

# The Graces

The Official Newsletter of the Malik Melodies Sisterhood, Inc.



*A Message from  
Professional Branch President,  
Gracious Melody Sharon Harleston*

Greetings Sisters,

What are your New Year's Resolutions? Are they attainable or did you over-complicate things? Perhaps, by now, they've already been broken. Let's simplify these resolutions a little! Instead of concentrating on a full year's worth of resolutions why not choose to take it day-by-day?

A better question would be...

***"Did you build something or break something today?"***

Keep that question in mind when considering your place of employment, school, family, church and this organization. Honestly, we are all guilty of having broken down in a number of these areas at one time or another. It's ok! Life's challenges, our family and our work can all take a toll on us. Sometimes it becomes so difficult that we get frustrated and we lose it.

We need to make a conscious effort to build each other up. Each member of this organization continually faces challenges, but it's how we view them that defines us. Do we choose to see the challenges as stepping-stones or as obstacles? If we choose to see the challenges as obstacles then they become problems which in turn can cause a negative mindset. "I can't" or "I don't want to" are just a few words that come to mind.

However, if we choose to see challenges as stepping-stones, they become opportunities for us to use to "step on" so we can achieve so much more. Create a vision for yourself that encompasses excellence, innovation and integrity. Keep your vision simple yet goal focused.

I am so fortunate to be among the Regal Queens of Malik Melodies Sisterhood, Inc. who have enhanced this organization with their talents, support and unwavering commitment. Therefore, we should move forward into the New Year with new opportunities.

My warmest thanks to you – one and all!

TQIMSTQIY

*Gracious Melody Sharon Harleston  
Professional Branch President*

## WHAT ARE YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS?



## January/February 2016

### In This Issue

President's Message	Pg.1
Black History Month	Pg. 2
MLK Day of Service	Pg. 4
MMSI in the ATL	Pg. 5
Melody on the Move	Pg. 7
You've Got Mail!	Pg. 8
Condolences	
National Wear Red Day	Pg. 9

### The Graces Staff

Juceliz Batista  
Kim J. Bright  
Christine Delgado  
AnnMarie Ledley, DO FACOG  
Mildred Ngminebayihi  
Nathalie Lilavois, Ed.D.  
Lisa Rodriguez  
Lorraine Sánchez

### Executive Board

Kim J. Bright, Co-Founder  
Sherlyn L. Ortiz, President  
Nathalie Lilavois, V.P.  
Lisa Kirkland-Sutherland  
Mary Richardson  
Lisa Rodriguez

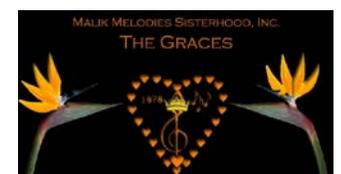
Malik Melodies Sisterhood Inc.

P.O. Box 260430,  
Bellerose, NY 11426

P.O. Box 92944,  
Washington, DC 20090

[malikmelodies@gmail.com](mailto:malikmelodies@gmail.com)  
[www.malikmelodies.org](http://www.malikmelodies.org)

**Please send comments or ideas for  
articles for future newsletters to  
[TheGracesNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:TheGracesNewsletter@gmail.com)**



# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

*Malik Melodies Sisterhood, Inc.*

**Black History Month Honoree**



**Jacqueline Berrien**

(November 28, 1961 – November 9, 2015)

During the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary year (2009) of the Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission, the former Associate Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), Mrs. Jacqueline Berrien, became the first African American female and its fourteenth Chair under President Obama. “The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is a bipartisan Commission comprised of five presidentially appointed members, including the Chair, Vice Chair, and three Commissioners. The Chair is responsible for the administration and implementation of policy for and the financial management and organizational development of the Commission.”

[www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/commission.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/commission.cfm)

In response to her appointment as head of the EEOC, “I am confident that I am here because many people who lived before I was born were determined that I should have opportunities that they could only witness in dreams and articulate in prayers,” Berrien said. “I am motivated by the knowledge that the entire nation will benefit as we move closer to fulfilling the mission that guides the EEOC: to end unlawful discrimination in the nation's workplaces. I welcome the opportunity to work with anyone, within or outside the EEOC, who is determined to fulfill the agency's mission.”

