

MWM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



SUMMER/FALL 2015

NEWS FOR THE VISUALLY-IMPAIRED



Merrick Washington Magazine

MERRICK/WASHINGTON MAGAZINE



With integration, the Durham Colored Library became part of the Durham Public Library System. The DCL, Inc. board then turned its attention to another project, the *Merrick Washington Magazine for the Blind*.

The *Merrick Washington Magazine* project (MWM) is a publication started in 1952 that brings news articles about and related to African American culture and history to a sight-challenged population who do not readily have access to Braille or large print editions of major publications. We hope to give our readers the independence to read these materials on their own, rather than rely on others to convey this information to them. The articles featured in each issue cover everything from American politics to health issues and are culled from a range of top-notch new sources, including *The New York Times*, *Essence Magazine*, and *National Geographic Magazine*, to name a few. The bi-annual publication is usually available in both Braille and large print editions, depending on funding. It is distributed to readers, organizations and schools around the U.S. that support the visually-impaired. Our target demographic includes people who have been sightless since birth and those dealing with diseases and medical conditions that affect eyesight.

We publish *MWM* this in memory and in honor of the founders- Mrs. Lyda Moore Merrick (deceased – she was Aaron McDuffie Moore’s daughter and chaired the DCL, Inc. Board for several years) and Mr. John Carter Washington- and all of the Durham, N.C. leaders who believed in the mission and love behind this project. In particular, we honor the memory of John H. Wheeler (deceased), who in 1969 called together the members of the Durham Colored Library, Inc. board and led the decision to bring *MWM* under the guidance of that organization. We also honor the memory of Josephine Dobbs Clement (deceased), the first editorial board chair under this new arrangement, and the other members of that board: Constance Merrick Watts (daughter of Lyda Moore Merrick), John Carter Washington and W.C. Bennett (deceased). Over the years, many women’s civic organizations have also continued to lend support to *MWM*. We are grateful for their faith in our project and mission.

ARCHIVED ISSUES

Summer/Fall 2015 (<http://durhamcl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Summer-2015-issue.pdf>)

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Dear *MWM* readers,

This year has been exciting, troubling and historic. Nationally, the US has passed historic legislation to protect freedoms, like that to marry and access to healthcare. Conversations about issues that disproportionately impact communities of color—mass incarceration and economic inequality—are front and center as we enter a critical election cycle.

At the same time, we've been heartbreakingly reminded of deeply rooted problems that we can't seem to fix with policy, like discrimination and racism. These systemic issues have threatened our voting rights and driven unjust police and civilian violence throughout too many of our communities, from Baltimore, MD to Charleston, SC to Waller County, TX.

It has been a particularly challenging year for our DCL board. We recently lost one of our organization's past board chairs and guiding lights, Constance Merrick Watts (page 10), and her vibrant sister Vivian Merrick Sansom. The Merrick Sisters were exceptional; they lived life with integrity, positivity, and love. While they are deeply missed, their passing has given those of us carrying forth their legacies and visions renewed energy to operate in this world as they did: committed to community, curiosity, and creativity. These same values have also guided the life of John Carter Washington, the 94-year old *MWM* co-founder who has persevered against extraordinary odds, including being blind and an orphan (page 6).

The articles in the Summer 2015 edition of *MWM* were picked with those values in mind. To strengthen our community, we must celebrate and lift-up inspiring community leaders, such as athlete Renee Powell (page 44) and Dr. Aaron

McDuffie Moore (page 14), founder of the Durham Colored Library, Inc. But, simultaneously, we must continue to confront and combat discrimination issues that cripple our community, like disenfranchisement (page 21) and gentrification (page 24).

Our intellectual curiosity has been peaked by technology innovators who are developing new devices for the visually impaired (page 30). In our globalized society, it is also critical for us to also examine the consequences of our technological advances on our brothers and sisters abroad, such as those in Korle Lagoon in Ghana where much of our hazardous “e-waste” is dumped and destroying the area (page 27).

Finally, we’re inspired by the power of creativity. It has been the vehicle for Black writers to provide social critique—sometimes so powerful that the FBI tracked their activities (page 34). Creativity also drives contemporary artists to activate the dreams of Black youth through newer characters, like Black superhero Cyborg (page 38).

Community, curiosity, and creativity. We hope this issue inspires you to lead with these values, too.

SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO THE FOUNDERS

The News and Observer | April 2015

At 94, blind and deaf, John C. Washington is a true inspiration

By Josh Shaffer

DURHAM - More than anyone I've met, John C. Washington deserves the chance to shake his fist at fortune, spit at the heavens and curse every sunrise.

At 94, he describes the circumstances life handed down on day one:

Born blind and nearly deaf, discovered in an alley, his mother dying beside him, black in segregated Durham. He survived being abandoned on a set of railroad tracks, getting whipped by schoolmasters and navigating the world without a set of working eyes.

And now, his hearing totally gone, he celebrates a fate that might have crushed the rest of us, ticking off a list of accomplishments that elude the less-inspired:

Married 55 years. Fathered three children. Worked for decades as a massage therapist at the Durham YMCA. Founded, edited and wrote a column for the nation's first magazine in Braille.

I asked about all this in his room at a North Durham nursing home, where his daughter Melva pressed my questions into his hand – one sign-language letter at a time. He answered in a

voice that came close to shouting but carried the cadences of a preacher.

“I feel,” Washington told me, a smile on his lips, “that if I could see I would not have done the things that I did for my fellow blind. I would be wild ... and rude!”

I met Washington thanks to Charles Finch, a longtime Durham social worker who believes young people need local inspiration – stirring figures who come from their own streets, whose hands they can shake.

“It’s not always this pie in the sky thing: Martin Luther King and Selma bridge,” Finch told me over lunch. “They’re impressive, but they’re not part of your life.”

