

The **ROOTS** of Omar Tyree

An Updated Wikipedia Page

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Omar Rashad Tyree (born April 15, 1969) is a multiple *New York Times* bestselling author, an NAACP Image Award winner, a Phillis Wheatley Literary Prize recipient, and an HBCU Legacy Award honoree, who was presented with a Citation from the City Council of Philadelphia in 2009 for his tireless work in Urban Literacy. With dozens of literary awards and honors as an author of 30+ books and counting, he has written and published the urban classic *Flyy Girl* (1993, 1996), *A Do Right Man* (1997), *Single Mom* (1998), *Sweet St. Louis* (1999), *For the Love of Money* (2000), *Just Say No!* (2001), *Leslie* (2002), *Boss Lady* (2005), *What They Want* (2006), *The Last Street Novel* (2008) *Pecking Order* (2009), *All Access* (2015), *Control* (2024), and most recently, *Touchdown in Brazil* (2026). He is also a professional journalist, who has written hard news, op-ed, entertainment features, investigative reports, historical and educational articles, along with poetry, short stories, nonfiction, business, children's books, and co-authored the *New York Times* bestselling autobiography, *Mayor for Life, The Incredible Story of Marion Barry Jr.*, published with the former Washington DC mayor, in 2014.

As a versatile thinker and creative entrepreneur, Tyree's extensive resume includes songwriting, music production and publishing, screenplays, directing and acting, stageplays, and a vertical microfilm, all under his Hot Lava Entertainment, LLC. As an excellent lecturer and speaker, he has been invited to more than 80 American colleges and universities, including Harvard, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, UCLA, Florida, LSU, UCONN, and more than a dozen HBCUs, including Morgan State, Del State, South Carolina State, Central State, Alabama State, Southern, Xavier, Hampton, Prairie View and many more.

After self-publishing *Colored, On A White Campus* in the fall of 1992, and the groundbreaking *Flyy Girl* in the spring of 1993, both through his MARS Productions imprint as a 24-year-old college grad and newspaper journalist in Washington, DC, Tyree followed up with *Capital City* in the spring of 1994, and soon became known as "The Godfather of Urban Street

Lit.” His success as a young urban author inspired millions of inner-city teenagers to not only pick up a book to read, but to write their own stories, spawning hundreds of “urban/street lit” authors from New York City to California. Uncontained by the borders of the United States, Tyree has been featured at book and literary events in Canada, the Caribbean Islands, Nova Scotia, London and Dubai. In addition to his popular novels and original ebooks as Omar Tyree, he has also published *College Boy* (1992, 2003), *Capital City* (1994, 2009), *One Crazy Night* (2003, 2009) and *Cold Blooded* (2004) as The Urban Griot.

Early Life & Education

On April 15, 1969, Omar Rashad Tyree was named Antyne Eric McLaurin by his mother, Renee McLaurin (Alston), who was the oldest of eight children of Geraldine and Everidge McLaurin in “The Bottom” of West Philadelphia on 38th and Aspen Streets. As the first in the family to graduate from college in 1974 with a Degree in Pharmacy from Temple University, Renee never wavered from her high hopes and plans for herself and her son. Never marrying his father, Robert “Bobby” Tyree, who resided at the top of West Philadelphia at 63rd and Felton Streets, Renee made calculated and deliberate decision about her son’s upbringing and education.

Instead of attending grade school in “The Bottom” at McMichael Morton Elementary at 36th and Fairmount Avenue, a mere three blocks away from the family house at 38th and Aspen, Renee sent her “hyperactive” firstborn son to Lewis C. Cassidy at 66th and Lansdowne Avenue near his paternal grandmother, Mercyle Tyree (Simmons), who lived four blocks away from Cassidy. Renee then married Melvin Alston Sr. and moved with her son to the middle-class neighborhood of Mt. Airy in 1978, just two blocks away from the recreational facility of Finley Playground at Mansfield Avenue and Upsal Street. She also sent her son to catholic school at St. Therese, previously at Upsal and Ardleigh Streets, just four blocks away from their new home on Dorset, hopeful that the catholic school experience would provide her son with discipline, structure and a strong foundation to calm his raw and unpolished West Philadelphia demeanor.

With a love of football that he played nearly every day on the streets and sidewalks of West Philly, including the organized Police Athletic League team (PAL) of the Mantua / YGS Raiders, upon his arrival in Mt. Airy, the athletic and confident West Philadelphian joined the West Oak Lane Wildcats, where he practiced and played organized football for the next four

years from 1979 – 1982 at Simon’s Playground in West Oak Lane, just a few miles away from Finley Playground in Mt. Airy. With the Wildcats, he won three consecutive Philadelphia youth football championships in the Police Athletic League (PAL) in 1979, 1980 and 1981, while losing the playoffs in his final season of 1982, before moving on to the high school level.

Central High School

In September of 1983, despite graduating in the top five of his class from St. Therese catholic school, the young competitor scored a few points below the 81% that was required on the California Achievement Test (CAT) in order to attend the city’s prestigious Central High School. Enrolling instead at Lankenau Motivation for his freshman year—a new college-prep school located right outside of Philadelphia’s Roxborough area—the fast-learning teenager picked up the bad habit of using what he called “photographic memory” to score high grades at Lankenau without applying himself or doing much homework after school.

In a life-altering move from his high-achieving West Philadelphia mother, Renee sought and found the African American Vice Principal of Central High School, Dr. Ella Travis, and talked her into giving her unchallenged son an opportunity to complete at Central as a sophomore, and Dr. Travis agreed to it. Transferring immediately into Central High School (CHS) in September of 1984—the historic Philadelphia public school attended by exceptional students from all over the city—Renee’s fast-learning son was now forced to adapt to a more rigorous education, as his grades plummeted from the easy As and Bs of Lankenau to embarrassing Cs, Ds and Fs at Central.

