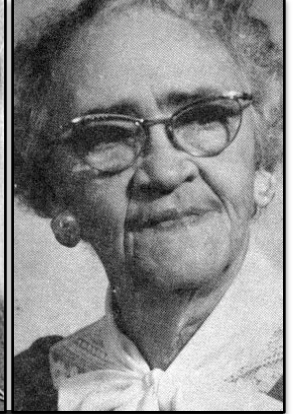
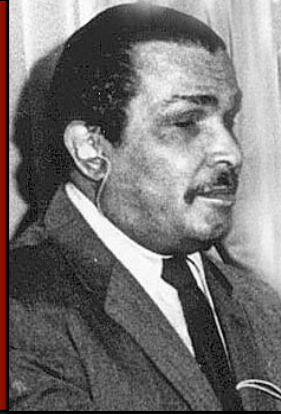


MWM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



WINTER 2014

NEWS FOR THE VISUALLY-IMPAIRED



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Merrick Washington Magazine

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Dear MWM readers,

When Lyda Moore Merrick and John Washington founded the *Merrick Washington Magazine (MWM)* in 1952, their intention was not only to make more news stories available to the visually impaired community; they also intended to highlight important stories of interest to African Americans that were not making it into mainstream media.

Today, *MWM* is guided by those original intents, and we find there is still a need for an alternative publication like this. As you'll read in the *Associated Press* article in this issue, a study recently released by the Media Institute Project shows that "a large majority of African-American and Hispanic news consumers don't fully trust the media to portray their communities accurately" (pg 30).

It's for reasons like this that our editorial team scours a variety of news sources—mainstream, independent, alternative—to bring you stories that paint a more well-rounded view of the accomplishments and challenges within the African American community. And, because of the interconnectedness of our diverse country, these stories are vital to and affect those beyond the Black community.

For instance, in this issue we highlight a story about Houston-based artist and MacArthur Fellow Rick Lowe (pg 23). While his Project Row Houses grew out of a desire to build something that served and supported his Black community in

Houston, the project has evolved into a place “where artists, young single mothers, kids needing a safe haven after school—anybody and everybody” can meet and learn from one another. It has served as a community development model for projects in Dallas, New Orleans, Los Angeles and South Korea.

In this issue, we also highlight an article from *The Hill* that explains why expanding access to high speed Internet is critical for breaking down employment barriers for minorities; and why this progress may be threatened (pg 39). *The Washington Post* calls attention to the talented, but very few, Black ballerinas in a piece about an ongoing problem: the lack of diversity in the ballet world in the US and abroad (pg 33).

We have chosen articles that lift up individuals who are championing critical issues, such as Hampton University president William Harvey Chides, who is calling for better support of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); and five Black female politicians who will be running on Georgia’s record-breaking statewide ballot this November.

And, as usual, we try to bring you up-to-date news about the ever-going crop of tech tools and research that are trying to expand options and opportunities for those with vision loss.

Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie cautions us in her 2009 TEDTalk about “how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a single story.” A diverse set of narratives helps us better understand ourselves and others in this world.

- Brandi Sansom Stewart, Editor

GENERAL NEWS

Clutch Magazine | July 2014

Five African American Women Will Be on Georgia's Statewide Ballot For The First Time

This November, Georgia will make history, or herstory. For the first time in Georgia and the U.S., five African-American women will be on a statewide ballot. These candidates include Doreen Carter for secretary of state, Liz Johnson for insurance commissioner, Robbin Shipp for labor commissioner, Connie Stokes for lieutenant governor and Valarie Wilson for school superintendent.

“We did not want to miss the opportunity to get out and announce this to everyone in the state of Georgia and tell everyone how important this election will be,” Democratic state Rep. Dee Dawkins-Haigler told the Savannah Morning News.

As part of their campaign the candidates will tour the state on bus, making sure to hit the areas of Georgia with a high number of registered black female voters to solicit votes. Their first plan of attack is metro Atlanta area.

Vice President and Executive Director of Rainbow PUSH Janice Mathis said their efforts show the dedication African-American women have toward important issues.

“It is a historic occasion, and it is so consistent with the way African-American women treat their institutions,” she said.

“Whether it’s our churches or families or sororities, you won’t find women more devoted to causes than African-American women.”

HBCU Digest | SEPT 22, 2014

**Hampton President William Harvey Chides Feds on
Lack of HBCU Support**

BY JL Carter Sr.

Hampton University President and Chairman of the White House Advisory Board on Historically Black Colleges and Universities Dr. William Harvey opened the annual White House Initiative on HBCUs Conference this morning in Washington D.C. with strong words on the lack of federal support to black colleges.

In his opening speech, Dr. Harvey gave statistics on decreased funding to federal lending programs, grants and contracts for research and development from federal agencies, and a recent

alliance created between colleges, government and philanthropic foundations to support low-income college students, which does not include one historically Black college.

Here is the full text of Dr. Harvey's opening speech.

Good morning. I want to thank Dr. Cooper and his staff for all of their hard work in planning this conference. As Chairman of the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, on behalf of the Board, I am honored and very pleased to welcome you to this year's HBCU Conference, Innovators for Future Success.

I want to thank President Obama for his appreciation of the unique mission of HBCUs, their history of achievement against the odds, and their critical role in the future of our country. He knows that the nation can't get to where it needs to be without the help of HBCUs.

Having said that, we face enormous challenges. These are difficult times for our institutions, our students and their families. Federal support for HBCUs is showing an alarming downward trend, and our friends in Washington need to know that we are watching and counting. For example, over the last several years, all of the major Title IV programs had modifications and adjustments which make it much harder for

HBCUs to get funding. We all know of the Parent PLUS debacle that resulted in these loans to our students being down. Pell grants to our students are down. Direct loans to our students are down. Graduate subsidies were eliminated. In addition to student support, overall support to Black colleges is down. All of these changes had a significant impact in terms of availability of funding for students. Now more than ever, we need to support our own institutions and let our voices be heard.