Washington, who still goes by Johnny, learned quickly that the world in 1921 had little regard for a blind, black orphan. Unclaimed after birth, he got shuttled from hospital to orphanage to the Durham County Home.

“The only playmates I had,” he recalled, “were the old people.”

Life hardly improved when he landed at what is now the Governor Morehead School, where he protested what he said were beatings and field work forced on blind and deaf students, earning himself a reputation for spunk.

“My grades were poor,” Washington recalled. “The superintendent told me that he felt like he ought to bury me even though it was raining. I was a pretty bad boy. I wrote

letters to the board and to two governors. I guess they took it out on me at graduation.”

Denied a diploma, John Washington tried his luck in Chicago, where he trained at the Swedish School of Massage.

Rubbing sore tissue had long offered the blind a chance at a career and independence. The first blind masseur dates at least to 8th-century China. But Washington learned his trade on the cab-honking streets of the Windy City, where he stumbled around with his cane, trusting streetcar conductors to deliver him.

“I got lost in Chicago,” he said. “I got lost on the Loop. I used to walk around Lake Michigan, that bridge over the river. I was afraid.”

For me, a middle-age journalist who complains when the Wi-Fi is too slow, who feels forsaken when he breaks a shoelace, Washington would have qualified for a plaque somewhere if his resume had ended here. But his skill with his hands made his disability practically disappear, so much so that his daughter hardly noticed it growing up.

Having married Fannie Ruth Washington, also blind, he wore a buzzer in his shirt pocket to alert him when the doorbell rang. A series of microphones rigged around the house let him listen to any conversation in any room. He kept a radio playing at his table in the downtown YMCA, and later, when he worked out of his home, his patients relaxed between ceiling-high bookshelves that contained his Bible in Braille.

“They all called me ‘Deacon,’” Washington remembered. “I called them all ‘Brother.’ Everyone was happy.”

As to his magazine, founded in 1952, he explains that he was simply filling a need. Women had their own magazine. Jewish readers had theirs. Nobody else was publishing stories especially for blacks who were blind.

Its first title, The Negro Braille Magazine, gave way to the Merrick/Washington Magazine for the Blind, named for its co-founder Lyda Merrick, who also cared for Washington as a boy. The publication continues today.

I could have listened to Washington all day. But he had clearly tired, talking in a voice that could be heard down the hall of his nursing home. His life near the end is peaceful. He reads. He meditates. He prays.

As I left, he recited a piece of the poem he composed upon turning 92. And I’m happy to share the phrases he could recall: “I said that growing old was graceful, and it thrilled me to hear the ladies say, ‘Johnny, you are a sweet man.’ I said that growing old is kind, the way I try to be. I said that growing old is precious, more than silver. I said it was beautiful and dutiful.

“I am proud to be growing old.”

Lyda Constance Merrick Watts Obituary

By Shana Blake Hill, C. Eileen Watts Welch, and James A. Welch

Lyda Constance Merrick Watts was born October 17, 1920 in Durham, North Carolina. She was the second daughter of Lyda Vivian Moore Merrick and Edward Richard Merrick, and the granddaughter of Dr. & Mrs. Aaron McDuffie Moore (Sarah McCotta Dancy) and Mr. & Mrs. John Merrick (Martha Hunter). Her grandfather, Dr. Aaron M. Moore, founded Lincoln Hospital, where she was born, and he was Durham's first black physician.

Constance was educated in Durham's public-school system from first through ninth grade. She then attended Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, NC through high school. In 1941 she earned a BA in Economics from Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama and studied afterwards at Columbia University graduate school. Her studies in New York were interrupted by the attack upon Pearl Harbor which drew the USA into WWII. Constance wanted to re- turn to Columbia for her second year, but her father, like many people, "feared they would drop a bomb on New York next" and did not want his baby girl at risk.

Returning home to Durham in '42, she worked as a loan clerk for North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company while actively participating in several community service organizations. She twice served as president of the Durham Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, a sorority chapter founded by her accomplished and vivacious older sister, Vivian Merrick Sansom.

In 1945 Constance wed Dr. Charles Dewitt Watts of Atlanta, Georgia. The happy couple first met on the occasion of Charles' graduation from Morehouse College in Atlanta. Shortly thereafter he traveled to Durham to serve as best man for his dear friend, Joseph Sansom, who was marrying Constance's sister, Vivian. In the years to come, Charles often reminisced, "I couldn't take my eyes off Constance at that wedding." Constance was a popular young woman - after all she had been "Miss Talladega" two years in a row. But Charles Watts was a handsome, brilliant and extremely persistent, young doctor and soon stood at the altar once more. This time with his own beautiful bride. What a powerful marriage and a lasting love that would be!

From their union four children were born: C. Eileen Watts Welch, Deborah Chase Watts Hill, Charles Dewitt Watts Jr. and Winifred Watts Hemphill. For a while, of course they were just Eileen, Debbie, Chuck and Wini; four healthy, smart, mischievous, earnest children eager to live up to their parents' shining example. While raising her four children, Constance also provided significant management and social support for Dr. Watts' growing medical and surgical practice. When their aging mothers, Ida Hawes Watts and Lyda Moore Merrick, became frail, Constance cared for the women in her home.

Throughout her life, Constance demonstrated a deep concern for humanity in general and an undying compassion for family, family life and for those in her community. Known for her strong, yet gentle, leadership skills, her role as charter member, president or even founder served her well as she made a difference in so many lives. Her elegance, warmth, poise and

matchless charm have been legendary to all those who have spent time in her presence. She lifted any room she entered to a higher standard just by being her remarkable self. Constance was a lady in the truest sense of the word.

Constance Watts' community organizational affiliations were many and meaningful. For approximately 10 years, surrounding 1960, she facilitated distribution of the Girl Scout Council's cookies to the Hayti community.