A distinguished member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Mrs. Berrien was a native Washingtonian who had lived recently in Brooklyn, NY. During her stay in New York, she taught in trial advocacy programs at Fordham and Harvard law schools and served on the adjunct faculty of New York Law School. Earning her undergraduate degree from Oberlin College. She received her law degree from Harvard Law School, where she served as a General Editor of the Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review.

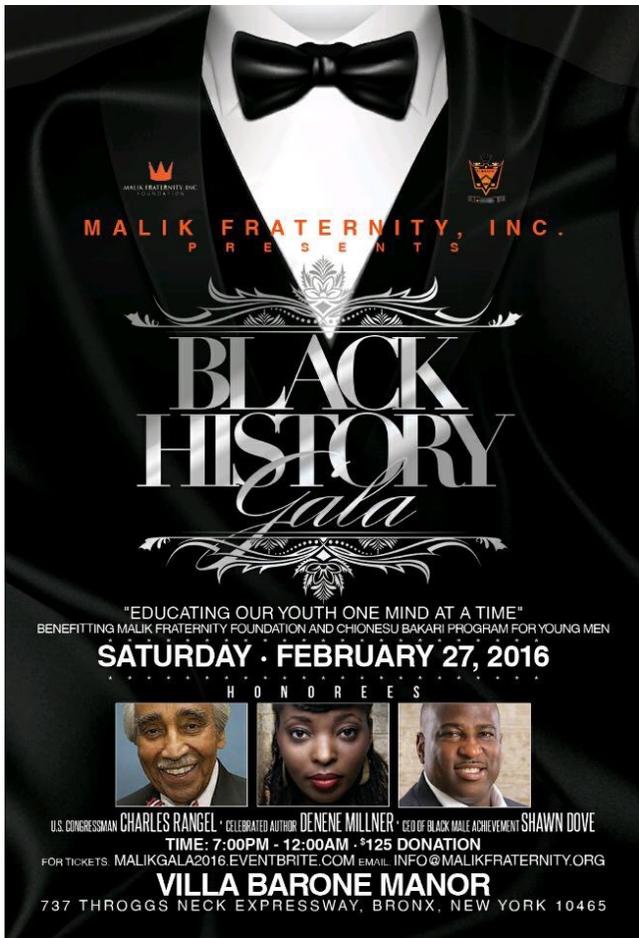
Throughout her more than 20 year law career, she has represented clients in cases concerning subjects as varied as pregnancy discrimination, employment discrimination on the basis of immigration status, voting rights, and access to affordable housing.

*It is with great honor, Malik Melodies Sisterhood, Inc. recognize the groundbreaking accomplishments of this Queen's journey.*

Visit us at [www.malikmelodies.org](http://www.malikmelodies.org)

**(LIAACC) BLACK HISTORY MONTH ART EXHIBITION AND OPENING RECEPTION**

On Friday February 5, 2016, GM Sharon Harleston & GM Nathalie Lilavois were joined by MGM Kim Bright at the *Long Island African American Chamber of Commerce (LIAACC) BLACK HISTORY MONTH ART EXHIBITION AND OPENING RECEPTION* held at Bloomingdales Furniture Gallery in Roosevelt Field, Garden City, NY. Art work from talented African American artists representing the Long Island Black Artist Association and the Long island Arts Alliance were displayed. Among the distinguished guests was Suffolk County Legislator, DuWayne Gregory (Dist.15) who is the current presiding officer of the Suffolk County Legislator. In his remarks, he commended the LIACC for this well attended networking event.