Additionally, information compiled by the White House Initiative on HBCUs for FY 2011 showed that out of the total contracts and grants awarded to all institutions of higher education, those to HBCUs from 16 federal agencies totaled less than 5% and 12 agencies totaled less than 3%. When one looks at the awards by categories such as scholarships; tuition assistance; research and development; administrative infrastructure; and training, 8 out of 12 categories were funded at less than 3%.

We are living in a time when too many people who are not affiliated with nor have ever attended or worked at an HBCU are trying to tell our stories. Award-winning journalist Tony Brown once told me that if we do not tell our own stories, then it becomes HIS-story and not history. All of us in this room need to commit ourselves to telling the HBCU story because we have

first-hand knowledge. We cannot allow others to be the experts on who and what we are as an HBCU community.

Millions of dollars are being designated to majority institutions and other organizations to tell the HBCU stories. Can you imagine that? Other millions are being designated to develop best practices to serve the students who have traditionally been served by HBCUs. For an example, just last week it was announced that eleven public universities including Arizona State University, Georgia State University, Iowa State University, Michigan State University, Oregon State University, Purdue University, The Ohio State University, University of California Riverside, University of Central Florida, University of Kansas, and the University of Texas at Austin, and six national foundations including the Ford Foundation; The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Lumina Foundation; Kresge Foundation; USA Funds; and Markle Foundation have formed an alliance to identify and share best-practices in degree attainment programs for low-income, minority and first generation students. Grant funding totaling \$5.7 million has been designated for the program. The fact that not one HBCU was included in this alliance is appalling.

HBCUs were serving first-generation, minority and low-income students when some of these institutions were denying their entry or were not even in existence.

Please know that the complaint is not that this alliance is seeking to serve low-income, minority and first-generation students. The complaint is that the alliance does not include any HBCUs—the experts that have been serving this population for over a century. If the alliance had checked with schools such as Hampton, they would have known that we have been using predictive analysis to insure success for decades. One wonders why they want to spend money to re-invent the wheel. It seems to me that if the participating foundations are interested in securing expert data, they should consider funding an alliance of 10-12 HBCUs that have been doing this work for years.

We should let the public know that this kind of action is unacceptable. With these kinds of insidious actions being taken, it is obvious that we have to do as we have always done, and that is work harder and work smarter. We must become more vocal and more involved in support of the wonderful work that we continue to do. This is one of the reasons this conference is so important. It gives us an opportunity to communicate with one another and to work together to make HBCUs and all of higher education better.

I encourage you to take full advantage of this conference. Make some new friends in Washington. Insist that they get to know

your institution, its priorities, its accomplishments and its capabilities.

Again, I welcome you to the National HBCU Week Conference, and I thank you for taking time out of your schedule to attend.

The New York Times | June 19, 2014

5 Exonerated in Central Park Jogger Case Agree to Settle Suit for \$40 Million

By Benjamin Weiser

The five men whose convictions in the brutal 1989 beating and rape of a female jogger in Central Park were later overturned have agreed to a settlement of about \$40 million from New York City to resolve a bitterly fought civil rights lawsuit over their arrests and imprisonment in the sensational crime.

The agreement, reached between the city's Law Department and the five plaintiffs, would bring to an end an extraordinary legal battle over a crime that came to symbolize a sense of lawlessness in New York, amid reports of "wilding" youths and a marauding "wolf pack" that set its sights on a 28-year-old investment banker who ran in the park many evenings after work.

The confidential deal, disclosed by a person who is not a party in the lawsuit but was told about the proposed settlement, must still be approved by the city comptroller and then by a federal judge.

The initial story of the crime, as told by the police and prosecutors, was that a band of young people, part of a larger gang that rampaged through Central Park, had mercilessly beaten and sexually assaulted the jogger. The story quickly exploded into the public psyche, fanned by politicians and sensational news reports that served to inflame racial tensions.

The five black and Hispanic men, ages 14 to 16 at the time of their arrests, claimed that incriminating statements they had given had been coerced by the authorities. The statements were ruled admissible, and the men were convicted in two separate trials in 1990.

In December 2002, an investigation by the Manhattan district attorney, Robert M. Morgenthau, found DNA and other evidence that the woman had been raped and beaten not by the five teenagers but by another man, Matias Reyes, a convicted rapist and murderer who had confessed to acting alone in the attack. Concluding that the new evidence could have changed the original verdict, Mr. Morgenthau's office joined a defense motion asking that the convictions be vacated.

If approved, the settlement would fulfill a pledge by Mayor Bill de Blasio to meet a “moral obligation to right this injustice.”

The proposed settlement averages roughly \$1 million for each year of imprisonment for the men. That amount would suggest that the city was poised to pay one of the men, Kharey Wise, who spent about 13 years in prison, more than it has in any wrongful conviction case.

The other four men — Kevin Richardson, Antron McCray, Yusef Salaam and Raymond Santana Jr. — served about seven years in prison.

The lawsuit had accused the city’s police and prosecutors of false arrest, malicious prosecution and a racially motivated conspiracy to deprive the men of their civil rights, allegations which the administration of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg denied and fought vigorously for more than a decade in federal court.

In contesting the suit, the Bloomberg administration argued that the authorities had acted in good faith and with cause, and should not be held liable. In 2011, a senior corporation counsel lawyer said that the charges had been supported by “abundant probable cause, including confessions that withstood intense

scrutiny, in full and fair pretrial hearings and at two lengthy public trials.”

In early 2013, the city’s Law Department echoed those views. “The case is not about whether the teens were wrongly convicted,” a department spokeswoman said. “It’s about whether prosecutors and police deliberately engaged in misconduct.”

But in January, lawyers for Mayor de Blasio asked the court to delay the litigation so that the new corporation counsel, Zachary W. Carter, could “get up to speed on the facts and the circumstances” of the case. Later, the mayor said that Mr. Carter was “committed to making sure we get to that settlement quickly, some complicated issues, but we’re going to work through them very, very quickly.”