Barely passing into the eleventh grade, the fearless competitor took on an Algebra II star class in his junior year at Central for another life-altering event. Heading into the final semester of his junior year with a C grade in the accelerated Algebra II class in the late spring of 1986, convinced that he would receive a C no matter what, the precocious son decided to select random answers on a final Scantron test and received a score so low, he ended up failing the entire class with a 69, just one point away from a 70 that was needed to pass the course with a D. He was then forced to enroll in summer school for the first time in his life, before his senior year at Central. And another lifelong lesson occurred.

While attending summer classes with other students who had failed Algebra II at the normal high schools of Philadelphia, placing a rugged and competitive Central High School student in their midst, who had failed an accelerated class by not taking the final exam seriously enough, he was so advanced in summer school that the instructor asked him to help the other students with the work. By the time he re-entered Central as a senior that September, the renewed confidence in his academic abilities propelled his grades back to the norm of As and Bs, which became crucial for the University of Pittsburgh admissions requirements, where he applied to attend college with the dream of playing professional football.

University of Pittsburgh

Not only was the young, ambitious dreamer accepted into the University of Pittsburgh (Big East Pitt Panthers), he was also selected as one of thirty minority students (15 young men, and 15 young women) to receive six weeks of advanced summer school training in a new QUEST Program to strengthen minority student preparation for the upcoming fall semester, with all expenses paid for by the university. However, with a graduation from Central High School on Wednesday, June 17, 1987, the incoming freshman was not pleased to report to college that same Friday of June 19 and lose the front end of his summer vacation. Overjoyed by another great opportunity for her son, Renee ignored his pouting and made sure that his suitcase and bags were packed and ready to go straight back to school in Pittsburgh for his first six weeks of college.

Immediately, when the 30 incoming University of Pittsburgh freshmen were tested on their reading, writing and comprehension skills that summer, with writing assignments on their families, friends, hobbies and upbringings, the rugged West Philadelphian, who had moved uptown to Mt. Airy, won championship football games, adapted to and excelled in catholic school, and then survived and thrived at Central High, unleashed natural storytelling capabilities that had been previously verbal, and transformed them into the written word, which shocked and inspired his college professors and peers, while passing into the highest level of freshman English.

When the fall semester began that late August, the confident Philadelphian flourished and breezed through his college courses, landing on the *Phi Eta Sigma* honor society with a GPA of

3.68, and was awarded challenge grant scholarship money, while majoring in the math and science field of pharmacy in the footsteps of his mother.

Holding onto his dream of walking onto the University of Pittsburgh football team, while running track and field at the school, fate would have its way again when the National Football League (NFL) had a 1987 player-strike over the issues of free agency, stagnant salaries, and draft modifications. The NFL teams responded by holding a supplemental player draft that included college students who had not been previously selected.

When several University of Pittsburgh players decided to leave school early in the hopes of joining the professional “scab teams” of 1987, Head Coach Mike Gottfried of the Pittsburgh Panthers had some discouraging words to say about it on national television, believing that college students should not have been allowed to join the replacement football teams. Watching the live interview on television in Pittsburgh, the Philadelphia native was appalled, knowing that every inner-city athlete from the African American community dreamed of one day playing professional sports, including himself.

Irritated by the hard realities of race, class and opportunity that was becoming more apparent at the college level, the fast-learning storyteller, who had grown up in the predominantly Black neighborhoods of Philadelphia, became a political firestorm with the ability to communicate it. He then began to read and debate every issue, taking advanced creative writing classes to strengthen his skills, while publishing “The Diary of a Freshman” in the African America newsletter at Pitt. Soon, he would be asked by his freshman peers, sophomores and even some juniors to help them with their writing assignments.

By sophomore year, the revolutionary-minded thinker and writer began to work on his first book, after being challenged by Michael Quigley, a Pittsburgh native who had become irked by the Philadelphian’s propensity to speak out as a natural leader at all of their student events. The West Philadelphia kid stepped up to the plate again in the middle of two hundred African American students when he accepted the challenge and told them all that he would indeed write a book. And he meant it.

Inspired by *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, two West Philadelphia neighborhood friend’s named Omar, NFL wide receiver Ahmad Rashad, and the love of his father’s and

grandmother's family surname, the West Philadelphia native began to use the pen name of Omar Rashad Tyree in all of his out-of-class writings, including his new book ideas. And he was no longer impressed by the University of Pittsburgh, where his African American peers continued to downgrade HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) as "party schools" that were not part of "the real world" of "getting along" and "learning what the white students learn." Meanwhile, African American students at Pitt often spent idle time with nothing to do on campus, while White Pittsburgh students had dozens of cultural options, along with Frat and Sorority house events that were typically off-limits to uninvited Black students.

In that same sophomore year of 1988, the legendary African American filmmaker and producer Spike Lee, released *School Daze*, starring Laurence Fishburne as a revolutionary college student, and visited Pittsburgh's campus for a crowded Black Student Union event, where the young Philadelphian congratulated the Brooklyn-based filmmaker on his monumental film, while being very similar to the outspoken and angry "Dap Dunlap" character that was played by Laurence Fishburne, who implored his fellow college students to "wake up" in a climatic ending.

Likewise, the revolutionary West Philadelphian, now vexed by every past, present and future race, class and economic issue, was no longer able to focus at Pittsburgh. He would soon drop all of his science-based classes for pharmacy, and with no further dreams of playing professional football, spent all of his time and energy in the computer labs, while working on his first autobiographically-inspired book, *Colored, On a White Campus*, which he subtitled *The Education of a Racial World*.

Howard University

While writing *Colored, On a White Campus* in the winter semester of 1989 at Pittsburgh, the serious-minded revolutionary applied for a transfer to the historic Howard University in the nation's capital of Washington, DC, and was quickly accepted with a high GPA and an essay on Black education, while changing his major from pharmacy to English for more writing experience. However, his intent to enroll at Howard University was not to graduate, but to experience Black college culture at a top-flight HBCU instead of believing in the hearsay. Understanding that he would likely be a self-determined entrepreneur and book writer instead of

an employed worker, he completed his first draft of *Colored, On a White Campus* in March at age 19 (later renaming the book *College Boy*). He immediately began his second book, *Fly Girl*, that same month of March, finishing the first draft in late April of 1989, after turning 20. And the book would later become an urban classic.

