



# New Black-owned businesses are making their way into Moorestown Mall

by Ahnyah Pinckney

Moorestown Mall has been a Burlington County fixture for nearly six decades. The one-floor mall currently houses some; 90 stores and businesses, including recognized names like Micheal's, Planet Fitness, Victoria's Secret, and H&M.

At least 8-retailers located at Moorestown Mall are Black-owned. And within the last year, the mall has welcomed two new Black-owned businesses, which makes some entrepreneurs hopeful about opportunities to reach a broader clientele base through onsite mall kiosks and storefronts.

One example is Nika Corbett, the owner of Curate Noir, which opened its mall kiosk in May of 2021. The subscription box company showcases and sells the products of 9 other local Black- and brown-owned brands listed on their website.

Corbett says that the mall has been supportive throughout the onboarding process. She has hosted expos there and featured businesses like women's clothing shop Vixen Culture Boutique and event photography vendor Selfie Design Lab. Both have opened up kiosks of their own in Moorestown Mall.

"Seeing black-owned businesses in an open, receptive space encourages other business owners to say maybe I can do it too," said Corbett.

Moorestown Mall is located at 40 Route 38, just shy of four miles from Cherry Hill Mall. Both malls are owned by the Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust (PREIT), a publicly traded real estate investment trust that mainly invests in malls throughout the Mid-Atlantic states. And both locations attract shoppers from South Jersey and Philadelphia, though Cherry Hill Mall boasts a larger retail plaza and selection of high-end retailers.

Amid recent store closures and financial struggles, Moorestown Mall has been undergoing construction that PREIT hopes will revitalize the property. This effort stems from a 2010 agreement between PREIT and the township to build a 112,000-square-foot hotel and three



The Day Play owner, Jakeya Pearce and son Sebastian, at their store in Moorestown Mall.

apartment buildings, including 213 affordable homes in the mall's parking lot.

As plans for redevelopment play out, entrepreneurs like Lena Watson are bringing their businesses to Moorestown.

"We're family owned and operated," said Watson, who opened Theremixx, an art and design studio, at Moorestown Mall in April. The shop offers paint and sip events, private parties, and pop-in paint sessions. The glass doors make the vibrant artwork colors pop, so it is hard to miss if you are walking by.

Watson has been painting for six years and runs the

studio with her daughter Mieko Watson. "It's just the two of us that do everything. All of the artwork, all of the painting and marketing."

Over at the Day Play, visitors entering the children's playhouse are greeted with a smile, treats for the kids, and possibly the sound of two massive bounce houses being filled with air. The quotes that decorate the walls remind children how smart and valued they are.

"What I provide is a safe small intimate space for kids--ranging from 12 months to seven years of age," said Jakeya Pearce, who also opened her store at the mall in April. She said Watson and other business owners in the mall have been supportive. Watson and her daughter

even produced two paintings for the Day Play- one of their logo and the other of The Lorax.

"I always had this thing of working with kids," said Pearce, who, as the eldest, helped raise her seven brothers and sisters. She's worked at a hair salon and then a car dealership and, at one point, even ran a water ice stand before moving from Northeast Philadelphia to South Jersey for a fresh start.

"Me and my dad teamed up and got the water ice stand in Philadelphia, and it was doing good... and then my heart made me start giving out free water ice to the kids," said Pearce. "I know that's not how you do business, but God knows my heart...God's plan, you start one thing thinking it's about the money, but then He puts you in something else, and it's like this is what you're supposed to be doing."

Despite a few logistical challenges that caused some delays, Pearce says that through hard work, dedication, and prayer, she was able to successfully open her business.

"My babies motivate me every single day," says Pearce of her children, nine-year-old Khloe and two-year-old Sebastian.

"When my daughter goes to school, she says, 'my mom has her own business,'" said Pearce. "It's just so exciting to see the look on your kid's face and know you did something or you're doing something to make them proud."

## Parole

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programs maintain prison social control through the threat of parole denial. It also helped to create more discipline and to get inmates to work harder.

During these time periods of prison reform for white people, our African ancestors were living in the Hell of chattel slavery.

During this dark period of Maafa, Africans received no reprieves, stays executions, pardons or paroles.

During this time period of white incarceration, each colony continued to reap the unlimited benefits of legalized slavery.

Our people, who were being brought to the colonies from Mother Africa in shackles and chains, continuously struggled and fought against the collective wicked evil during the most horrific and exploitive time period known to man.

Today, the average state parole board is comprised of (5) people who are appointed by the Governor of each state. They serve (6) year terms and are paid an average annual salary of \$80,000 a year. Actual parole hearings, which are intense and private, consist of the prisoner, parole board members and a prison staff member. In many states, the victim or family of the victim is permitted to testify at the hearings.

Today, receiving disciplinary write-ups, which are

rapid and widespread, usually are equivalent to a parole rejection and another year added to your physical bondage. There are literally over (40) violations, from fighting to smoking when prohibited, which can warrant a write-up.

### PAROLE VIOLATIONS AND RECIDIVISM

Recidivism always guarantees repeat business for the nations modern-day slave trade. Vicious parole officers and un-realistic parole agreements ensure a vibrant revolving door back behind bars. Over (60%) of state prisoners return back to prison after being released. Parole officers are paid to control and monitor the life of each parolee. They serve as supervisors, social workers, investigators, police officers and even prosecutors.

The 1941 Parole Act gave parole agents the powers of police officers towards parolees under their jurisdiction.

Our brother Kenneth Griffin was gunned down in cold blood on September 26, 1997 in the basement of his family's West Kensington home. Kenneth was unarmed when two state parole officers, Isaac Hickson and Robert Martinez, murdered him. Brother Griffin's family have received No justice.

*Khabyr Hadas is an educator, author, and a developer of Pan-African-Centered curriculums. He is a member of UNIA-ACL, founded by the Honorable Marcus Garvey in 1914. Brother Hadas can be heard on The Red, Black and Green, Internet Radio program each Monday evening from 7pm-8pm on UTIRadio.Airtime.Pro khabyrhadas@gmail.com 267.531.8789*

## Civics

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place. We are hopeful that that trend will continue for us in Philadelphia. She shared, "All of our Election Boards are equipped with a cell phone on site. If there's any reason they feel they need to reach out for help, be it a security issue or something else, they are certainly encouraged to call 911 immediately and to also reach out to the City Commissioners' office to let us know what's going on. Historically we have not seen a lot of election days where there were major problems or violence. It is my hope that we never do because in Philadelphia election day is just a beautiful day. And we want to always keep it that way.

Lastly, if someone wants to be a poll watcher on election day, you want to contact the political party of your interest or contact a candidate of your choice, and ask them to hire you for the day. If you want to be a poll worker and work the polls for the City Commissioner's office, log on at [www.vote.phila.gov](http://www.vote.phila.gov) and click on the menu. You will see a link for election board workers. And that's where you start. Election Day workers that come through the Philadelphia City Commissioner's office are now getting paid \$200 for their work on election day. If you participate in the training before-hand, you get paid an additional \$50.

Don't wait til the last minute now. Get on it, dog-gone it. Get ready for election day.

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