If the proposed settlement is approved by the comptroller, Scott M. Stringer, it would then be submitted for approval to Judge Deborah A. Batts of Federal District Court in Manhattan. In 2007, Judge Batts rejected the city’s motion to dismiss the suit and allowed most of the claims to proceed.

In such settlements, the city typically does not admit liability or wrongdoing; and any settlement with the five men would presumably include the legal fees and costs. Aides to Mr. de

Blasio, Mr. Carter and Mr. Stringer all declined to comment on Thursday when asked about the discussions, as did Jonathan C. Moore, a lawyer representing four of the men. A lawyer for the fifth man did not return a message seeking comment.

The proposed deal comes not long after the city said it would settle two longstanding lawsuits involving the Police Department's stop-and-frisk practices. In that litigation as well, Mr. de Blasio reversed the city's long-held position, and he agreed to sweeping court-ordered reforms that the Bloomberg administration had tried to block on appeal.

The mayor made that announcement at a news conference in Brownsville, Brooklyn, where stop-and-frisk tactics had been widely used. He appeared with Mr. Carter; the police commissioner, William J. Bratton; and, in a show of unity, lawyers with groups that had sued the city.

It is not yet known if or how the mayor might announce a settlement of the Central Park lawsuit, if it is approved.

Over the years, the men have consistently maintained their innocence in the rape of the jogger, Trisha Meili, who was left with no memory of the attack. (Years later, Ms. Meili revealed her identity and wrote a book, "I Am the Central Park Jogger.") In prison, three of the men — Mr. Richardson, Mr. Salaam and

Mr. Santana — maintained their innocence in the rape at parole hearings, where such a stance hurt their chances at a reduced term. At the hearings, the men acknowledged being in the park as part of a group of teenagers, some of whom committed assaults unrelated to the attack on Ms. Meili, and most expressed regret for the events, without going into specifics, transcripts show.

Mr. Santana indicated in his hearing that the larger group was out to rob people. “I took part in with the beatings of that man,” he said of one victim, adding, “If I could go back in time and not do it again, you know, it would have been a whole different story.”

The men’s lawyers have long said that their clients committed no crimes in the park that night.

In recent years, the case remained in the public eye, largely through a documentary, “The Central Park Five,” made by the filmmakers Ken Burns; his daughter, Sarah Burns; and her husband, David McMahon.

As recently as last Friday, about 100 people gathered at the Brown Memorial Baptist Church in Brooklyn to view the film and to hear a talk by one of the men, Mr. Salaam. He described the stigma of living with the brand of being a rapist. “It wasn’t a

popular thing to be one of us,” he said. The film, he added, “really gave us our lives back.”

At one point, he addressed the lawsuit. “Mayor de Blasio has said that he will settle this case for us and there has been some positive motion,” Mr. Salaam said, adding, “We’ve been waiting for 25 years for justice.”

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Houston Chronicle | September 16, 2014

Houston artist Rick Lowe wins MacArthur Fellowship

By Claudia Feldman

Rick Lowe's cellphone wouldn't stop ringing. He ignored the calls from area code 312 and a number he did not recognize. But finally, the artist stepped outside the Epicure Cafe on West Gray, put his cellphone to his ear and received the call of his life. Lowe, the founder of Project Row Houses in Houston's Third Ward, has been named a 2014 MacArthur Fellow. The prestigious award for creativity comes with a \$625,000 grant to be paid during five years and little else - no ceremonial dinners, no speeches, no plaques. Instead, the Mac-Arthur Foundation says, the fellowship provides recipients with flexibility to pursue artistic, intellectual and professional activities without any strings attached.

John Henneberger of Austin, an affordable-housing advocate, also won one of the 21 awards, commonly known as "genius grants."

A model project

Lowe's Project Row Houses, which now spans six blocks and includes 71 structures, was a collection of dilapidated shotgun houses when Lowe envisioned something entirely different: the revitalization of a historical piece of the Third Ward and a place where artists, young single mothers, kids needing a safe haven after school - anybody and everybody - could meet and learn from one another. Twenty years later, it has served as a model for similar redevelopment projects in Dallas, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Los Angeles - even South Korea.

"Rick pioneered a form of art that had no name," executive director Linda Shearer said. "Now his concept is taught in undergraduate and graduate art programs. It's called 'creative place making' and 'social practice.' What's remarkable is that Rick was on this track of socially engaged art and developing community long before anybody thought about it. He imbued those shotgun houses with value that people respect and treasure today."

When President Barack Obama learned about Lowe, Shearer said, he appointed him to the National Council on the Arts.

"Rick doesn't call attention to himself," Shearer said, "and he's not an egomaniac. He's all about being a catalyst and asking, 'How can we transform our communities through art?' "

A change of plan

Lowe, 53, was born in rural Russell County in Alabama. He was the eighth of 12 children, and all of them worked in cotton and peanut fields when they weren't in school.

"We felt like we were the last sharecroppers in the world," Lowe said. "That was my upbringing. I grew up mainly with my mother. My dad wasn't around consistently."

Lowe sums up the life lessons he learned in two words.

"Everybody works."

In high school Lowe played enough basketball to earn an athletic scholarship to Alabama State University. But he realized early he wasn't an elite player and transferred to what was then Columbus College in Columbus, Ga.

He paid tuition and other bills by working as a bus boy, dishwasher and waiter. It was a time, Lowe said, "to piece things together and find out how the world worked."

Lowe took his first drawing class as a freshman. Teachers praised his work and encouraged him to become an art major. Nobody, including his mother, asked how he would earn a living with such an impractical degree.

"What my mom taught me was to work hard, have a strong ethical component to my work and live my life right."

Though Lowe teaches classes at Southern Methodist University in Dallas now, he did not graduate from college. He was still in school but struggling when a professor told him, "You're a doer. You should go out into the world and do it."