In the mid-1970s through 1990 African-Americans in Durham were beginning to be elected to public office. Constance was the campaign treasurer for each of the years when the first African-American women were elected to the board of the Durham County Commissioners and the Durham Board of Education. Elna Spaulding served for 10 years as a Durham County Commissioner and Josephine Dobbs Clement 10 years on the Durham Board of Education and five years as Durham County Commissioner.

Like her maternal grandfather before her, she believed in the importance of making books available for all citizens. Constance served as co-chair of the Durham County Library Centennial Celebration, as a board member of the Stanford L. Warren Branch Library and treasurer of the Durham Colored Library, Inc.

Key among her other volunteer endeavors were being a charter member of the Durham Chapter of the Links, Incorporated, a founding member of the Tuesday Morning Study Group and a do-cent of the Duke Art Museum, as well as on the board of

the North Carolina Central University Art Museum. She also gave significant portions of her time to mentoring and tutoring students at W.G. Pearson Elementary School.

Her church membership with St. Joseph's AME Church included, among other activities, singing in the senior choir and participating in the Ladies Aid Society. When the old St. Joseph's AME Church was slated to be demolished by Durham's "Urban Renewal" during the mid-1970s, she volunteered to save the church. Her parents' and grandparents' homes had been destroyed so she was determined to protect the church structure. The old church's demolition was averted and ultimately revived to a state-of-the-art cultural enrichment and arts educational facility dedicated to the preservation of Hayti's heritage. Because of her hard work with that Hayti committee, the church was designated a National Historic Landmark. To this day the Hayti Heritage Center serves as a viable venue for concerts and art events featuring cultural diversity.

Constance also served several terms as a trustee for Mutual Community Savings Bank. Other boards graced by her participation included Durham and Community Healthcare Foundation, Auxiliary of the Durham County Medical Society, United Way of Durham and Auxiliary of the Durham Academy of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy. By her actions, Constance Watts was in both word and deed a remarkable woman, citizen and human being.

When interviewed by The Herald-Sun in 1989 on the subject of family, Constance talked about growing up in the Hayti community of Durham. At the end of the newspaper article she

expressed her personal views on how the integration in the 60s changed her outlook of Durham. She remarked, “Before, I thought of myself as a citizen of Hayti. Now I feel I’m a citizen of Durham. It is definitely better. There are more opportunities now.” Her optimism and community spirit shined through every word, when, as we all know, change never comes easy. Yet, Constance was always eager to learn something new and embrace the next adventure with her own sweet brand of grace.

In death she is joining her husband of 59 years, Dr. Charles DeWitt Watts, Sr., who passed in 2004; her second daughter, Deborah Chase Watts Hill, who passed in 1993; and her loving and noble ancestors. She is survived by her sister, Vivian McCotta Merrick Sansom of Raleigh, NC who is 97 years old; three children, C. Eileen Watts Welch (Jim), Charles D. Watts, Jr. (Janis Ernst) and Winifred Watts Hemphill (Dana); nine grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends who she loved very much.

Merrick Washington Magazine | August 2015

**Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore: Establishing African American
Rural Schools in North Carolina**

By Sherri Holmes & C. Eileen Watts Welch

Dr. Moore's efforts were responsible for dramatically improving literacy among African Americans and creating an educational system that uplifted generations of African Americans residing in rural North Carolina communities.

Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore's contributions to society were broad, centering on his life's philosophy of self sufficiency, hard work and helping others less fortunate to have better opportunities. Born in 1863, moving to Durham in 1888, he set up a medical practice. Between then and his death in 1923 he founded, or partnered to establish, more than ten businesses and institutions. Some of these are still viable businesses such as the NC Mutual Life Insurance Company, several financial businesses of which Mechanics and Farmers Bank (now M&F Bank) continues to thrive and North Carolina Central University. Other institutions served Durham's African American community throughout the Jim Crow days and included the original Lincoln Hospital & Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing.

In 1913 he founded the Durham Colored Library (DCL, Inc.) which today continues his mission of lifting up stories about African Americans to create a more comprehensive picture of the American experience. One of the publications the library produces is the *Merrick Washington Magazine* for the visually impaired (originally named *The Negro Braille Magazine*). His daughter, Lyda Vivian Moore Merrick,

followed in her father's footsteps of service and launched the magazine in 1952. She avowed, "My father passed a torch to me I have never let go out. We are blessed to serve."

Following the Civil War nearly 90% of African Americans lived in the South. After almost 250 years of prohibiting teaching African Americans to read, most southern whites had no intention of investing in the education of African American children. There were numerous northern philanthropists who stepped in and addressed this significant problem. In 1892 John Fox Slater, a textile manufacturer from Norwich, CT, established a foundation with an initial donation of \$1 million. Its sole purpose was "uplifting of the lately emancipated population of the southern states, their posterity, by conferring on them the blessing of a Christian education." Several influential political and educational leaders joined the Slater Fund's board which helped support the establishment of hundreds of schools in the South.

In 1907 a Quaker named Anna Jeanes donated \$1 million to create "The Fund for Rudimentary Schools for Southern Negroes." Their board of trustees included several notable figures including Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee University. The funds were used to develop a network of African American educators who traveled throughout the South to oversee instruction for African American children. They became known as "Jeanes Teachers" or "Jeanes Supervisors." They also led fundraising efforts, arranged healthcare, offered adult education and even started land co-ops to enable sharecroppers to purchase their own land. The motto of the Jeanes teachers was "Do the next needed thing."

Ida Daniel Dark, D.M.A., is the current secretary of the board of directors for the Durham Colored Library. In the 1950s her mother, Leona B. Daniel, was a Jeanes Supervisor and her father, John T. Daniel, Sr., was the Pender County Training School Principal in Rocky Point, NC, whose campus housed several Rosenwald buildings. Dr. Dark remembers her mother traveling throughout the area to work with teachers in the rural schools. Her mother developed annual competitions to encourage teachers to ensure their students were able to meet the educational standards.