Click here for : [MALIK Gala Commercial](#)



**LIAACC & MMSI: Forging New Partnerships**  
 From L to R: LIACC Chair of Technology, Darren A. Wallace, GM Sharon Harleston, LIACC President, Phil Andrews, MGM Kim Bright, GM Nathalie Lilavois, and LIACC Vice President, Sharon Davis-Edwards

# “Bink-a-thon” Volunteer Day

Submitted by GM Sharon Harleston

In observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 18, 2016, MMSI hosted a Day of Service, making fleece binkies “blankets” for babies born with heart disease on Saturday, January 16 at Grace Baptist Church, Bronx, NY. We were able to make 102 “binkies” “blankets”. The binkies “blankets” along with Precious Hearts 1969 characters hats will be donated to Children’s Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, NY during the month of February. A special thank you to all Sisters, family and friends who participated for this worthy cause. Thank you GM Kathleen D. Taylor for your contribution!



**Melodies, Family & Friends making binkies (blankets)**

**Precious Hearts 1969 character hats**



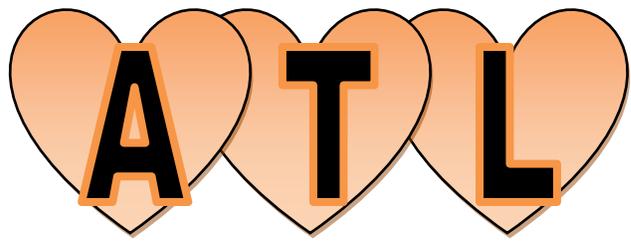
“Thank you so much!! With your help together we created something very special that will be part of my legacy for our CHD Babies. I truly appreciated you helping to make this happen”.

**Gracious Melody Maria Lopez**

**Melody Brittany presenting MMSI donation to Mrs. Ann Carolyn Battle, Trustee Chairperson of Grace Baptist Church**



# MMSI in the



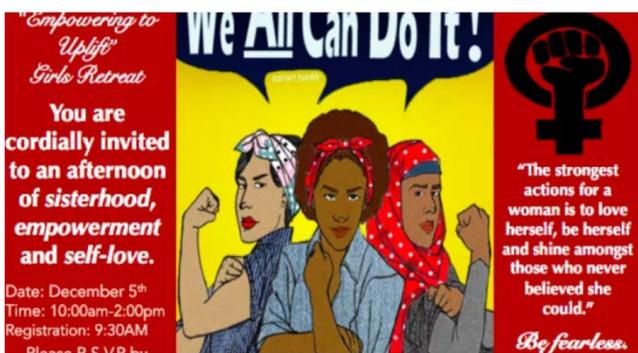
## EMPOWER TO UPLIFT

Submitted by Gracious Melody Juceliz Batista

On December 5th, I hosted a girls' empowerment retreat entitled, *EMPOWER TO UPLIFT*". My coworkers and I noticed a lack of self-love, self-worth and positivity amongst our girls and felt compelled to do something about it. Many of our girls see each other as competition, so we decided to create workshops that helped cultivate sisterhood, self-love and empowerment. We recruited professional women from the community to come and network with our girls. Our volunteers represented a multitude of professions such as public service, government, entrepreneurship, business, and fine arts. **Gracious Melody Michael Renee Daniels** dedicated her time as well.

The session began with a keynote address by Mirana Reshaw, who works for Coca Cola in the IT department. Afterward, we held a networking brunch where the girls sat down, ate, and held conversations with professional women. Later, they broke out into sessions that focused on self-love and positivity. The program closed with the girls creating vision boards followed by closing remarks by La'ki, the Freedom Writer.

**MMSI salutes our Sister, GM Juceliz Batista, an Atlanta based educator for continuing MMSI's vision of Empowerment, Sisterhood, and Leadership in the ATLANTA community!**



## [Being an Afro-Latina Teacher in the South](#)

[January 19, 2016](#) reprinted with permission from GM Juceliz Batista

I'm Dominican. A Dominican from Washington Heights with brown skin and curly puffy hair. I am also a Black woman. When I was 10, my mom put a *desrizado* in my hair because I had too much hair to manage. Ten years later, just like every other girl who wants to free herself from the constraints and standards of European beauty, I transitioned into my natural hair. I became aware of my African ancestry at a very young age. In high school, I learned about internalized racism and self-hate. In college, I continued my learning and joined a women's organization filled with women that recognized their Afro-Latino heritage. I love all aspects of me and have found opportunities to use my heritage to spark teachable moments, especially in my classroom.