In the late summer of August 1989, the competitive overachiever arrived at the “Mecca” of African American education at Howard University, where the culture was drastically different from Pittsburgh. His first observation at Howard was evaluating how many students came from predominantly white high schools or small towns, who had reversed field to attend an historically Black college in a big Black city of DC, where the University of Pittsburgh seemed to recruit more African Americans from the larger inner cities. Nevertheless, Black college culture and educational confidence was definitely present at Howard, where once again, the rugged West Philadelphian immediately rose to the occasion.

Within the first month of adjusting his major from English to Print Journalism in the Winter semester of 1990—his second semester at Howard—the Philadelphian storyteller wrote and published his first two articles in Howard University’s *The Hilltop* student newspaper under the penname of Omar Tyree, and immediately created a stir with an article on whether or not women in the military should be asked to serve on the frontline instead of in back-up, assistant roles. He then wrote and published several local sports articles for *The Community News*, run by the School of Communications, before interning at *The Capital Spotlight*, where a friend had given him the chief editor’s contact at the Black Press newspaper in downtown DC.

The ambitious Howard student showed up at the National Press Building downtown at 14th and F Streets in the early summer of 1990 to meet with Barry Murray, the chief editor and co-owner of *The Capital Spotlight* newspaper, with ten published articles under his belt, and the rest is history. Murray was immediately impressed with him. And while the young journalist apologized for only having ten articles, the seasoned editor quickly informed him that most interns had no articles at all, or maybe *two* at the most. He then sent the bold and fearless Philadelphian out to write dozens of major news stories in the capital city of Washington, DC, covering everything from education, sports, politics, entertainment, business and crime. The community readers had no idea he was still a college student until meeting him in person.

After losing a passionate argument in the Spring of 1991 with his mother Renee and grandmother Gerladine about dropping out of school to jumpstart his book writing career, the first grandson promised that he would hand over his Howard University degree to his mother and grandmother upon his graduation, because he didn't need it to do what he wanted to do in life. By that time, Omar Tyree—still writing it as a penname—had already become a popular newspaper brand in and around the District when he returned to Howard University's *The Hilltop* newspaper for his final semester in the Fall of 1991, and asked if he could feature a weekly column called *Food For Thought*.

With a headshot photo provided and the first article already written, the student editor agreed to give the dedicated column idea a shot. The first article debated the selection of US Supreme Court Judge Clarence Thomas and was published in September of 1991. The spotlighted piece created such a storm from other student journalists and writers that the editor was forced to call Tyree back and explain that the paper would not be able to dedicate a section to one writer. A day later, with Howard University professors and campus readers enthralled by the first article, the editor called back again and informed the disappointed senior that they would indeed dedicate space to publish *Food For Thought* each and every week regardless of how the other writers felt. And the name Omar Tyree became a column stable with *The Hilltop* for 13 straight weeks of groundbreaking articles from a young and ambitious mind.

Completing his Bachelor's in Print Journalism from Howard University's School of Communications, *cum laude*, that fall of 1991, as Antyne Eric McLaurin, the exceptional young college grad did not receive his degree or walk at a graduation ceremony until the Spring of 1996, after paying off his student loans. Nearly a dozen family members made the trip down from Philadelphia in early May of that year, including his two younger brothers, Melvin Alston Jr. and Phillip. Melvin Jr. then requested to attend Howard University himself at the graduation ceremony and follow in the footsteps of his older brother, which he did, graduating from the School of Fine Arts in 2002.

CAREER

Self-Publishing: 1992 - 1995

After completing school at Howard in December of 1991, the young college grad attempted to move to the city of Chicago and set up employment interviews with the *Chicago Defender* newspaper, and *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines. However, due to his lack of established employment, when he was unable to secure a rental property of a second-floor apartment he had found at 88th and Cottage Grove Avenue on the South Side in January of 1992, he left the city of Chicago after staying three nights at the Quality Inn hotel in Greek Town, and returned to the Washington DC area, finding a one-bedroom, third-floor apartment for \$400 a month in Hyattsville, Maryland. He then returned to work full-time at *The Capital Spotlight* newspaper, while mapping out his self-publishing goals in the book world.

On February 17 of 1992, after paying a name change fee and bringing in his birth certificate, Social Security Card, and proper driver's license ID, Antyne Eric McLaurin legally changed his name to Omar Rashad Tyree. He then filed for the fictitious business name of MARS Productions in the state of Maryland, and opened up a business account at the Industrial Bank of Washington that had a new branch across the street from the National Press Building, where he showed up to work five days a week at *The Capital Spotlight* newspaper on F Street, NW. Unable to afford him as a fulltime writer at the paper, Barry Murray was only able to offer Tyree small payments as a freelancer writer, while co-owner Robert "Ike" Kendrick asked the young Howard grad to sell advertisement space to make up the difference. That led to Tyree making many business connections of his own around the city of Washington, DC, including relationships with Amos Drummund of Personalized Pharmacy, and Daniel and Tony McNeill of McNeill Brothers Photography & Print shop, both located on Kennedy Street, NW.

With not enough advertisement or writing income to pay all of his bills or finance his book publishing endeavors, a business war broke out between Ike Kendrick and Barry Murray over the use of Tyree as a reporter writer / sales rep, when Kendrick started pitching advertisement articles that Murray did not consider as "real news." Caught in the middle of it, Tyree was forced to borrow money from his mother, stepfather and other family members back home in Philadelphia to hold him over, which led to the idea of asking for business contributions to jumpstart the publishing of his first book, *Colored, On a White Campus*. After being shown the book's full manuscript at his Personalized Pharmacy store, Amos Drummund, a Howard University grad himself, originally from Nashville, Tennessee, contributed a \$1,500 loan that

allowed Tyree to print the first 1,000 copies of his book, arriving at his Hyattsville apartment building on October 6 of 1992.