In 1912, Booker T. Washington approached Julius Rosenwald, son of German-Jewish immigrants and Sears, Roebuck and Company President, about improving education for African Americans in the South. At the time, Rosenwald was serving on the board of trustees of Tuskegee Institute and became committed to uplifting African Americans. In 1917 Rosenwald declared, "The horrors that are due to race prejudice come home to the Jew more forcefully than to others of the white race, on account of the centuries of persecutions that they have suffered and still suffer." Rosenwald first agreed to fund six, small schools in Alabama. Eventually his program was expanded as he financed over 5,300 schools, shops and teachers' homes in 15 states.

In order to receive a Rosenwald grant, communities were required to raise matching funds and the school boards had to purchase the land, as well as provide teachers with salaries and supervision. According to historian Joanne Abel, "The African American community was doubly taxed. Once for their regular taxes and then they provided additional funds, as well as contributed labor and materials." To build

the schools, communities were given blueprints and strict requirements for construction. Inspectors ensured that they met the standards. The schools were designed by William A. Hazel, head of Tuskegee Institute's architectural and mechanical drawing division; George Washington Carver, Tuskegee's noted agricultural scientist; and Robert Taylor, professor of architecture at Tuskegee. The Rosenwald buildings were considered to be state of the art.

Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore was born on a farm in Elkton, NC. He experienced first-hand inadequacies of education for African Americans when he attended a rural school in Rosindale, NC. Dr. Moore developed a profound appreciation for education and later spent three years teaching at the same school he had attended. He then decided to further his education by entering the Whittin Normal School in Lumberton, NC. The following year he attended the Normal School in Fayetteville, NC. Unfortunately, Dr. Moore was forced to leave school each year to assist with planting and harvesting season, but he still maintained his passion for learning.

In 1885 Dr. Moore enrolled at Shaw University in Raleigh, NC, intending to become a professor. While there he learned of the desperate need for African American physicians and the school officials encouraged him to attend its new Leonard Medical College. He completed the four-year program in three years and was ranked second among the mixed racial group being tested when he passed the North Carolina Medical Board. Despite changing the direction of his career, Dr. Moore continued to dedicate his life to educating his community.

When he heard about the Rosenwald funds, most likely from his friend Booker T. Washington, Dr. Moore became determined to obtain funding to construct school buildings for African Americans in North Carolina. Up until that time there were no Rosenwald schools in North Carolina and few, rural schools for African Americans. Those schools which existed were in poor condition. In order to improve the quality of education, he also decided an appeal should be made to the Slater and Jeanes Foundations.

Dr. Moore knew it was critical to first document the current problems. He paid the salary for the state's first inspector, George W. Davis, for African American rural schools and worked with the State's Education Department to provide direction and support. The inspector noted the terrible conditions of the school buildings, the poorly educated teachers earning extremely low salaries, dilapidated furnishings, short school terms, poor student attendance and insufficient resources.

Additionally, Dr. Moore was able to obtain support for North Carolina from Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald. He also took on the task of raising thousands of dollars from an African American community which was already struggling. Dr. Moore needed enough financial support to not only match the Rosenwald funds, but to supplement the salaries of the Jeanes Supervisors. He encouraged the community to strive to meet the requirements of providing the labor and materials to build the schools, as well as to increase the amount of time their children attended school. This was a sacrifice because children were needed to help on their family farms. However, in order to receive funding, the children were required to spend an additional two months in school.

Dr. Moore held a series of community meetings for African Americans throughout the state. He informed the families about their rights as citizens, as well as provided them with documentation showing the disparity between white and African American children's education. He also alerted them about the sacrifices necessary to improve their children's quality of education. Dr. Moore wrote a powerful tract, *Negro Rural School Problem. Condition-Remedy*; the following is an excerpt:

“The biggest thing that we can do, and this seems to me to be our mission, is to empty our lives and character into our children, thereby making them better and wiser citizens than we are, or had the opportunity to be ... There is much that we can do and must do for ourselves, and we call upon, every teacher, preacher, farmer and business man to arouse themselves, and “Let us reason together.”

Over time Dr. Moore gained robust backing from the North Carolina Teachers' Association (formed by Black educators in 1881). The relationship he developed with the association was so strong they made him treasurer; a position he maintained for several years. Dr. Moore drew upon every political and personal contact he knew in order to obtain sponsorship for the cause.

He also took on the seemingly insurmountable task of convincing the North Carolina State Legislature to expand funding for the education of African Americans. By the time Dr. Moore made his case to state legislators he had documentation of the issues and he had support from the Rosenwald, Slater and Jeanes resources. He also had funding and backing from the African American community. Allies from some white community leaders and support from many

North Carolina educators, including the state superintendent, bolstered his plan.

Ultimately, Dr. Moore's initiative worked. Thanks to him, North Carolina constructed over 800 Rosenwald school buildings, more than any other state in the country. North Carolina had 36 Jeanes supervising teachers which was also more than any other state. Dr. Moore's efforts were responsible for dramatically improving literacy among African Americans and creating an educational system which uplifted the community.

After the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, North Carolina communities began the process of consolidating their county and city school systems; however, continuing to operate "racially separate" schools. This led to the closing of many Rosenwald schools. Many subsequent generations of rural African Americans better understood the benefits of obtaining an education for themselves and their children. All because of the seeds planted by the teachers, Jeanes supervisors, Rosenwald schools facilities and – in North Carolina – the man who made it all possible, Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore.

GENERAL NEWS

Moyers & Company | March 2015

1 in 13 African-American Adults Prohibited From Voting in the United States

By Katie Rose Quandt

As Americans honor those who fought for voting rights in Selma, Alabama, 50 years ago, it's easy to forget that 5.9 million citizens — 2.2 million of them African-Americans — remain disenfranchised today. One out of every 13 African-Americans is prohibited from casting a ballot in the United States.