Lowe moved to the Mississippi Gulf Coast to spend time with one of his brothers. He worked in an ice cream storage plant and as a hairdresser.

In 1984, he moved to Houston "for no particular reason, except that I wanted to be in large city," he said. "I didn't think I'd last very long, but here I am 30 years later."

Lowe remembers it took several years for him to find his niche and artist friends with whom he felt comfortable. He hop-scotched from Spring Branch to an artists' warehouse on Commerce Street to still other artists' studios on Feagan Street near downtown.

By the late 1980s, Lowe realized he had lost touch with his African-American roots, and he spent considerable time trying to connect with Houston's black communities. He took art classes at Texas Southern University. He met black artists

including Bert Long, Bert Samples, Jesse Lott, Floyd Newsum, George Smith and James Bettison. He also spent many hours visiting with the executive director of S.H.A.P.E. Community Center, Deloyd Parker.

That, Lowe said, is when he starting thinking about the intersection of art and community, art and social justice, art and social services, art and basic human needs.

"All of us were looking for something," Lowe said, "when I came up with the idea of reclaiming these little shotgun houses on Holman."

The 22 homes built in the 1930s were practically falling down, and some were occupied by drug dealers and addicts. If entrepreneurial Houstonians looked at the shacks and saw town houses, Lowe says his friends gave him the confidence to move forward with his vision.

A focus in Houston

Henneberger, 59, said he intends to use his grant to help low-income neighborhood advocates gain more leverage in their struggles for better housing, more equitable public services and relief from environmental racism. Houston will be a particular focus, he said.

"Houston is of special interest because it is the place where we have seen more effective, democratic community engagement on issues than anyplace else in the state," he said. In addition, "conditions in the neighborhoods are among the most unequal of any place in the state that I've ever encountered."

'Have to be thoughtful'

Lowe hasn't decided what to do with his infusion of cash. "I have to be thoughtful about the best way to use the money," he said. "This is not something I'll play around with and throw away. I do want to have a big impact. And a lot of the money will go to the Third Ward."

When Lowe is not working or traveling for work, he shoots basketball at his gym, the 24 Hour Fitness in Midtown.

"Sometimes it's in the middle of the night, when I can't sleep," Lowe said. "I'm one of those people."

Lowe also plays dominoes with the regulars at Project Row Houses. "We have what we call the humility table, which is a reminder that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. Sometimes it's about skill and talent, and sometimes it's about luck. But whatever happens, you know to check your ego at the table."

Jazz musician Jason Moran, a native Houstonian who moved to New York, won a MacArthur grant in 2010. Poet Edward Hirsch, who taught literature and creative writing at the University of Houston, earned his MacArthur grant in 1998.

"He left town after he got his," Lowe said of Hirsch. "I'm not going anywhere."

Associated Press | September 16, 2014

African Americans, Latinos Really Don't Trust The Media To Tell Their Stories Well

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new study shows a large majority of African-American and Hispanic news consumers don't fully trust the media to portray their communities accurately, a statistic that could be troubling for the news industry as the minority population of the United States grows.

Three-fourths of African-American news consumers and two-thirds of Hispanics have doubts about what mainstream media report about their communities, according to a survey released Tuesday by the Media Insight Project. And while most say it's become easier to get news generally in the last five years, few

feel the same way about news regarding their own community, the survey said.

African Americans and Latinos currently make up a third of the U.S. population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. By 2043, the number of minorities is expected to eclipse the number of non-Hispanic whites, with the total minority population reaching 57 percent by 2060.

People of color who are "seeking out news about their communities, they can't find it. And what they see, they don't think is accurate," said Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the American Press Institute, which teamed with The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research on the project. The survey was funded by the American Press Institute and the McCormick Foundation.

When asked whether they thought news about their communities was accurate, 75 percent of blacks said only "moderately" or "slightly/not at all." When Hispanics were asked the same question, 66 percent replied "moderately" or "slightly/not at all."

Tia C. M. Tyree, a Howard University professor and the assistant chair of the university's department of Strategic, Legal and Management Communications, said the stereotyping of

African-Americans and Hispanics in the media, and a distrust of systems in the United States that used to be rife with racism contribute to the distrust.

"Many will believe there is embedded racism in many of America's systems: the media system, the legal system, the educational system," she said. "Many will believe that minorities aren't treated fairly in those systems, and because of that, any products that come out of it will be problematic."

Tyree also pointed at the small number of African-Americans and Hispanics in the media, saying that affects the viewpoint of the product. "It matters who the owners are, it matters who the producers are, it matters who the editors are, because that's often the agenda or the slant of the media and the news coverage," she said.

Part of the reason for the differing levels of skepticism between Hispanics and blacks, the survey said, is that Hispanics have access to a sizable amount of Spanish-language media on television, including Univision, as well as media from other countries. There are no longer any African-American daily newspapers, and few cable channels aimed at African-Americans offer daily news programs.

African-American consumers felt they could find the largest amount of news about their communities on local media. Twenty-three percent named a local television station as providing the most news about their communities, 15 percent named the black press, and 9 percent named newspapers.

Hispanics by far — 41 percent — view Hispanic-specific news sources as the most frequent providers of information about their communities, 10 percent named 24-hour news stations 7 percent named a local news station.

"There isn't an analogous, what you might call 'ethnic' press (for blacks) that has evolved as the Internet has evolved — it's been more of a disruptive medium — while the Hispanic media has sort of adapted and grown," Rosenstiel said.

More blacks get their news from television and on cellphones than non-Hispanic whites or Hispanics: 95 percent of blacks said they got their news from television versus 87 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 86 percent of Hispanics; and 75 percent of blacks said they got news on their cellphone versus 64 percent of Hispanics and 53 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

The news industry needs to figure out how to reach these consumers of color, Rosenstiel said. "They're affluent, they're attractive to advertisers, there's a market there," he said.