Tyree then returned to Howard University's campus and sold his first printed books furiously to the teachers and students who still knew him, including a consignment deal with the Howard University Bookstore. Heading into the Thanksgiving and Christmas season, the hustling bookseller popped up at every cultural event in DC and eventually made a return on his investment over the first few months of book sales. Returning Amos Drummond's \$1,500 in early 1993, Tyree asked if he could borrow another \$2,000 to print his first copies of *Flyy Girl*.

Amos Drummond allowed the hardworking book writer to borrow another \$2,000 to print the first 1,000 copies of *Flyy Girl*, which arrived at his Hyattsville apartment building in early April of 1993, in perfect time for a Black Expo event being held at the Philadelphia Convention Center that same month in April. Tyree returned home to sell books from a \$200 booth table and earned \$1,800 in cash in one weekend. He soon returned Amos Drummond's \$2,000 and never looked back from his entrepreneurship.

Flyy Girl, a coming-of-age story about the materialism of Philadelphia's 1980s era, went on to establish Tyree's distribution and sales relationships from Newport News, Virginia, Washington DC, Lower Maryland, Baltimore, Wilmington, Delaware, Philadelphia, Lower and Upper New Jersey, and three Boroughs of New York City; Harlem, Queens and Brooklyn. By that summer of 1993, he was selling multiple boxes of *Flyy Girl* at time and was outperforming the Black books of established publishers. In April of 1994, he printed his third book release of *Capital City*, which he called *The Chronicles of a DC Underworld*, that spotlighted Washington DC, drug war territory, which he was very aware of from living and working there.

Moving to New Castle, Delaware, in December of 1994, as the no tax state in the middle of DC and New York, Tyree figured he could cut the distance of his travels and streamline his business, which he did. By the spring of 1995, several major publishers were interested in his hot-selling urban book. He then met Vanesse Llyod-Sgambati, a veteran publicist and events organizer at another Philadelphia Expo event, where she introduced him to Denise Stinson, a literary agent out of Detroit. Tyree explained to Stinson that the major publishing houses had been calling around to the bookstores and asking about his sales numbers, including Manie Barron who worked at Penguin RandomHouse.

Densie Stinson immediately went to work and called about the inquiry. Unable to do a deal with RandomHouse with Barron not in an acquisitions position, Stinson made a call to editor Dawn Daniels at Simon & Schuster, who was one the few African American editors at a major publishing house with acquisitions authority. Understanding his cultural voice and loyalty, Tyree preferred to sign with a Black editor regardless of the price. Fortunately, Dawn Daniels was well aware of the *Flyy Girl* popularity and called for a meeting with Denise and Omar at her Simon & Schuster office in Manhattan, New York. The three of them were quick to agree on a deal to republish *Flyy Girl* with national marketing, promotion and distribution, along with a second book to be written about a Black and his relationship issues, which later became *A Do Right Man*. And Tyree's first major publishing deal was set in the fall of 1995 at two-hundred, fifty thousand dollars for two books in hard back and softback. At the time, Omar Tyree was twenty-six years old.

Simon & Schuster: 1996 – 2004

Tyree's groundbreaking *Flyy Girl* was republished by Simon & Schuster in hardback with a new cover jacket in the fall of 1996. Included in the new release were fresh book reviews from *New York Times* bestseller, E. Lynn Harris, Terry McMillan's younger sister Rosalyn McMillan, cultural critic, writer and film producer, Nelson George, and a young and upcoming West Coast writer named Sheneska Jackson. However, with a \$23 price tag in hardback, the book sales did not take off as rapidly as expected.

Tyree went on to write *A Do Right Man* for his next fall release in 1997, joining the African American publishing circuit as one of the youngest writers discussing relationship issues, spawned by the popularity of Terry McMillan's *Disappear Acts* and *Waiting to Exhale*. Holding his own against the works of older male fiction writers, Walter Mosley, Eric Jerome Dickey, Michael Baisden and E. Lynn Harris, Tyree continued to hammer out respectable reads with *Single Mom* and *Sweet St. Louis* in the falls of 1998 and 1999, respectively.

However, as a seasoned journalist who could write on any and every topic, Tyree was leery of being pigeonholed as a "relationship writer." And as *Flyy Girl* continued to sell to younger readers in a cheaper \$14 softback package, he decided to return to the young urban story with a sequel book, *For the Love of Money*. Excited by the opportunity of refocusing on a

younger readership instead of an older relationship crowd, Tyree envisioned a grand marketing and promotions campaign for both *Flyy Girl* and its sequel at Simon & Schuster. His agent, Denise Stinson, had other ideas. She was excited to shop the young, dutiful and prolific writer to the highest bidders instead.

Not wanting to separate the two books at different publishing houses, Tyree balked at the idea of leaving Simon & Schuster. He also battled Stinson over the use of poetry in the sequel book, which he believed was pivotal for the popular character of “Tracy Ellison” to maintain her authenticity as an artist, while Stinson felt the poetry was overused and unnecessary. Tyree then called a meeting with Simon & Schuster brass without Stinson to explain his marketing ideas for the sequel, which were very well received. Cutting ties with his literary agent, the rugged, fearless, and accomplished Philadelphian locked in on a release date of Tuesday, August 15, 2000, like a hip hop album, and promoted the date for nine straight months on his web site, on t-shirts, bookmarks, and promotional fliers. When the date finally arrived in mid-August of 2000, Simon & Schuster sold all 50,000 copies of the first print run in two weeks and had to schedule an emergency printing to keep the momentum going.