Every morning I parade the hallways of my school while on the phone with my mother for our usual morning mother-daughter talk time. These conversations are filled with endless complaints, jokes, and of course, *bochinche*. I tell her that I miss her and that I wish I'd woken up to her *platanos con salami* that morning. I'm rushing down the hall with my head leaned on my shoulder with my phone in between, hands occupied with a stack of copies, when I notice my coworkers giving me puzzled looks. I'm wondering if I'd worn my clothes inside out, or if I had dried up drool on my face. Nevertheless, I walk past them and continue my persistent attempt to get my mother off the phone. One thing about mothers is that they always have one more thing to tell

### ***Being an Afro-Latina Teacher in the South (continued)***

you that prolongs the conversation to fifteen more minutes. We finally end our conversation and in the distance, I hear a coworker shout, “Aye, what you over there speaking?” I was confused because I’d never been asked that question before.

I grew up among Dominicans, who all knew I was Dominican by just looking at me. Even from a plane 50,000 feet up, a person looking down could spot me and say, “Yup, she’s Dominican.” It always annoyed me when I was younger because I wanted to be different from everyone else. I grew up in Washington Heights in New York City where in a class of 32 students, 31 were Dominican. If you were anything but Dominican, you were an outcast. We’d think, “How did you end up here? Are you lost?” It didn’t help that I had an accent that screamed, “*Yo Soy Dominicana*”. I couldn’t escape it, if I wanted to. I grew up with being known as Latina by others, so I haven’t quite gotten used to others not immediately recognizing my Dominicaness when I’m outside of New York City.

Eventually I answered my coworker and said, “Spanish.” “Oh, you’re Mexican?”, he replies. That three-worded response helped me put everything into perspective. My school is diverse. 75% of my students were African-American. 14% were Latino and the rest were White, Asian or Native American. Many of my Latino students were Mexican. Some were from Central American countries such as El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras.

When my students heard me speak Spanish for the first time, their reaction mirrored the reaction of my coworkers, except my Latino students were able to tell them the language I was speaking. “She speaking Spanish, bruh! You Mexican, Ms.?” To hear this question again for the second time frustrated me because the only association my students had to the Spanish language was Mexico, when there’s this huge, diverse Latino world. “I’m Dominican!” I pronounce with enthusiastic pride. Overcome with confusion, they ask “Where is that?”. I rush to the globe in the class and point to my relatively tiny island. “But you look Black. Why do you speak Spanish?”, they press, and in the quickest way possible, I gave my students a history lesson on the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and the Afro-Latino connection.

Although I gave students a history lesson, it was still unfathomable for them that I shared similarities to the Latino students in the classroom. Aside from the fact that they associated every child that spoke Spanish to Mexican descent, they just couldn’t believe that someone who has features that they attribute to Blackness, speaks fluent Spanish. As a matter of fact, even my Latino students had a difficult time accepting me being Latina. Sometimes they would ask me things like, “Where did you learn Spanish? Did they teach you Spanish in college?” or they would say things like “Wow, you’re really good at Spanish,” and still have a “HOW, SWAY?” look on their face when I told them that Spanish was my first language. They would brush me off and continue doing what they were doing.

My students often say, “This is the first time I met a Dominican,” or “I didn’t know you could speak Spanish and not be Mexican.” As their teacher, I know better than to judge them for their ignorance. When my students say things like that I get excited about the opportunity to inform my students about a world that is unfamiliar to them. It gives me satisfaction and joy to tell students about my culture and speak about how closely connected we are because of our history. Any opportunity I have available to teach my students about African ancestry in the Caribbean, particularly in Dominican Republic, brings me joy. I showed my students videos of Celia Cruz and had them create a banner of prominent Latinos during Latino Heritage Month. I paused ELA class and taught my students how to do a basic step in salsa. I’m always excited to do this because I’m exposing my students to things they’ll never find in textbooks. Perhaps through their one interaction with their Afro – Latina teacher, they’ll realize that there’s a huge world out there for them to discover.