The Media Insight Project is an initiative of the American Press Institute and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

NORC, at the University of Chicago, conducted the survey Jan. 9 through Feb. 17, 2014. It involved landline and cellphone interviews in English or Spanish with 1,492 adults nationwide, including 358 Hispanic adults and 318 African American adults. Results from the full survey have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.6 percentage points; For Hispanics, the margin was 8.5 percentage points and for African Americans, 7.9 percentage points.

The Grio | September 13, 2014

Why black Americans should invest in art pieces

By Charing Ball

Black Americans should invest in art.

If you ever had a doubt about the importance of art in the development and maintenance of history, culture and identity of a people, think for a second on why museums are always the first to be raided and looted after the fall of an empire or a nation.

It was true for the Iraqi National Museum in Baghdad, where “untold numbers” of prehistoric 4,000-year-old Mesopotamia and Islamic art were stolen, hours after the official deposition of Saddam Hussein and the fall of Baghdad. It was also true of an archaeological museum in the town of Mallawi, Egypt, which was looted of 1,050 “irreplaceable artifacts” and ransacked during the recent uprising.

“People should really understand there is lots of power in art, and it all goes back to ownership,” said Florcy Morisset, owner and creative director of Vivant Art Collection.

Morisset has been preaching the virtues of art ownership in her downtown Philadelphia gallery, the only one in the city, which specializes in Haitian and culturally ethnic world art, for over seven years. In September, she will officially be closing the gallery doors and moving her collection online. However, she is still particularly keen on inspiring more black patrons of the arts.

As Morisset simply states: if we don’t buy it, others, who might not have the same goals and cultural interest, will.

“It’s to the point that some African artifacts and some famous black artists are now so far out of the financial region that we

[black people] can not even own their art,” she said. “And if we’re not owning it, that means others are. And if we are not participating, that means we have no voice in shaping culture.”

Ownership is key.

This is particularly true of young black adults, who Morisset believes are the most absent from the investing and personal curating side of the art. Rappers like Jay Z, who turned his song Picasso Baby into performance art for the Pace Gallery, and Swizz Beatz, who frequently talks about his own collection of notable artwork, are helping to change the face of what we think about art collecting.

However, as Morisset notes, “The problem is that normally, art is regarded as a luxury item, and some are unwilling or even unable because of money. But that’s not always the case. You don’t have to be Oprah or Jay Z to have a collection. There are people with only three pieces and consider themselves art collectors. It really just comes down to a matter of education.”

Understand your options.

For one, understanding the different options you have to support the arts is important. As an investor, your aim is to buy art with the purpose of it selling it in the future.

“An investor tends to buy what is hot and trending and what has the opportunity to appreciate,” she said.

Whereas an art collector buys arts based around their personal preferences and, generally speaking, to either display in their homes or loan to museums or even to donate at the time of their death. Morisset said that while either option is an excellent choice for a young black patron, she does offer three general rules for picking investment pieces.

Get to know the artist.

First, she suggests an investor get acquainted with the artist behind a potential investment piece. “Do you know who the artist is? Does the artist have a Google-able name? Do you have his bio? Basically, you want to make sure you have the history of the artists, as his story is just as important as his/her art is,” she said.

Look for quality and pick a theme.

The quality of the art piece, including craftsmanship and durability, is also a huge consideration. However, the most important aspect of any investment collection is picking pieces which bring your collection together under one unified theme.

“Your collection could be of only oil paintings, or it maybe photography stills or charcoal paintings. Or you may build around a particular artist, country, time period or even a color. There is a collector whose entire collection is based around

Number 7 editions of prints,” she said. “What theme you choose to shape your collection is up to you. However, if your intent is value, it is best to have particular unifying theme.”

Morisset also want folks to remember that the artist and the quality of his or her work, as well as the quality of the collection itself, are much more important than how much you paid for a individual piece. And in fact, she sees young aspiring artists as better investments, as they tend to offer more appreciation value than already established artists.

Buy what you like.

“But overall I tell people to buy and invest in what you like. Nothing is guaranteed to appreciate,” she said. “As a collector, buy a piece that stops you in your tracks and speaks to you. Again, the number one reason is that we are looking to protect what you find valuable and who has access.”

The Washington Post | May 5, 2014

Where are the Black Ballerinas?

By Stacia L. Brown

When was the last time you saw three black ballerinas on a magazine cover? I can save you some time. You’ve never seen that — unless you’ve already spotted Pointe magazine’s

June/July 2014 cover. For its annual career issue, Pointe enlists Dance Theatre of Harlem's Ashley Murphy, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet's Ebony Williams and the American Ballet Theater's Misty Copeland to discuss an ongoing problem in ballet communities: lack of diversity.

This isn't a new situation and neither are attempts to call greater attention to it. In 2011, Sierra Leonean phenom Michaela DePrince was featured in the award-winning documentary *First Position*, which discussed the challenges she's faced while ascending through the rarefied ranks of dance as a dark-skinned ballerina. At 19, DePrince currently dances with the Dutch National Ballet's junior company, but she still experiences institutional racism in the artform. In a 2013 interview with DanceTabs, she astutely noted, "As a black ballerina racism is less about what happens to you and more about what doesn't happen to you."

An illuminating piece in *The Guardian* last year titled, "Where are the black ballet dancers?" reifies DePrince's claim, interviewing a number of world-class black dancers, including the New York City Ballet's Aesha Ash:

"Black women are often perceived as rude, ostentatious and aggressive. In ballet, the meek, humble, innocent young girl roles are rarely given to black women. But we are all those

things and then some. We don't always have to be exotic – all fire, athleticism. The images we don't see of black women as princesses: that speaks volumes.”

Ash is speaking to the power of visual representation. Ballerinas have long been avatars of possibility for little girls. Watching them work is a real-life reminder that, with talent, drive and intense practice, it is possible for to become the closest thing our world has to a real-life fairy or a princess without royal pedigree. When black and brown girls don't see black ballerinas in the world's most prestigious troupes, the absence intimates diminished possibility. A career in professional ballet is already a long shot for most girls, but the odds seem even longer for black girls who rarely, if ever, see prima ballerinas of color succeed.