These men and women lost their right to vote because of felony convictions. Depending on the laws in their states, some may regain access to the polls when they complete their prison sentences, finish parole, or complete probation, but those in Kentucky, Florida and Iowa will be disenfranchised for the rest of their lives. (Only two states — Maine and Vermont — allow those currently in prison on felony charges to vote, and eight states even ban inmates with misdemeanors.)

Most of those affected by these voting restrictions — 75 percent — have already done their time and returned to the community.

The Sentencing Project and Human Rights Watch say these laws have “no discernible legitimate purpose,” and criticize the purported goals of preventing voter fraud and preserving the sanctity of the ballot box as “anachronistic.” Nor has

disenfranchisement been shown to act as a crime deterrent; in fact, voting is negatively correlated with recidivism.

“You’ve done your time in prison, now you’re living in the community,” says Marc Mauer, executive director of the Sentencing Project. “You’re expected to abide by the rules of society, pay your taxes, get a job... It’s counter-productive to the community at large for us to essentially be treating people as second-class citizens.”

Thanks to a steady push from advocates, since 1997 at least 23 states have eased their voting restrictions. Last Monday, the Maryland Senate passed a bill that would restore voting rights immediately after release from prison. The bill’s sponsor in the House, where it heads next, is Cory McCray (D-Baltimore City), who has a personal connection to the issue: as a teen, the assemblyman was arrested and jailed multiple times for drug dealing.

McCray told The Washington Post that Maryland’s disenfranchisement of people on parole and probation “doesn’t make sense. The debt has been paid.”

A similar bill affecting those who have completed prison sentences passed the Minnesota Senate Judiciary Committee last month. Marc Mauer is optimistic that both the Maryland and Minnesota bills could pass in the coming months.

Grassroots efforts to reform voting restrictions are growing in other states, including Kentucky, where both houses passed legislation year but were ultimately unable to agree on a final

bill, as well as Iowa and Florida. Widely regarded as the worst state for felon voting rights, Florida has nearly three times more disenfranchised ex-felons than Texas, the second-highest state.

US Sens. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Rand Paul (R-KY) have also introduced federal legislation that would allow ex-felons to vote in federal elections, regardless of state laws.

Felon disenfranchisement was built into the American Constitution (along with disenfranchisement of women and people of color), but the harshest state restrictions were enacted after the Civil War, along with other Jim Crow measures like poll taxes, literacy tests and grandfather clauses that allowed whites to skip the tests and taxes.

Thanks to racial disparities in incarceration and sentencing, felon disenfranchisement laws continue to keep minorities from the polls. Nationwide, more than one in eight voting-aged black men were ineligible to cast a vote in the 2014 election, and in three states, more than one in five African-Americans cannot vote. What's more, as the US prison population increased over recent decades (and sentencing got tougher, classifying more non-violent offenders as felons), the total number of inmates and ex-felons without the right to vote skyrocketed from 1.2 million in 1980 to its current 5.9 million.

Washington Post | October 2014

Recent college graduates are pushing lower-income African Americans out of cities

By Eric Tang

How do we make sense of the fact that America's most progressive cities, the ones that cherish diversity, are losing African Americans? And that the most conservative places are doing the opposite?

Between 2000 and 2010, cities like Austin, Chicago, Washington D.C., San Francisco—places that vote majority Democrat, consider themselves socially and culturally progressive, and boast racial diversity—all lost unprecedented numbers of African Americans. San Francisco, for instance, saw a staggering 20.4 percent loss in its African American population between 2000 and 2010. Chicago and Washington D.C. also experienced double-digit losses.

During that same decade, the only three major cities (populations over 500,000) that voted Republican in the 2012 presidential election— Phoenix, Fort Worth, and Oklahoma City—all saw significant increases in African American numbers; their African-American populations grew by 36.1 percent, 28 percent and 11.4 percent respectively.

Rebecca Diamond, an economist at Stanford University, offers one salient explanation.

Her research points to how cities such as Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Washington D.C. have over the past three

decades attracted ever-larger numbers of college graduates. Using Census data, Diamond shows that as college graduates occupied larger shares of these cities' work forces (while avoiding other cities they deem less attractive) income inequality in these cities grew.

Urban industries and amenities catered to the higher-waged worker, making these cities more expensive to live in. Lower-wage workers (those with only a high school diploma) also desired the enhanced quality of life offered by these cities—better food and air quality, lower crime rates—but they couldn't afford to live in them. Simply put, as college grads arrived, lower-waged workers were driven out.

Although Diamond's study does not analyze how specific racial groups are impacted by what she terms a "national gentrification effect," it appears that African Americans have bore the disproportionate brunt of it.

This is certainly the case in in Austin, Tex.

A recent study we conducted at the University of Texas at Austin reveals that Austin is the only major growth city (a city with over half a million people that saw at least 10 percent growth between 2000 and 2010) that experienced an absolute loss in its African-American population.

According to the census data, Austin grew by 20.4 percent between 2000 and 2010, granting it third place among fastest growing major cities in the United States. But during that same decade, its African-American population declined by 5.4

percent or 3,769 people. This statistical singularity is illustrated in the following graph.

What happened in Austin seems to be consistent with the Stanford research. Austin has the highest percentage of college graduates as well as the highest median incomes in Texas. Census data also suggests that the African Americans who left Austin between 2000 and 2010 were by and large lower-waged workers (African American losses occurred in tracts that were on average poorer than those that did not see losses).

The loss of Austin's African American population amid tremendous growth in its general population certainly doesn't square with the city's reputation as a "tolerant" place, one celebrated for its progressivism, cultural dynamism, and emphasis on sustainability.

Of course, some might argue that the notion of a liberal city—especially those as moneyed as Austin, Chicago, New York and San Francisco—is now irrelevant. But this line of argument too easily dispenses with the reality that high-earning college graduates identify strongly as liberals, and moreover, that the municipal governments they elect are taking the lead on the some of the most progressive environmental and cultural policies in the nation.