Most southerners aren’t exposed to Latinos outside of Mexicans and, on to a lesser extent, Central Americans. Even in my two-and-a-half years living here, I’ve always been the only Latina at my workplace and I seldom find others – particularly Afro-Latinos – in social settings. I search through the crevices of the city to find things related to my culture, but I hardly ever do.

To be quite honest I don’t enjoy the south. I miss the salad bowl of diversity in New York City and I miss being surrounded by my culture. I miss stopping by the *bodegas* and buying *un peso de platanos* from *primo*. I always ask myself what my purpose in the South is and why the universe brought me here. I’ve started to accept that perhaps my purpose is to be a disseminator of history for my students. Through my identity and my existence, I am providing my students a depth of knowledge they may have never been exposed to had we never crossed paths. It’s important to me that my students know that to be Black extends to more than what they know and that they yearn to learn more about their history and the world outside of their neighborhoods.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Angry Teacher



# Melodies on the Move

## GM Maritza Arroyo

Gracious Melody Maritza Arroyo is CEO for Zone 126, a nonprofit organization leading a Cradle to Career project in Astoria/Long Island City, Queens, New York. Zone 126 is using a Collective Impact framework to drive community transformation. She brings more than 20 years of experience in leading teams in diverse sectors, both for profit and nonprofit. The past ten years have been dedicated to education reform, where Maritza has found her calling.



**“We are now faced with fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there "is" such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”**

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

At Zone 126, during the last two years, GM Maritza has leveraged her experience and proven track record in leading organizational restructuring to define Zone 126's role as a backbone organization driving a Cradle to Career project, focused on transforming the communities in need of Astoria/Long Island City. In this capacity she has been instrumental in creating the strategic roadmap for scaling its cradle to career pipeline of intervention programs and services. Additionally, she has implemented an evidence-based results framework, which outlines how each intervention works together to yield large social change, through cross sector coordination.

Beginning her career in retail management, this TAA Chapter Queen has had fast-track promotions in roles where she has overseen multi-million dollar operations and managed bottom-line profitability while forming and developing high functioning teams. Most recently, she led the growth of the tristate region at BELL, Building Educated Leaders for Life, where she scaled the organization's operations from \$3M to \$10M in two years. Maritza oversaw 50 staff members and increased the number of students served to 10,000 over the 4,000 from the previous year.

GM Maritza was born in Frederiksted, St. Croix US Virgin Islands. She attended Hofstra University where she became a Melody in 1985. Maritza Arroyo attended the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business where she completed a Certificate in Executive Management Leadership. In 2011, she was selected as an emerging nonprofit leader at the Social Impact Exchange. Ms. Arroyo was selected in the 2014 inaugural cohort of the Presidio Institute Cross Sector Leadership Fellows program. As a parent of a child attending a NYC DOE District #30 school, Ms. Arroyo was voted as a board member of Community District Education Council #30 in 2014. She lives in the community she serves, Astoria, New York, with her son, Dylan.





# YOU'VE GOT MAIL

What a way to end 2015! Awesome, awesome issue! A big shout out to all of the wonderful articles submitted by our Sisters (including myself). Thank you to the wonderful newsletter staff for putting together such great and informative pieces.

TQIMSTQIY  
**Sharon Harleston**  
**MMSI PB President**

“The Brotherhood would like to congratulate the Sisters on their recent Anniversary on December 14. The Sisters continue to make the MALIK Family proud with their individual accomplishments and collectively as an organization. MALIK salutes you.”

**National President Hugh Lawrence Jr.**  
**MALIK Fraternity Inc.**

Dear Sisters,

We greatly appreciate your articles and suggestions for the **MMSI Health & Fitness Program**. It's so great to see the teamwork that took place to change this initiative into a program. The impact of the program has been great for all members of our Sisterhood and has peaked an overall interest in MMSI from Sisters we haven't heard from in ages. This program is a great asset to MMSI on many levels.

