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BEAT ME; DON'T MEET ME: A Black-Owned Business Expo

The Advocates for Social Justice have partnered with Mamma MIAs and Willie Fairley of Willie Ray's Q Shack to host a Black-owned business expo in Cedar Rapids. The event will take place on January 21st at the Knights of Columbus, 1620 E Ave NE Cedar Rapids, IA, 52401, from 6 PM to midnight. The expo's goal is to bridge the gap in our community while promoting and supporting our local Black businesses.

ASJ is excited for another meaningful opportunity to support the community. Damia Janae highlights the importance of collaboration. The slogan for the expo is, "BEAT ME; DON'T MEET ME." Damia Cungtion explains the event's inspiration as something that stemmed from her own experiences in starting a business. She didn't have many people who understood her experiences and obstacles as she founded Mamma MIAs and would've benefited from the connection to other Black leaders in the community. "The inspiration is being one of these [Black organization founders] and not having anybody to go to, to help me figure things out. So, I want to be the step closer to the next person's dream." The slogan illustrates Black business owners' passion and work ethic, telling the next generation of entrepreneurs to not only meet the current leader's success but surpass it. It's a beautiful testament to the deep network of hard work and resilience so prevalent in the Black community.

The Black-owned business expo is an opportunity for people to network, learn about and support local businesses in Cedar Rapids. Tickets are \$20, which includes two meal tickets and access to all vendors. We are ensuring COVID-19 safety by making all meals take-out only, and masks are required. Let us strengthen our community together in a safe manner and enjoy some delicious food.