It's not that these cities are no longer liberal, per se, but that the brand of (neo)liberalism they now celebrate is unaccountable to the concerns championed by lower-waged workers: universal prekindergarten, affordable housing, and the de-privatization of public space (crystallized by last month's San

Francisco's playground fiasco that garnered national headlines). It's a liberalism that has, quite literally, left no room for the low-waged worker, particularly African Americans.

TECHNOLOGY

Fast Company | June 2015

Meet The Children Who Live In Ghana's Hellish Digital Dump

By Adele Peters

Fifty years ago, the Korle Lagoon was a thriving fishery. Now, the former wetland outside Accra in Ghana is a place where old electronics go to die.

As part of a book called *Living on a Dollar a Day*, photojournalist Renee C. Byer visited the e-waste dump—now part of a sprawling slum that locals call Sodom and Gomorrah, and one of the most polluted places in the world. There, she met the children who work trying to make a living from the metals they can extract from old computers and cell phones.

"They're burning plastic to collect metal, and they're using magnets to dig through this toxic waste to earn maybe a dollar or two a day," says Byer. "I don't think anyone really envisions this when they buy a computer."

Nor do most people think of dumps like the one in Ghana when they drop off a laptop or phone for recycling. But recyclers don't always recycle: Since labor costs and environmental laws make electronics expensive to process in a place like the U.S., companies can often make more money by selling old gadgets

to waste traders who ship to Asia and Africa. The majority end up in China, followed by India, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Benin, and Liberia.

Many of those electronics are still working and sold for use. But for others—which might last a year or two after repairs, or just not turn on at all—it's a quicker path to the dump. Others may end up there five or ten years later. The site in Ghana processes hundreds of tons of e-waste each month.

A handful of U.S. states have e-waste laws that require certification for recycling companies, and those certifications can help address the question of whether waste is ultimately handled responsibly. But managing the waste stream is an incredibly challenging problem, and even the certifications aren't an absolute guarantee that electronic waste won't ultimately end up in an unregulated dump. As people go through electronics faster and faster, the problem gets harder to solve: By 2017, the world may be producing around 65 million tons of e-waste every year.

The U.S. has yet to sign on to the Basel Convention, an international treaty that makes it illegal for rich countries to send hazardous waste to poorer countries unless the poorer country specifically consents. But even EU countries that have signed on still manage to get around the regulation and export e-waste anyway by changing how it's labeled. Most of the e-waste at the Ghana dump originally came from Europe.

Some say that the answer lies in helping countries like Ghana set up safer recycling facilities, rather than trying to stop

exports of e-waste altogether, especially because old technology is valuable if it works and recycling is a source of jobs. "Instead of stopping the flow, we need to build the capacity to safely handle the waste," says Scott Cassel, CEO and founder of the Product Stewardship Council. "We need to be working with top officials to make sure what we're putting in place is working for everyone."

At the moment, it isn't working. "Right now, recycling facilities are being mismanaged, and putting people at risk, particularly young people," says Cassel.

Byer wanted her photos to tell the stories of some of those young people, like Fati, an 8-year-old girl who works in the Accra dump even though she has malaria.

"I don't think that anyone can envision this sort of prison of poison that children are working in to survive," Byer says. "We really need to become more conscious to how we are dumping our electronic waste."

Stanford engineer produces free Braille-writer app

By Andrew Myers

Three years ago, Sohan Dharmaraja was a Stanford engineering doctoral candidate in search of his next project when he visited the Stanford Office of Accessible Education, which helps blind and visually challenged students successfully navigate the world of higher education.

He was getting ready to become a mentor in a summer programming course for undergraduate students, an event organized by the Army High Performance Computing Research Center at Stanford.

The only charge handed down by the course organizers, Dharmaraja recalled, was to "do something on a tablet."

He noted, "The people in the Office of Accessible Education were perplexed about why I was there. Visual impairment and tablets don't obviously go together, but when they showed me a Braille – the laptop-like computer that the blind use to type documents – I said, 'that's it!' And the rest just fell in place."

A Braille is an indispensable tool to blind and visually impaired people, allowing them to type documents and notes, and to send and receive email.

Building a prototype

Dharmaraja teamed with Adrian Lew, a Stanford associate professor of mechanical engineering, and Adam Duran from New Mexico State University to create the prototype flat-

screen Braille. That prototype, created in two months, caught the world's attention, making headlines from Wired to the BBC.

It is a long journey from a simple albeit exciting prototype developed quickly in a summer course to a finished app that's ready for the prime time of the hyper-competitive app store.

Though it has taken Dharmaraja and Lew a couple of years to hone, test and perfect their creation, the full-blown iPad app, known as iBraille Notes, is now available to the world. The basic version of the app is free.

"Creating a prototype is relatively easy when your audience is a handful of fellow classmates. We did it almost as a whim to see if we could do it," Dharmaraja said. "But creating a real app, that potentially millions might rely upon every day, is a whole other ballgame."

Lew added, "We think the time was well-spent to get it right."

Compared to the remarkable breadth of capabilities of most tablets and smartphones, a Braille is relatively narrow in function, and most cost thousands of dollars. Now, with an iPad and an app, the blind have capabilities many never dreamed possible.

Typing is only a third of what people really want to do on a computer, Dharmaraja said. Ideally, the user would be able to not only create documents, but to edit, cut, paste, and move pieces of text around, as well. In a big, multi-page document, that is not an easy thing to do, even for a sighted person.

"We constantly pushed ourselves to innovate because being born with a disability shouldn't mean you get left out of today's technology revolution," Dharmaraja said. "When you see the smile of someone doing something that you and I take for granted, it's motivating."

One of the biggest benefits of iBraille Notes is how the keyboard works. To locate keys, users simply hold their fingertips anywhere on the glass surface of an iPad – the iBraille then draws the keys around the fingers.