For the Love of Money became Tyree’s first *New York Times* bestselling novel at age 31, and won an NAACP Image Award for the author in February of 2001. Ironically, it was the revolutionary poetry in the book that impressed the NAACP voters. The August 15 book release also established the idea of a locked in date, which Tyree had copied from the music and film industries. That next summer of 2001, the juggernaut of Harry Potter began to use the same locked-in date approach with kids, who showed up wearing witch hats and wielding magic wands.

With a new contract negotiation in the works for his next two novels, Tyree signed an undisclosed deal for 4 books and seven figures with a lawyer on retainer and no agent. It was his fourth consecutive agreement with Simon & Schuster, so he knew the terms and the language.

The Hollywood Blues: 2004 – 2009

With Hollywood film productions next on his list to accomplish, Tyree wrote and published *Just Say No!* about an insatiable R&B singer, *Leslie*, an urban horror story about the struggles of race,

poverty, and class in the city of New Orleans, and *Diary of a Groupie*, about an opportunistic young lady who lands herself in a couple of impossible situations in Las Vegas and New York City. All three novels became *New York Times* bestsellers in 2001, 2002 and 2003, respectively, while written with obvious films in mind. But the passionate and driven writer had no idea how difficult it would be to break into Hollywood with his own ideas without having his own money and a team to execute them.

Instead of writing and publishing another book for 2004, in 2003 Tyree wrote a screenplay called *Move the Crowd*, based on the popular title of a Rakim rap song, and the author's move to the Queen City of Charlotte, North Carolina, a city that did not have the music history of Philadelphia, Washington, DC, or New York. So, the author wrote an idea of finding real local music talent in Charlotte and producing a movie about their audition process and aspirations, while being courted by a New York City record executive, who desired to start a new label in the city.

At the height of his own popularity and power, in the summer of 2003, Tyree hosted eight hundred and fifty singers, rappers and actors from in and around the Charlotte area, who came out to audition for a dozen key roles and extras. But despite his determination and efforts, the author was unable to find financiers who were willing to help produce the film.

Undeterred by the disappointment, Tyree returned with a second screenplay in early 2004, a thug love story called *Cold Blooded* that he had first written with Aaliyah Haughton and Morris Chestnut in mind in 1999, a few years before the singer's untimely passing. He decided to novelize the screenplay into a book and produce a music soundtrack for it in an effort to pitch it all as a film under his Hot Lava Entertainment brand. Simon & Schuster even agreed to publish the *Cold Blooded* book in the summer of 2004. But after producing an impressive music soundtrack and book for the vehicle, the author was still unable to find a financial production partner.

Distracted by the passion of elevating his storytelling into film, Tyree returned to the *Flyy Girl* tale with a trilogy book entitled *Boss Lady* in 2005, where the fictitious "Tracy Ellsion" character builds a young, girl team who discuss the production and branding of her own film, mirroring Tyree's real-life aspirations. But without real films to elevate his storytelling profile and marketing, the new book numbers were nowhere near what Tyree or Simon & Schuster had

hoped for. The author completed the four-book contract with *What They Want* in 2006, a masculine response to the female-driven “Black Erotica” movement of African American fiction, spawned by Zane and her breakout title *Addicted*.

At a crossroads in his career, while discouraged by his failures at filmmaking, Tyree signed a fifth consecutive agreement with Simon & Schuster for two more books and less advance money, publishing *The Last Street Novel* in 2008, and *Pecking Order* in 2009. Although both books were well received by the readers, the sales numbers continued to lag as Tyree desired to focus on more stories from a masculine perspective in an increasingly dominant female marketplace of African American fiction.

In Limbo: 2010 – 2020

Disheartened by his failed film aspirations and the mounting pressures in the literary world to write more female-driven stories, Tyree pivoted to the popularity of ebooks, where he self-published *Corrupted* in 2011, about the dark life and times of a gay book editor in Manhattan, and *Insanity* in 2012, about an overly ambitious housewife in Baltimore, Maryland. Obviously in a dark place in his own life, both ebooks did well, but were not on par with the previous success of a multiple *New York Times* bestselling author.

Still undeterred, Tyree pressed forward with more creative ideas, signing a 2-book, no advance deal with Koehler Books out of the Virginia Beach area, to produce what he called The Traveler Series with *No Turning Back* as an ebook novella, and *Welcome to Dubai* as a full novel to introduce an international suspense series in the lane of “James Bond” in 2013. Publishing *The Sneaker Kings* about the trending and classic sneaker world in 2014, neither project sold well with no marketing budget or connection to the author’s previous audience of inner-city African American females.

Tyree then co-authored *Mayor for Life, The Incredible Story of Marion Barry Jr.*, published in 2014, before writing *All Access*, a suspenseful tale based on Atlanta’s popular and often toxic reality TV world that was self-published under his short-lived OTI brand (Omar Tyree Incorporated). With a film rights deal finally landed with Lionsgate for *Flyy Girl* in the summer of 2013, through a partnership with Arthur Wylie Wealth Management Group and

Codeblack films founder, Jeff Clanaghan, who Tyree had been discussing film adaptations with for a decade, the author felt reinvigorated enough to self-publish *All Access* in 2015 with the expectation of more media attention from an upcoming *Flyy Girl* film production. But when the film production conversations fell through at Lionsgate, *All Access* was caught in a national book tour with little to no marketing and no film talk.

Over the next five years of 2016 through 2020, Tyree dabbled back into the worlds of music and film with his Hot Lava Entertainment brand, writing several original and adapted screenplays, including one for the long-awaited *Flyy Girl* film in 2018 that he published as an Amazon ebook in the spring of 2019. He also shot and produced an independent soundtrack film entitled *Monologues* right before the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic of 2020. While searching to find his way, the embattled author distributed *Monologues* through Amazon Prime Video with the same reoccurring dilemma of no marketing budget.

What's Next...: 2021 – 2026

Addicted to his own creativity, Tyree engaged in back-to-back music projects with his Hot Lava Entertainment brand in 2021 and 2022, producing *The Last Summer*—utilizing talent from the Charlotte, North Carolina region during COVID—and *The Philadelphians*—with all Philadelphia talent after COVID. Although both projects had multiple songs of promotional value, without established marketing or a proven track record in the music industry, Tyree was creating more content with no strategic way of selling it.

