathy Hughes.

Thomas continued: “Cathy Hughes’ story is the American dream. It is so motivating to know that a woman from humble beginnings could take a vision and buy a radio station and grow it into a successful multi-faceted media company. If she did it, so can I. If she made it, so can you.”

Gwendolyn Quinn, a global media and communications strategist, called Thomas a star.

Quinn, who partnered with Antonice Jackson, the president of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the National Black Public Relations Society, to develop the “Top 25 African American PR Millennials to Watch” list.