Fast, multiple formats

Like a traditional Braille writer, iBraille Notes uses a series of eight keys – one for each fingertip. If the user gets disoriented and loses track of the keys, recalibration is as easy as lifting the hands off the glass and putting them down again. The app will again automatically orient the keys to the fingertips.

Other advanced features include a clever undo/redo function that requires a simple clockwise or counterclockwise twist of a single fingertip against the glass. There's one-click Google access. Using the iPad's accessibility tools, iBraille Notes provides search results by speech for users who would otherwise have no way to read the results.

The app also accommodates multiple Braille formats, including mathematics and scientific as well as other languages. Braille systems the world over are notoriously complex – there is no single standard. Every country, every language, every profession has its own way of doing things.

"The iBraille is the fastest, most capable Braille writer out there," Lew said.

In almost every way, the app is unrecognizable from the raw prototype Dharmaraja and Lew demonstrated to a stunned crowd at Stanford a few years ago. Everything has been rethought from the bottom up.

Coding well-vetted

Soon after the summer course ended, Dharmaraja earned his doctorate and returned to his native Sri Lanka to work on the app, which he then dubbed Braille Notes. He became a fledgling CEO and quickly hired a team of blind and visually impaired Sri Lankans to be his testers. This team was no ordinary group of testers, however. An average blind person in the West has had at least some introduction to technology, but not so in Sri Lanka.

"Our testers did not know what a tablet computer or a touchscreen was, much less how to use them. We had to teach them how to use a touchscreen before they could tell us how to improve our products," Dharmaraja said.

This turned out to be a good thing for the development team members. When they wrote code, they'd have the testers try it on the tablets. The testers would then provide feedback, often in no uncertain terms.

"We'd proudly hand some new code over and they'd promptly tell us it was, well, not very good, only they used different terminology," Dharmaraja said with a laugh

In creating the iBrailler, the team had help from testers at San Francisco's Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired and a testing group from the Employers Federation of Ceylon. The project also received support from the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka.

ARTS

The Guardian | February 2015

FBI monitored and critiqued African American writers for decades

By Alison Flood

Newly declassified documents from the FBI reveal how the US federal agency under J Edgar Hoover monitored the activities of dozens of prominent African American writers for decades, devoting thousands of pages to detailing their activities and critiquing their work.

Academic William Maxwell first stumbled upon the extent of the surveillance when he submitted a freedom of information request for the FBI file of Claude McKay. The Jamaican-born writer was a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance, author of the sonnet *If We Must Die*, supposedly recited by Winston Churchill, and Maxwell was preparing an edition of his complete poems. When the file came through from the FBI, it stretched to 193 pages and, said Maxwell, revealed “that the bureau had closely read and aggressively chased McKay” – describing him as a “notorious negro revolutionary” – “all across the Atlantic world, and into Moscow.”

Maxwell, associate professor of English and African American studies at Washington University in St Louis, decided to investigate further, knowing that other scholars had already found files on well-known black writers such as Langston Hughes and James Baldwin. He made 106 freedom of information requests about what he describes as “noteworthy

Afro-modernists” to the FBI; 51 of those writers had files, ranging from three to 1,884 pages each.

“I suspected there would be more than a few,” said Maxwell. “I knew Hoover was especially impressed and worried by the busy crossroads of black protest, leftwing politics, and literary potential. But I was surprised to learn that the FBI had read, monitored, and ‘filed’ nearly half of the nationally prominent African American authors working from 1919 (Hoover’s first year at the Bureau, and the first year of the Harlem Renaissance) to 1972 (the year of Hoover’s death and the peak of the nationalist Black Arts movement). In this, I realised, the FBI had outdone most every other major institution of US literary study, only fitfully concerned with black writing.”

Maxwell’s book about his discovery, *FB Eyes: How J Edgar Hoover’s Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature*, is out on 18 February from Princeton University Press. It argues that the FBI’s attention was fuelled by Hoover’s “personal fascination with black culture”, that “the FBI is perhaps the most dedicated and influential forgotten critic of African American literature”, and that “African American literature is characterised by a deep awareness of FBI ghostreading.”

Princeton said that while it is well known that Hoover was hostile to Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement, Maxwell’s forthcoming book is the first exposé of “the extent to which the FBI monitored and influenced African American writing” between 1919 and 1972.

Taking its title from Richard Wright's 1949 poem *The FB Eye Blues*, in which the Native Son novelist writes that "every place I look, Lord / I find FB eyes / I'm getting sick and tired of gover'ment spies", the work also posits that for some authors, suspicion of the surveillance prompted creative replies.

Digital copies of 49 of the FBI files have been made available to the public online. "The collected files of the entire set of authors comprise 13,892 pages, or the rough equivalent of 46 300-page PhD theses," Maxwell writes in the book. "FBI ghostreaders genuinely rivalled the productivity of their academic counterparts."

The academic told the *Guardian* that he believes the FBI monitoring stems from the fact that "from the beginning of his tenure at the FBI ... Hoover was exercised by what he saw as an emerging alliance between black literacy and black radicalism."

"Then there's the fact that many later African American writers were allied, at one time or another, with socialist and communist politics in the US," he added, with Wright and WEB Du Bois both becoming Communist Party members, Hughes a "major party sympathiser", and McKay "toasted by Trotsky and published in Russian as a significant Marxist theorist."

The files show how the travel arrangements of black writers were closely scrutinised by the FBI, with the passport records of a long list of authors "combed for scraps of criminal behaviour and 'derogatory information'", writes Maxwell. Some writers were threatened by "'stops', instructions to advise and defer to

the Bureau if a suspect tried to pass through a designated point of entry” to the US.

When McKay went to the Soviet Union, a “stop notice” instructed that the poet should be held for “appropriate attention” if he attempted to re-enter the US. In Baltimore, writes Maxwell, FBI agents “paraded their seriousness in a bulletin sent straight to Hoover, boasting of a clued-in ‘Local Police Department’ on the ‘lookout’ for one ‘Claude McKay (colored)’ (23 Mar. 1923).”