Re-teaming with his first investor and friend, Amos Drummond, along with Walter “Rap” Pearson—another Howard University alum, friend and business associate—the three of them organized and promoted a “True Soul & Hip Hop” tour mainly through the Busboys & Poets establishments of Washington DC and Maryland. With a formula of live poetry, R&B/soul and hip-hop performances, the trio was able to land an event at the historic Cramton Auditorium to kick off Howard University’s Homecoming in October 2022, renamed “The Flow.” Although the show was a welcomed and timely idea, once again, a lack of marketing, execution, production capital severely limited what it *could* have been.

That same fall of 2022, the previously prolific author who hadn't written a new book in years, was asked by his long-time college booking agent, Raoul Davis of Ascendant Strategy Group, if he had any new book ideas to offer a publisher. At the time, Tyree had been writing book proposals for several of Davis's celebrity clients who wanted to land their autobiographies and other books. This fateful conversation led to the publication of *Control* by Dafina / Kensington Books in the summer of 2024, through editor associate Leticia Gomez. The book sales suffered again from the same issue of limited marketing in the social media era, where the Omar Tyree brand is not heavily followed. The author loved the authentic and timely premise of the book, where an Atlanta-based psychologist deals with six fatal clients who all succumb to the mental health issue of obsessive control, or the lack thereof.

In the social media era Tyree is no longer a momentum-building star, nevertheless, he continues to develop and write new ideas for books, music soundtracks, feature films, vertical microfilms, and social media podcasts, including the international NFL football book, *Touchdown In Brazil*, featuring a game between his hometown Philadelphia Eagles and the Green Bay Packers in Sao Paulo that occurred on September 6, 2024, *Bad Decisions*, a vertical microfilm idea that Tyree calls his new *Flyy Girl* for the cell phone generation, and The RETRO Movement podcast, where the author reverts to his Howard University journalism days of interviews with exceptional guests, where he plans to Respect The ROots of those who have paved the way for others to succeed, similar to how he, Terry McMillan and ZANE opened up lanes for new African American writers to become successfully published and wealthy authors.

After constant suggestions from his close friends, Tyree recently decided to work on his own autobiography, *From the Bottom, The Omar Tyree Story*, as well as *The Witch Doctor*, a contemporary, Harlem-based horror series with a Black revolutionary response to President Donald Trump's MAGA movement (Make American Great Again), both represented by Leticia Gomez Savvy Literary Group.

Tyree has previously stated that he will never stop creating until he has taken his final breath of life. And he means it.

PERSONAL LIFE

Marriage & Family

Tyree married Karintha Randall, a fellow Howard University grad in June of 1998. The couple had two sons, Ameer and Canoy, in 1996 and 1999.

Literacy Activism

From the moment he walked out of the hallways of Howard University, Tyree has advocated tirelessly for African American literacy, particularly for Black urban boys who continue to lag behind on national reading, writing and comprehension exams. So, he wrote and published a short story book for middle school readers entitled *12 Brown Boys*, and founded the Urban Literacy Project (ULP), a nonprofit 503C both in year 2009. He then wrote his own public grade school curriculum based on “**The 5 Key Components of Literacy.**”

According to Tyree, **Reading**, defined as taking in information, **Writing**, defined as the ability to communicate, **Thinking**, defined as the process of everything, **Visualization**, defined as the ability to see past, present and future through words and ideas, and **Application**, defined as the ability to apply skills, are not only the tenements of literacy but of intellectual life itself.

Tyree further explains in his passionate lectures that any child or person who cannot **Read**, or collect and store mental information, cannot **Write**, or communicate through penmanship, typing or speaking, cannot **Think**, or process daily and sometimes complicated data, cannot **Visualize**, or conceive an image or idea in mind without the further need of a picture, and cannot **Apply** any valuable or learned skills, will have a very hard time finding gainful employment in life.

Illiteracy, or what Tyree defines as the underdevelopment of the human mind, locks a person into physical labor and nothing else. Therefore, his “**5 Key Components of Literacy**” and its curriculum was developed not only for school children, but for adults to learn from as well.

FILM & MUSIC ENDEAVORS

Hot Lava Entertainment, LLC

As a child of the 1970s era of Philadelphia International Records music with Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, Tyree was raised with an ear for exceptional music that was played around him every day. The 1970s also produced the genres of disco, funk, rap and the quiet storm of radio ready love songs. Because of the city's tendency to party in its open parks, playgrounds, schoolyards, crowded streets, basements, recreational centers and nightclubs with a large number of citywide DJs, Philadelphia became a testing ground for the early record labels and performers of hip hop. And as the firstborn grandson of the next generation, who grew up with his aunts, uncles and older cousins, Tyree was very well aware of all of the music, and started his own record collection at age ten, which would later influence his determination to create musical projects along with his books and film ideas.

The McLaurin family of his mother was also a strong movie-loving clan, where Tyree would spend full days at the local or downtown theaters with his two uncles, Andre and Montague, who introduced their first nephew to the Martial Arts, Blaxploitation, horror, science-fiction, adventure, comedy and crime movies of the 1970s, despite the film ratings. As a result, Tyree was consuming adult level stories at a young age and had a surprisingly long attention span to capture the finer details. In fact, it was movie watching and his active memorization of character lines, where Tyree's storytelling abilities first developed. As a watcher, fast learner and a mimic, similar to comedians, Tyree would copy voices, accents, physical movements *and* sound effects.

Continuing what he called "movie marathons" of viewing two or three films with each visit to the megaplex theaters of the 1980s and 90s—well into his college years and beyond—Tyree's mother Renee, asked her son just one important question at his Howard University graduation in 1996. "So... when are you going to do your first movie?"