To counter that, social media campaigns like Brown Girls Do Ballet on Instagram and Tumblr blogs like Black Ballerinas have been created to heighten their visibility. These social media spaces and others are also making Pointe's new magazine cover a virally shared image. But establishing the presence of black dancers is only a fraction of the battle. Black and brown people cannot stop at proving that we do, indeed, exist in spaces where we are still — in 2014 — unexpected (or worse, unwelcome).

It's past time for diverse representation to deepen.

What makes Pointe's magazine cover such a shareable meme is that it gives us more than one black dancer in one space: three body types, three dance companies, three distinct black experiences, coexisting. The cover eschews tokenism in a way that the larger culture of ballet has not, illustrating the ways in which media may lead the charge of reshaping what's possible for future generations of black ballerinas.

Our images — both still and moving — won't make much impact if we approach diversity in the same old ways, occasionally adding “a fly to the buttermilk” to quiet detractors. Black ballerinas, for all the lead and solo opportunities their skin color still costs them, deserve more than media representation that stops at declaring, “We're out here!”

This was one of the reasons I sat out the 2012 fracas between Amy Sherman-Palladino, creator of ABC Family's ballet-centered drama “Bunheads,” and Shonda Rhimes, ABC's foremost doyenne of diversity (thanks to her success creating “Grey's Anatomy” and “Scandal”). After the pilot aired, Rhimes famously tweeted, “Hey @abcfbunheads: really? You couldn't cast even ONE young dancer of color so I could feel good about my kid watching this show? NOT ONE?” It was a valid

complaint, even if dancers of color did crop up in the background of scenes later in the short-lived series.

But, in truth, I wouldn't have wanted to see Sherman-Palladino add a black ballerina to her cast unless the girl was ensured a storyline. And if that storyline didn't at least reference the very real bias black ballerinas face, it still would've been a wasted opportunity. Sherman-Palladino's body of work rarely accounts for race (the Korean Kim family on *Gilmore Girls* notwithstanding), so my confidence in her desire or willingness to engage it on "Bunheads" would've been low.

What young girls of all races need to see more of when they watch ballet-themed media are black and brown dancers facing discrimination — overtly, from dance moms and peers, and institutionally, from instructors and companies. They need to see more than just one dancer in the back of an all-white class or performance. They need to see black ballerinas sharing their varied experiences of systemic racial bias. And they need to see ways in which this pervasive discrimination can be confronted.

Perhaps the upcoming ballet drama, *Flesh and Bone*, which is slated to air next year on Starz, will offer us incisive racial commentary — if not in its first few episodes (the show doesn't appear to have dancers of colors in its current cast), then later on. Maybe some savvy TV producer will sign a deal with Misty

Copeland to chronicle her Project Plie, an initiative that seeks to diversify ballet student bodies, by offering scholarships to dancers of color and by offering American Ballet Theater to training ballet teachers who work with underrepresented communities. Regardless, ballet seems to be enjoying a silver and small screen renaissance. Media's opportunities to affect meaningful long-term change in the global dance community abound.

For many, ballerinas are still avatars of possibility. The more aware we are about what black ballet dancers constantly face and overcome, the more we should all want to push back against bias. The more dancers of color we see in a single elite space, the more our children will believe there's room for more than one at the top.

BUSINESS

The Hill | June 30, 2014

Expanding broadband is critical for minorities

By Harry C. Alford

The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) expected vote to consider regulating the Internet as a public utility would affect all Americans, but perhaps no group more than minorities.

Broadband has been a boon for minorities, particularly for those seeking to enter the marketplace. High-speed Internet has helped break down barriers of entry that have long kept minorities from starting new businesses. As Internet use has exploded over the past decade, minority entrepreneurs have been some of the greatest beneficiaries. From 2002 to 2007, the number of African American-owned businesses across the U.S. grew at three times the national average. And self-employment among African Americans rose by 26 percent from 1999 to 2009 — more than any other demographic. These successful businesses are a huge boost to the community, giving a whole generation a set of new role models. The expansion of broadband can largely be attributed to the investment private companies have made in our nation's Internet infrastructure. The nation's largest Internet providers

have poured billions into growing and improving our country's national broadband networks. In 2012 alone, these companies invested over \$50 billion into broadband, giving entrepreneurs around the country more access to the networks that let them build a small business.

Unfortunately, this progress could come to an end in the near future.

The FCC is currently considering whether to reclassify the Internet as a public utility, a decision that would have a devastating effect on access and availability. Other public utilities such as highways and the electric grid have long been plagued by funding shortages, so much that the American Society of Civil Engineers now estimates that our nation's infrastructure will face an investment gap of \$3.6 trillion by 2020. The growing gap is already causing very real problems, with one-third of American roads now estimated to be in bad condition and an increasing number of blackouts on the electric grid annually.

Public utility regulation directly leads to such problems by dampening the competition necessary for more investment. Title II regulations were designed to rein in long-gone telephone monopolies — not the dynamic, competitive businesses we see today. A wide array of cable, TV, Internet,

and fiber providers compete fiercely to expand access and provide the best possible service for consumers. Applying 19th-century models to these 20th-century technologies would stifle innovation and discourage further investment.

The continued expansion of broadband is particularly critical for minority communities. Earlier this year, a study from the Pew Research Center found computer use among African Americans to be below the national average, only 77 percent. Giving this community more access to a computer and an Internet connection will be vital in building the digital literacy skills in demand in today's job market.

As the FCC considers its next steps, it is incumbent that they keep in mind how much minorities have gained from the proliferation of high-speed Internet. Now more than ever, we need to keep this vital economic engine going strong — not slow it down with burdensome and ultimately futile regulations.

