

About the Community Fundraiser for Melanie Lavender

Anyone who knows Melanie Lavender or has been privileged to attend one of her performances, classes, or presentations, is aware of how much she contributes to our community in Sarasota and beyond, in countless ways that are inspiring, uplifting, thought-provoking, generous, and loving.

Newtown born-and-raised Spoken Word artist, published author, radio and podcast host, community advocate, wife and mother, Melanie's reputation extends to enthusiastic followers far beyond the local community—whether she's known as Soul Adani, CoCo Mel, or just Mel. As a devoted mother, Mel says she shares her passions as an example, "so my son knows what it looks like."

Until recently, Melanie was a program manager with the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce. However, recent serious medical challenges, and more than a few setbacks, have forced her to leave the workforce. She has required intense medical treatment, and although her focus is on healing, the reality of medical bills and ongoing daily living expenses is creating a stressful burden.

Melanie speaks often of the inspiration and strength she draws from her friends, family, church, and local community. She hosts a popular radio program, "Community Conversations with Mel", streaming worldwide on Sarasota/Bradenton's WSLR 96.5 FM that focuses on local current events, community issues, and interviews with leaders and influencers across Sarasota and Manatee counties. Her book, "Psalms of The Elusive Black Housewife," written at the start of the pandemic, helped her to transform depression into poetry and community activism.

With this appeal, a group of Melanie's friends is reaching out, with some urgency, to solicit support to help bridge the gap--allowing her time to rest, restore, and heal--before she returns to full-time work and her normal outpouring of creativity, service, and support for her family and community. Your donations will help to directly cover medical out-of-pocket fees and monthly mortgage, utility, and grocery expenses.

We have developed various ways for you to contribute including a GoFundMe (\$30,000 goal), a silent auction (in-person), and a community gathering at Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center on August 2, 2026 from 1-5pm featuring an exciting line-up of literary, visual, and performing artists.

If you're not already familiar with Melanie and her work, or would like to revisit her presentations, we invite you to check out one or more of these links: "The Soul of Sarasota," WEDU PBS program featuring Melanie as one of five trailblazing artists, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...); "Access is Representation," TedX Bradenton talk, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...); "Newtown's Proverbs: Love Letters To My Community," [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...); and "People Trippin," [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...).

Please share this appeal with your network and accept our heartfelt gratitude for your generous contributions and support. Remember, every contribution received will help alleviate the considerable stress Melanie is under and enable her to focus on regaining her health and strength as she returns to sharing her unique light and love with us all.

Thank you,
Members of Melanie's Village in Sarasota, FL
<https://linktr.ee/MelaniesVillage>