Renee understood that her son would always love football, music, and movies. So, when his poetry night readings in Washington DC, Northern Virginia, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York City, turned into rhythm poems written and recorded to instrumental jazz tracks in the mid-1990s, Tyree eventually produced an entire LP album, *Rising Up*, in 2002 as The Urban Griot, which he also used as book writing pseudonym.

He wrote his first unproduced film entitled, *Big Time*, in the late 1990s, based on two college buddies who manage a nightclub in the city of Pittsburgh, while learning hard business

and life lessons in the flow. A second film idea, *Cold Blooded*, about a college girl who falls for a womanizing hitman, was developed in 1999 after an attorney friend informed Tyree that the talented singer, Aaliyah Haughton, was seeking film opportunities to star in.

Upon his move to Charlotte, North Carolina in 2000, *Move the Crowd* became his third screenplay written in 2003. But as discussed earlier, he was unable to find a financial partnership to produce any of them. Nevertheless, his Hot Lava Entertainment, LLC, continued in its mission to create contemporary African American films that would utilize soundtrack music to tell the story, like the Blaxploitation era that he and filmmakers; Spike Lee, Robert Townsend, John Singleton, Matty Rich and the Hughes Brothers all grew up watching in the early 1970s.

In fact, Hot Lava Entertainment, with books included, became Tyree's idea of mimicking the business model of Warner Brothers, who once had books, film and music as well, and an office building right across the street from Simon & Schuster's in Manhattan. The creative synergy of Warner Brothers was on his mind when he tried again to produce music, film and a book with *Cold Blooded* in 2004, after developing music relations with the movers and shakers of Charlotte and Atlanta, that included Big Bronze and S. Dub, two popular Charlotte rappers, and Stephon McKinley Falls, who credited his productions to The Labteks, as a very talented beat and song producer. Rudy Currence joined the project out of Columbia, South Carolina, the Southern Dawgs out of Waterboro, and Stimuli out of Brooklyn, New York. A song was also negotiated with Atlanta's soul artist, Nivea, who was still signed to Jive Records at the time, who declined to allow Tyree to release *I Promise* as a summer single.

In the fall of 2006, Tyree pulled together a much smaller casting for an improv film that would become *The Lure of Young Women*, about a local film producer looking for a young muse, who gets himself in all kinds of trouble with the young women that he interviews. Tyree starred in the film, utilizing the music and talented friends that he already had relationships with and premiered the project in the spring of 2007 with a strong turnout at the Spirit Theater in downtown Charlotte.

However, instead of continuing to produce small budget films to travel with and screen them, city by city, as Tyree had planned, a partnership with Arthur Wylie Wealth Management Group convinced the driven producer to shelve the improv project and focus on the bigger

Hollywood deals instead. Unfortunately, the bigger film formula did not prove to be effective, as none of bigger projects could find the funding.

Even after *Flyy Girl* landed at Lionsgate in 2013, the production of the film never moved forward. By 2017, Tyree was back involved with music, producing singles and song ideas that went nowhere without dedicated goals, strategies and marketing. He wrote more original and adapted screenplays, including a rewrite of *Leslie*, the New Orleans urban horror tale, *One For The Streets*, an adaptation of *The Last Street Novel* based in Harlem, New York, *Broke & Sexy* an original romantic comedy based in Washington, DC, and *No!*, an original teenage rom-com based in Charleston, South Carolina with a young Black and Hispanic lead, while reaching out the representation for both Polo G from Chicago and Lil Tjay from the Bronx, New York.

With not one project fortunate enough to land an investor, Tyree came up with another idea inspired by the billion-dollar earning *Joker*, starring Joaquin Phoenix in 2019. Impressed by the emotional musical element of the film, the author came up with the idea for *Monologues*, where several characters would act out the words of a five-minute monologue on different topics with complimentary music, featuring the topics of love, wealth, family, domestic abuse, happiness, depression, dance, race, murder, genius and beauty. Tyree shot the project with filmmaker, Prestine Manderville, primarily in and around Charlotte with a \$25,000 budget provided by healthcare professionals, Cherise and Fred Williams, ironically from his native West Philadelphia neighborhood in The Bottom. However, with no marketing, the film was eventually distributed through Amazon Prime Video in 2020, during the COVID-19 outbreak.

By 2023 to 2025, Tyree had been pulled back into the writing and publishing business with *Control*, a psychological thriller and mental health book based on seven contemporary characters with control issues, released by Dafina Books in May of 2024. Simon & Schuster then contacted him for a republication of the *Flyy Girl* trilogy, including *For the Love of Money* and *Boss Lady* with new cover jackets designs. However, while out of the loop in the new world of social media, the hardworking author found himself climbing a mountain to land any local or national interviews to discuss his continued work.

Undiscouraged, Tyree wrote yet another original screenplay in 2025 entitled *The Conversation*, after realizing in his mid-50s that he had fallen out of touch with the current relationship issues between Black men and women. In the same old-school masculine state of

mind, he wrote *Touchdown in Brazil*, a fictional football adventure despite the publishing industry's fear of non-reading sports fans and men. Tyree simply wanted to write a book that he could be passionate about and not be forced to cater to a limiting readership base.

A year later in 2026, with influence from close friends and associates, the embattled author finally decided to start his own autobiography, *From the Bottom, The Omar Tyree Story* to explain himself, his years of ups and downs, and his ongoing motivations. He also wrote *Bad Decisions*, an original Vertical microfilm series that he believes could become the new *Flyy Girl* in the age of Artificial Intelligence, social media stars, and short attention spans.

Presently, Tyree is working on a three-book Harlem Horror series, *Devil Shoes*, *The Witch Doctor*, and *Silicon*, which may or may not find a publisher, while the addicted creator continues to figure out his way home in a fast-starting career that spun out of order after his obvious struggles with the expense of Hollywood.