**Thank you again for your support and contributions.** I look forward to more suggestions, ideas and articles from all of you. This program is flexible and can go in any direction with your help. Feel free to submit your ideas any time so this program can grow in leaps and bounds!

Thank you,  
**GM, Anita Wallace**  
**H&F Committee Leader**



**Martha Eggleston**  
**Beloved Grandmother**  
**of**  
**GM Keisha Rivers**



**Robert Lee Evans**  
**Cherished Father**  
**of**  
**GM Veronica Evans**



MAY THE  
*constant love*  
*caring of friends*  
SOFTEN YOUR SADNESS  
MAY  
*cherished*  
*memories*  
BRING YOU  
*moments of comfort*  
MAY  
*lasting peace*  
SURROUND YOUR  
GRIEVING HEART



**Eleanor E. Younger**

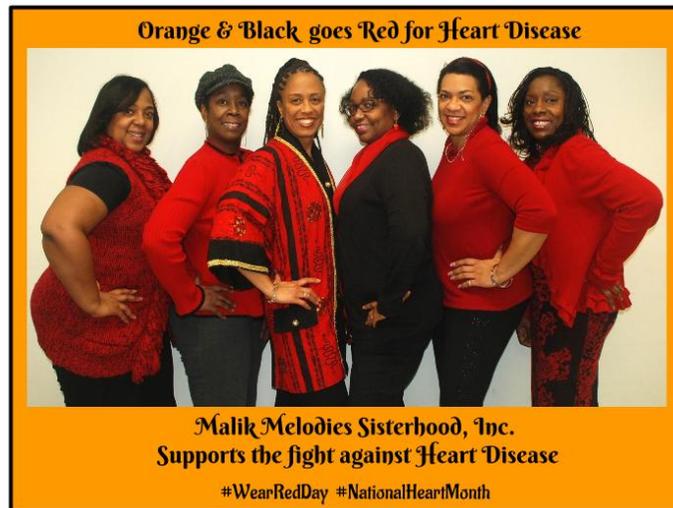


**Beloved grandmother of**  
**GM Kathleen D. Taylor**



# Orange & Black goes RED

NATIONAL WEAR RED DAY® | FEB. 5 2016

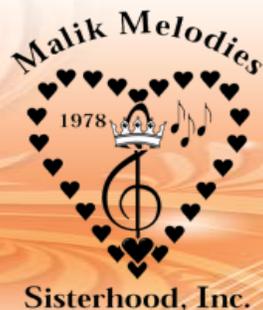


FEBRUARY IS  
AMERICAN HEART MONTH

MMSI SUPPORTS OUR  
"QUEEN OF HEARTS"  
GM Maria Lopez

PLEASE SHOW YOUR SUPPORT BY DONATING  
TO

We would love to feature your talent, hobbies, poetry, thoughts and ideas! We are always interested in diverse opinions and topics of interest by guest authors. If you'd like to contribute a feature article, please send your ideas to [TheGraces@gmail.com](mailto:TheGraces@gmail.com).  
Thank you!



If you wish to recommend a Sister, a Brother, or yourself for "Melodies/ MALIKs on the Move!!" please contact GM Nathalie Lilavois, Ed.D. [nlilavois910@gmail.com](mailto:nlilavois910@gmail.com)

***MMSI Professional Branch Membership***

***2016 Meeting / Mixer Schedule***

***March 1 – Membership Meeting***

***May 3 – Membership Meeting***

***July 5 – Membership Meeting***

***July 30 – Annual Summer Mixer***

***September 6 – Membership Meeting***

***November 1 – Membership Meeting***

***December 3 – Annual MMSI Anniversary Winter Mixer***

***All Membership Meetings will be via conference call.***

***Contact GM Anita Wallace at [MalikMelodiesPB@gmail.com](mailto:MalikMelodiesPB@gmail.com)  
for the call-in access numbers if you are not currently on the  
distribution listing.***

***EB/PB Joint Cabinet Meeting – Monthly/2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday***

***MMSI/MALIK Convention Planning Committee:***

***Monthly/3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday***