

DUBAI BLACKOUT

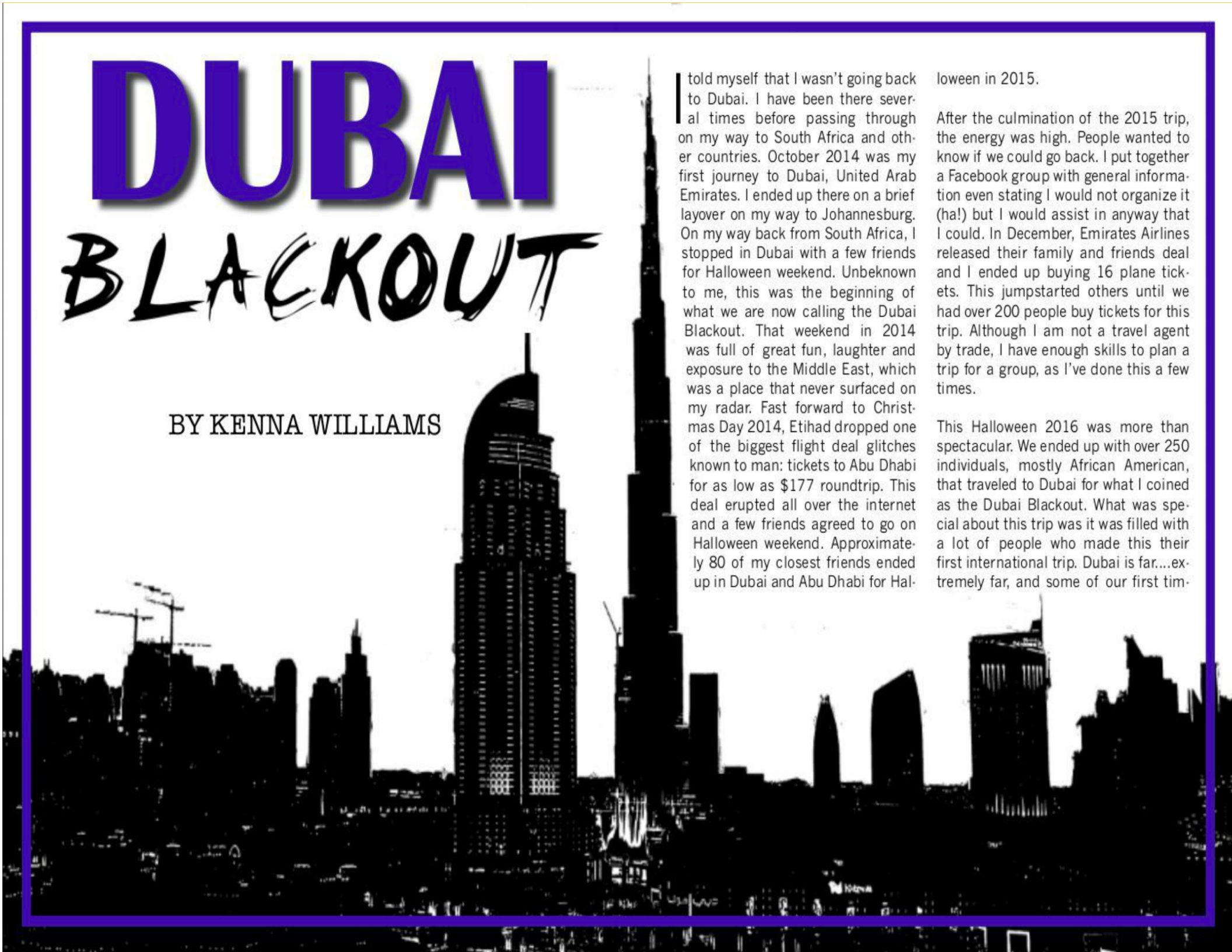
BY KENNA WILLIAMS

I told myself that I wasn't going back to Dubai. I have been there several times before passing through on my way to South Africa and other countries. October 2014 was my first journey to Dubai, United Arab Emirates. I ended up there on a brief layover on my way to Johannesburg. On my way back from South Africa, I stopped in Dubai with a few friends for Halloween weekend. Unbeknown to me, this was the beginning of what we are now calling the Dubai Blackout. That weekend in 2014 was full of great fun, laughter and exposure to the Middle East, which was a place that never surfaced on my radar. Fast forward to Christmas Day 2014, Etihad dropped one of the biggest flight deal glitches known to man: tickets to Abu Dhabi for as low as \$177 roundtrip. This deal erupted all over the internet and a few friends agreed to go on Halloween weekend. Approximately 80 of my closest friends ended up in Dubai and Abu Dhabi for Hal-

loween in 2015.

After the culmination of the 2015 trip, the energy was high. People wanted to know if we could go back. I put together a Facebook group with general information even stating I would not organize it (ha!) but I would assist in anyway that I could. In December, Emirates Airlines released their family and friends deal and I ended up buying 16 plane tickets. This jumpstarted others until we had over 200 people buy tickets for this trip. Although I am not a travel agent by trade, I have enough skills to plan a trip for a group, as I've done this a few times.

This Halloween 2016 was more than spectacular. We ended up with over 250 individuals, mostly African American, that traveled to Dubai for what I coined as the Dubai Blackout. What was special about this trip was it was filled with a lot of people who made this their first international trip. Dubai is far...extremely far, and some of our first tim-





ers traveled 17 hours ONE WAY just to get to Dubai. That in itself is an amazing accomplishment. We had all age ranges from 20s even to the 80s represented and all types of professions such as students, administrators, engineers, doctors/nurses and entrepreneurs among other things like retired! I put together a schedule of activities such as the Saf-ron Brunch at the Atlantis Hotel, Desert Safari complete with sand boarding and sand duning, Mountain Safari, a day trip to Abu Dhabi to visit the museums and the famous Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and a yacht cruise planned by Ms. Lynzi Taylor from Abu Dhabi.

One special note for this trip is this was one of the first trips that I was going to bring my brother Tony. I have traveled all over the world and my oldest brother

Tony said he was going to Dubai with me the next time I go. He and his wife Laki-sha obtained tickets to Dubai. My brother did not have a passport yet, but he said he would get one and he worked towards that goal. Tony and I talked about this trip daily. He'd talk about how we were going to recreate the Jodeci videos on the sand dunes. He even assembled a group of men going and they were working out who would sing the parts!

On February 18th, 2016 my brother unexpectedly passed away in his sleep at the age of 41. As a sister, I was beyond devastated but in my family, we are taught that you have to keep pressing on. I ended up taking two months off work and traveled around the world but I took my brother's tie with me so he could travel in the afterlife. My cousin Shyronica Small,

Tony's wife Lakisha and I took the tie to Dubai with us. He was there in spirit!

At the end of the trip, friendships and relationships were formed, invites to holiday dinners were planned and future trips with new friends were made. A lot of barriers were broken during the trip, tears released past pain and a lot of people manifested their destiny. Some people conquered their fears of flying and others were able to come out of an anti-social shell to be appreciated and loved on by over 250 queens and kings on the sands of time. #DubaiBlackout made us family and our memories are forever emblazoned in our hearts.

I am looking forward to our Dubai Black-out 2017!



Kenna Williams is World Traveler. She hails from Oxnard, CA by way of Memphis, TN. She is a 40 year old professional woman working as an Aerospace Engineer in the Defense industry and she is the creator of the famous hashtag #BookDatIsht which simply means to book flights immediately without questioning anything! She is also known as the Nomadness Tribe Cheerleader since 2012