The Huffington Post | May 22, 2014

False Stereotypes of People With Disabilities

Hold Employers Back

By Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi

Almost twenty-five years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), physical architecture and some educational opportunities thankfully have changed, but negative attitudes and stigmas about people with disabilities have not. Indeed, a major Princeton study shows that while people with disabilities are seen as warm, they are not seen as competent.

Meanwhile, a study published by Cornell Hospitality Quarterly analyzed results from a survey of employers at 320 hospitality companies in the United States. It found that all of the companies share a concern that those with disabilities could not do the work required of their employees. Another top concern was the potential cost of unspecified accommodations they might need to provide for a person with a disability under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This is despite the fact that the record shows that most such accommodations are not exceptionally costly. Anecdotally, there is also evidence that employers fear legal action should they terminate an employee with a disability. It is far more difficult to prove discrimination for not being hired in the first

place. So, given that that the perception is that people with disabilities aren't competent, and could potentially be costly, why would an employer take the risk of hiring them?

One of the employers who took the "risk" was Randy Lewis, former Vice President of Walgreens and Fortune 50 executive, who led Walgreens' logistics division for sixteen years, as the chain grew from 1,500 to 8,000 stores. Randy introduced an inclusive model of hiring people with disabilities in Walgreens distribution centers that resulted in ten percent of its workforce consisting of people with disabilities. All of whom are held to the same standards as their colleagues without disabilities. The outcome? Study after study turned out to be myth-busters. The employees with disabilities were MORE productive and loyal than their non-disabled peers! And most accommodations? Either free or cheap. But even when the relatively few more expensive accommodations were factored in, the overall costs of accommodations were far outweighed by the low turnover rates and better tenures of the employees with disabilities. Grateful for opportunities, and in many cases thriving on repetitive tasks, they are so loyal to Walgreens that important sums of recruitment costs were saved as the employees continued to stay in their jobs and deliver excellent results. You can learn more about this in Randy's new book or on the Walgreen's website.

Other companies such as Ernst and Young (EY), have also found inclusive hiring to be a winning ticket. Starting with its founder, Arthur Young, EY has always embraced differing abilities.

Trained as a lawyer, Arthur was deaf with low vision and he wasn't able to comfortably practice. He turned to finance and the new field of accounting to build his career. His "disability" drove him to innovation and entrepreneurship, which played a pivotal role in the development of EY. Finding and engaging diverse talents has been a key part of EY's ongoing success.

Malcolm Gladwell's new book, *David and Goliath*, extols the strength of people with disabilities. Because traditional ways of doing things don't always work for people with disabilities, Gladwell demonstrates that they compensate for that in ways that benefit the workforce by developing incredible ways to innovate and succeed.

AMC Theaters, Lowe's, many grocery stores and others are also getting outstanding results by hiring employees with disabilities. So what are other employers waiting for? They are still blinded by negative stereotypes. It's time for people with disabilities to be seen for what they CAN do, and not for what they cannot. What can people with disabilities do? Think about it.

Beautiful music from a deaf man? It happened. Ludwig von Beethoven.

World changing words from someone with dyslexia? It happened. Thomas Jefferson.

A Super bowl champion NFL player who is deaf? It happened. Derrick Coleman.

A Nobel Prize for a scientist who failed in school? It happened. Albert Einstein.

Secrets of the universe being revealed by a man who uses a wheelchair and who can no longer speak? It's happening. Stephen Hawking.

It's time to change the narrative of how we see people with disabilities so employers can see the ABILITIES they have and the positive impact that can have on their business's bottom line. It's amazing that such small change can have such a big impact. It can - if it is done in a focused and strategic way. Employing people with disabilities may take a little more forethought and planning. The U.S. government recently changed their expectations of federal contractors who now must become at least partially inclusive of hiring people with disabilities. There are many groups that can help in the process

including www.USBLN.org, www.ProjectSearch.org,
www.nod.org and others.

As the Baby Boomers continue to age, a powerful answer to labor and talent shortages already exists in our own back yards - our own family members and neighbors with disabilities who want to work.

Recognize the disability. Imagine the possibility. Respect the ability.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Tech Generation Magazine | August 23, 2014

Vibrating gloves teach Braille in minutes

By Ethan Levinskas

Researchers from the Georgia Institute of Technology are working on a glove that helps the visually impaired learn Braille, even when they are not paying attention or when they are doing something else. This glove is based on a similar project the researchers had called Piano Touch, which teaches individuals how to play the piano in 45 minutes. The process is known as passive haptic learning (PHL), a technique that helps people acquire muscle memory through vibration stimuli.

In a study assessing the effectiveness of these vibrating gloves, participants wore a pair of gloves with rotating motors stitched into the knuckles. These motors were then programmed to vibrate in a pattern that reflected and translated phrases in Braille. Audio cues then informed the participants of the Braille letters created when a particular sequence is typed. At the end, the participants were asked to type the phrase learned without vibrations or cues from the gloves.

This process was repeated again on the participants, but this time they were given a distraction task. The participants were

told to ignore the gloves while they played a game for 30 minutes. The participants were then split in half – half of them received vibrations and audio cues while playing the game, while the other half only heard audio cues. When the game was over, they were again asked to type the phrase without wearing the gloves. Participants who felt the vibrations were a third more accurate, with some earning a perfect score.

No one in this study knew the language of Braille or had previously typed on a Braille keyboard. Participants also could not see what they had typed, and they had no indication of their accuracy throughout the study. Participants were even able to transfer the knowledge learned from typing Braille into reading. After the test, they could recognize 70% of the letters in a phrase.

Not only is this research important for aiding the visually impaired, or learning piano, but the gloves have also been used to help improve sensation and mobility for those with spinal injuries.

BBC | September 23, 2014

'I was blind... now I have bionic eyes'

By Rose Eveleth

Fran Fulton is 66, and she's been fully blind for about 10 years. A few weeks ago, all that changed.