OMAR TYREE BOOKS

Fiction:

College Boy (1992, 2003) ~ The Urban Griot / **MARS Productions / Simon & Schuster**

Flyy Girl (1993, 1996) ~ Omar Tyree / **MARS Productions / Simon & Schuster**

Capital City (1994, 2009) ~ The Urban Griot / **MARS Productions / UrbanBooks**

A Do Right Man (1997) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

Single Mom (1998) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

Sweet St. Louis (1999) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

For the Love of Money (2000) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

Just Say No! (2001), *Leslie* (2002) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

One Crazy Night (2003, 2009) ~ The Urban Griot / **MARS Productions / UrbanBooks**

Cold Blooded (2004) ~ The Urban Griot / **Simon & Schuster**

Boss Lady (2005) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

What They Want (2006) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

The Last Street Novel (2008) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

Pecking Order (2009) ~ Omar Tyree / **Simon & Schuster**

Welcome to Dubai (2013) ~ Omar Tyree / **Koehler Books**

The Sneaker Kings (2014) ~ Eric McLaurin / **Koehler Books**

All Access (2015) ~ Omar Tyree / **OTI Publishing**

Control (2024) ~ Omar Tyree / **Dafina Books**

Touchdown In Brazil (2026) ~ Omar Tyree / **Dafina Books**

Original Ebooks:

Corrupted (2011) ~ Omar Tyree / **Ebook Nation**

Insanity (2012) ~ Omar Tyree / **Ebook Nation**

No Turning Back (2013) ~ Omar Tyree / **Koehler Books**

Psychadelic (2013) ~ Omar Tyree / **Ebook Nation**

Poetry, For the Love of Black Women (2013) ~ Omar Tyree / **Ebook Nation**

Unleashed; The Provocative Stories (2013) ~ Omar Tyree / **Ebook Nation**

The American Disease (2018) ~ Omar Tyree / **Ebook Nation**

Anthologies:

Testimony (1995) ~ Nastasha Tarpley / **Beacon Press**

Tough Love: The Life and Death of Tupac Shakur (1996) ~ Michael Datcher and Kwame Alexander / **Black Words Books**

Proverbs of the People (2003) ~ Jewell Parker Rhodes and Franklin White / **Kensington Pub Corp**

The Game (2005) ~ Urban Street Anthology / **(Out of Print)**

Not In My Family (2006) ~ Gil Robertson IV / **Agate Bolden**

Dark Thirst (2006) ~ Linda D. Addison and Omar Tyree / **Pocket Books**

Dirty Old Men and Other Stories (2009) ~ Omar Tyree / **Strebor Books**

Children's:

12 Brown Boys (2008) ~ Omar Tyree / **Just Us Books Inc.**

Mr. Creative (2012) ~ Omar Tyree / **(Unpublished)**

Business:

The Equation: Applying the 4 Indisputable Components of Business Success (2008) ~ Omar Tyree / **John Wiley & Sons**

OMAR TYREE MUSIC

LP Album:

Rising Up (2002) ~ The Urban Griot / Compilation Album / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Cold Blooded (2004) ~ The Urban Griot / Soundtrack Album / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Monologues (2020) ~ Omar Tyree / Soundtrack Album / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

The Last Summer (2021) ~ Omar Tyree / Compilation Album / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

The Philadelphians (2022) ~ Omar Tyree / Compilation Album / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

EP Singles:

* Omar Tyree has released several single projects, including:

The Old Day (1994) ~ Cool Tyy & Manny Rize / **Hi & Low Records**

School Time (1995) ~ Cool Tyy / **Hi & Low Records**

Just Say No! (2001) ~ Performed by Donal Ray Dixon / **Simon & Shuster Audio**

Through The Grapevine (2002) ~ The Urban Griot / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Sweet Conversations (2002) ~ The Urban Griot / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Cold Blooded (2004) ~ Big Bronze & Carl Thomas / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

BOOM! (2004) ~ Big Bronze / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

South Carolina (2004) ~ Southern Dawgs / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Flyy Girls (2005) ~ Performed by Big Bronze / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

The Old Days (1995) ~ The Urban Griot / Compilation Album / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Where Are we Now? (2016) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Hot Beats 4 A \$ (2016) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Like Whatever (2016) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Probably Not (2016) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

Do Me Right (2016) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
The Weekends (2016) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Courage (2016) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
The Future (2016) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Take A Ride (2017) ~ Ana Morris / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Hit That (2017) ~ Ana Morris / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Black Panther (2018) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
NBA Contract (2018) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
The Real Struggle Is... (2018) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
The Frontline (2020) ~ The Oldhead & Halil Walker / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Revelations (2020) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
International Soul (2021) ~ The Oldhead, Aviance & Griot Noy / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
What They Gon Say (2021) ~ Da Tagg / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Philly Style (2021) ~ MC Knowledge / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
The Gift (2022) ~ Griot Noy / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Time (2022) ~ Tehut-9 / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Bounce & Rock (2022) ~ Liam & Lance / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Good At This (2022) ~ Schooly Collins / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Criminal Minded (2022) ~ Merkury Gold / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Final Exam (2022) ~ Griot Noy / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
How I Love You (2022) ~ Mel Alston Jr. & Griot Noy / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
RETRO (2026) ~ The Oldhead / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

OMAR TYREE FILMS

The Lure of Young Women (2007) ~ Written, Directed & Starred / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
Monologues (2020) ~ Written, Directed & Starred / **Hot Lava Entertainment**
My Crazy Family (2022) ~ Co-Written & Starred In / **LMK Entertainment**
My Crazy Family, Part 2 (2025) ~ Starred In / **Hot Lava Entertainment**

* **Omar Tyree** has written more than a dozen original and adapted film screenplays that await financial partnerships, including several book adaptations; *Flyy Girl* (2018), *Leslie* (2018), *One For The Streets* (2018) and *Wild Seed*, adapted from the science-fiction novel of **Octavia E. Butler** (2019).

* **In The Works** are both his autobiography, *From The Bottom, The Omar Tyree Story*, and *The Witch Doctor*, a Harlem-based horror series of retribution, revolution and reparations.

