

BlkTech Charlotte Launches 21 Day Reading Challenge for High School Students in University City



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The Program Will Culminate With a Block Party as Part of AfroFuturism Fest 2021

CHARLOTTE, NC, July 15 -- University City Partners announces sponsorship of the first BlkTech Charlotte 21 Day Reading Challenge. The 21 Day Reading Challenge designed for African American and Latinx teenage students was created to increase the habit of reading and provide youth living in University City with something fun to do. The reading program will occur from July 21 to August 11 in conjunction with BlkTech Charlotte's first AfroFuturism Fest. Students from high schools in University City are invited to participate.

The reading challenge is organized by [BlkTech Charlotte](#), a program of City Startup Labs that look for serious Black high-tech entrepreneurs who are intent on building scalable technology companies, as well as employers looking for well-prepared Black tech talent.

"The inspiration and timing of our reading challenge follows the discovery of low literacy scores among Charlotte students and a desire to create opportunities for growth in technology," said Rashaan Peek, Director of BlkTech Charlotte. "We at BlkTech Charlotte can't focus on creating high-tech, high-net-worth entrepreneurs without ensuring we are also doing the work of supporting our community through its challenges. Through building the habit of reading we are working to ensure technology innovation and economic opportunities are available to all."

BlkTech Charlotte found that 94 percent of its stakeholder survey respondents stated education is the most important social justice issue affecting the Black tech community. The tech program acknowledges that reading increases imagination and in turn creates innovation.

During the *21 Day Reading Challenge*, student-athletes from Julius Chambers High School will lead the way in sharing daily reading posts on their social media platforms with tags for #BLKTechCLT and #UnivCityCLT. These social media posts will serve to draw attention to reading and inspire other students in CMS to participate and develop their own reading habit. Students will also keep a log of the books, poems, raps, or songs that they are reading in preparation to discuss at the end of the challenge. The Julius Chambers Athletic Department will receive a \$500 award.

"We are building a University City that is welcoming to everyone, and that includes providing great experiences and things to do for our teens," said Darlene Heater, Executive Director of University City Partners. "City Startup Labs is based here in University City making way for a natural partnership and privilege to sponsor their first 21 Day Reading Challenge. Our local high schools and community partners were also eager to help support a successful reading challenge and engaging activity for our students."

The BlkTech Charlotte *21 Day Reading Challenge* will precede the inaugural [AfroFuturism Fest](#), a unique innovation convening with a cross-sectional aggregation of present and future Black creatives, techies, makers, designers, scientists, thinkers, and entrepreneurs. The three-day event from August 11-14 will offer a conference with a keynote speaker and panelists, Black Food Truck Friday, a Black Cinema Series, and other activities. More details about the festival can be found at <https://www.blktechclt.com/>.

About University City Partners

University City Partners invests resources in shaping public spaces and planning for a better-built environment in University City that influences the way we live, work, play and learn. University City Partners invites others to invest in the University City community, whether that is by way of a headquarters or home. Building University City is not only about new development, new businesses, and new road and transit infrastructure. It is about building relationships and building a community.

About Black Tech Charlotte

A program of City Startup Labs, BlkTech Charlotte is a startup studio looking for serious Black high-tech entrepreneurs who are intent on building scalable technology companies as well as employers looking for well-prepared Black tech talent. BlkTech Charlotte intentionally convenes a cross-sectional/aggregation of creatives, techies, makers, designers, scientists, thinkers, and entrepreneurs to collectively solve community challenges using technology.

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