Fulton suffers from retinitis pigmentosa – a degenerative eye disease that slowly causes light-sensitive cells in the retina to die off. Over the course of several years she lost her sight, and for the past 10 years she hasn't been able to see anything at all. But in late July, Fulton was outfitted with a system called the Argus II. A pair of camera-equipped glasses are hooked up to electrodes implanted in her eyeball, which feed her brain visual information. Using the system, she can now see the world again. What's the experience like?

“When they ‘turned me on’ so to speak it was absolutely the most breathtaking experience,” she says. “I was just so overwhelmed and so excited, my heart started beating so fast I had to put my hand on my chest because I thought it was going to pop.”

As both cameras and our understanding of the visual system improve, new techniques to restore sight to the blind are progressing too. Devices like the Argus II are able to bypass

damaged eyes to restore some vision to those who have lost it. It's not the same as fully restored vision, and it's still early days – there are only six people in the US with the Argus II – but researchers hope that as they learn more about vision they can help those who've lost it get it back.

The Argus II system is made up of three parts: a pair of glasses, a converter box, and an electrode array. The glasses aren't corrective, they are simply a vehicle for the camera – and that camera is no more complicated than the versions found in modern smart phones. The image from the camera is then transmitted down into a converter box that can be carried in a purse or pocket. This box sends signals to the electrode array implanted onto the patient's retina. Essentially, what the Argus II does is skip over the cells that retinitis pigmentosa has killed to get visual signals to the brain.

Robert Greenberg, the president and CEO of Second Sight, the company that developed Argus II, explains that the eye is like a multi-layer cake. On one layer are the light-sensitive cells, called "rods" and "cones", that sighted people rely on to take in light and turn that into visual information. But for those with retinitis pigmentosa, those cells are dead. "We're bypassing those dead cells and going to the next layer of the cake," Greenberg explains.

This means that Argus II has to convert the information from the camera into signals that the electrodes implanted in the eye can use, and that the brain can interpret. Figuring out how to achieve that was the focus of Greenberg's PhD thesis. But there was a bigger hurdle to come, he says: working out a way to implant electrodes onto the paper-thin retina inside the eye.

“The retina is like one-ply toilet paper,” he says. “Developing something that can sit on the surface of the retina without damaging it is really difficult. That was tougher than figuring out the algorithms.”

For patients, though, the whole thing is remarkably simple. The surgery to implant the electrodes takes just a few hours and patients go home the same day with an implant that wraps around one of their eyes and is secured by a tiny tack the size of a human hair. After about a week to heal, the patient returns to get the glasses, to have their new electrodes tuned, and to train them on how to use the system. On the converter box there are knobs that let users increase or decrease things like the brightness and contrast. Then they go home with their new pair of eyes.

Sight beyond sight

So what do people using Argus II actually see? Greenberg says it's best imagined as looking like a pixelated image, or staring at

a digital scoreboard held just in front of your eyes. There are regions of light and dark that collectively the brain recognizes as an image.

Fulton, however, says it's difficult to describe exactly what she sees. "People say you'll see shapes," she says. "Well yeah but it's the electrical impulses, and it's about learning how to interpret them. It's not that it's hard; it's just a learning curve. It's something that I'm learning."

Fulton says that mostly what she can see is areas of light and dark. She recently had dinner with friends. When they were leaving the restaurant she was able to hone in on a person's light shirt. "I didn't need to use a sighted guide, they were in front of me and I just followed them out," she says. Other patients report that things like fireworks and Christmas trees are especially visible. "I can't wait for something to happen that I can go to fireworks, I haven't seen fireworks in a very long time and I am looking forward to that," Fran says.

Many patients, Fulton included, continue doing vision therapy to improve their sight and train their brain to better interpret the signals.

For Fulton, who works as a disability advocate, getting around now is so much easier. "The first time I left work with it – I work

on the third floor and there are three elevators, and I heard the bell to go down. I lined myself up in front of the door and I walked straight in. I didn't bump my left shoulder, didn't bump my right shoulder, I didn't have to use my cane to check. Every day it's very exciting, and never in my lifetime did I ever think something like this could happen."

Fulton has long used a cane to detect obstacles in her way, but now her awareness of her surroundings is much more detailed. "I am able to now identify doorways and objects on the street. I can't tell you whether it's a flowerpot or a homeless person collecting money, but I can tell you there's an object there."

Defining tech

Argus II isn't perfect: it's only black and white, for starters. And it's not like you're feeding a full image to the brain: users can't read signs, or recognize faces, or identify objects – at least, not usually. "I've been quite successful at identifying a triangle versus a circle and a square," Fran boasts.

It's also important to note that this is not a system that all blind people can use – they have to have an intact retina for the implant to work. Those who lost their site to things like diabetes, glaucoma or infection and who have damage to the retina can't use the Argus II system.

Greenberg says Second Sight is working on a new implant that bypasses even the retinal layer, and implants electrodes directly onto the visual region of the brain.

But for those who have been blind for years, simply seeing shapes again is pretty exciting. “I’m very much looking forward to being able to see my grandchildren,” Fulton says. “I won’t be able to see their faces, but I know they’ll have great fun standing in a room and say ‘grandma find me!’ and I’ll be able to tell the difference between the four-year-old and the seven-year-old.”

Yahoo News | September 23, 2014

New app allows the blind to read non-braille documents

A revolutionary app called the KNFB Reader was unveiled last week, combining advanced digital photography with Apple hardware, allowing the blind and visually impaired access to almost any kind of printed text.

The Voice Over function guides the user through the process of taking the picture, and reads the text aloud. It's even capable of reading multi-columned text such as newspaper articles.

No document is too long, and it can help the blind read books that might not be available in braille. It's able to save the documents as well as import and export them.

The KNFB Reader can read in English, French, German, Dutch (Belgian and Netherlandic), Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian.

It's compatible with every iPhone from the 5 up, including the 5C, 5S, 6 and whatever comes next. It needs iOS 7 or higher for compatibility.

The app is currently available for download for \$99.99

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