They also reveal how, with the help of informers, the agency reviewed works such as Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* before publication.

“What did the FBI learn from these dossiers? Several things,” said Maxwell. “Where African American writers were travelling, especially during their expatriate adventures in Europe, Africa, and Latin America. What they were publishing, even while it was still in press.” In the 1950s, he said, the FBI aspired to “a foreknowledge of American publishing so deep that literary threats to the FBI’s reputation could be seen before their public appearance.”

The bureau also considered “whether certain African Americans should be allowed government jobs and White House visits, in the cases of the most fortunate”, and “what the leading minds of black America were thinking, and would be thinking.”

But, he added, “the files also show that some FBI spy-critics couldn’t help from learning that they liked reading the stuff, for simple aesthetic reasons.”

Huffington Post | July 2015

Meet Cyborg, The Badass Black Superhero You Should Know

By Aaron Barksdale

Cyborg, the techno-powered teenage superhero, is rising to the ranks of peers like Superman and Batman by headlining his own comic book series. But what makes him different from other mainstream superheroes? For starters, he's black.

A freak accident turns Victor Stone into the half-human, half-robot hybrid hero with Herculean strength and mechanical telepathy. In spite of his of abilities, Cyborg has a complex life dealing with the challenges of being different both as a black male and as a superhero.

David F. Walker, the award-winning journalist and author who penned the series of black private-eye and vigilante Shaft, is the writer bringing Cyborg's story to life. We caught up with Walker to get the scoop on the cultural impact of the prolific comic book publisher DC Comics and spearheading a leading storyline for one of the greatest black superheroes ever to exist.

The Huffington Post: Who is Cyborg, and how did he gain his powers?

David F. Walker: Cyborg is Victor Stone, who first appeared in the pages of a series called *The New Teen Titans*, back in 1980.

Vic is a young African American man who was nearly killed in a laboratory explosion, only to have his life saved, and his body restored through the use of advanced cybernetics. Vic is somewhat unique, in that he doesn't have an alter-ego, and Cyborg isn't so much of a persona as it merely is his state of being -- the result of this devastating accident that almost took his life. The technology that is used to keep him alive makes him look more like a robot, gives him incredible strength, and allows him total access to the Internet by way of the computer implanted in his brain.

What sort of significance do you think it means for Cyborg, a black superhero, to officially have his own series?

There simply aren't that many black superheroes with their own series, which leaves a rather large cross section of the comic-reading audience under-represented. I go to conventions, and I see incredible numbers of women and people of color in attendance -- in some cases making up the majority of convention attendees -- and yet that is not reflected in the mainstream comics on the shelves. Cyborg having his own series is a step in the direction of greater representation, which is significant for quite a few reasons. Perhaps the most significant reason is that it helps to activate the dreams of young black people. Lack of representation becomes a form of oppression, sending a message that there is no place for black people or women or the LGBT community in these fantasy worlds that serve as a metaphor for the lives we live, and an escape for the horrors of everyday life.

What traits make Cyborg an interesting hero?

I could say that it is the fact that he is more machine than man - that he can fly, and possesses superhuman strength, and that his brain has the most advanced computer in existence plugged right into it -- but that's not what makes him interesting. What makes him interesting -- what makes all heroes interesting -- are the flaws and weaknesses that remind us of their humanity.

What things can we look forward to in the Cyborg solo series?

Obviously, there will be action. This is, after all, a comic book, and action drives a large part of the American superhero comic genre. So, we will see Vic facing various threats, from cybernetic-aliens looking to hijack his tech, to super villains we love to hate. But the thing that I think many people are looking for, and that I hope to deliver, is the development of Vic Stone as a character. Cyborg has been around for 35 years, and we've seen bits and pieces of his life, but he has always been a co-star in team books like *Teen Titans* or *Justice League*, which means there is only so much of his story that can be told.

What elements do you think make for a great superhero comic?

I may get in trouble for saying this, but superheroes are the modern equivalent to the gods of ancient mythology. These are power fantasies and morality tales that are meant to help us better understand the way we live our lives, and give us an escape from both the mundane and horrific that we face on a daily basis. A great superhero comic is brimming with the same things we deal with, only exaggerated to the most wild of extremes.

Do you feel that the audience for superhero comics has changed over time? Are there more black readers now than there were in the past?

In terms of black readers, other people of color, and women, those numbers are growing at a rate that blows my mind, and makes me happy. There are a lot of people that don't want to admit this, but the fan base for superheroes -- in comics and other mediums -- has changed drastically, and women and people of color are now the majority. You'll hear some people deny it, but those people are wrong. And this is why it is so important for there to be more than just the straight, white male heroes.

Do you think reader expectations have changed over time -- is there more of an interest in more diverse superheroes?

There are some comic readers, and they tend to be very vocal, who are averse to change. For them, comics are a sacred place, the heroes are their gods, and a bit too much of their self-worth is invested in these make-believe worlds. I believe these readers are an unfortunately loud minority that fear change, even though change is inevitable. And in the world of comics, diversity means change, because the default setting is white, straight males. It is what all of us know, and have come to expect. We think of superheroes, and we think of Superman. To bring diversity to that accepted reality, we must be willing to change, and again, some people fear change. At the same time, I know for a fact that there are other readers, who not only want diversity -- and therefore change -- they need it. I'm one of those people. Many of the people that crave to see diversity are either fairly new to comics, or have been intimidated by those who scream in favor of the status quo. We can't be

bullied by the people who want things to stay the same, simply because it brings them great comfort -- especially not when their comfort is paid for by our oppression and exclusion.

Do you think it's important for people of color to see reflections of themselves among superheroes?

Do you know what it was like to see "Superman" the movie in 1978, when I was 10, and the only black person in the entire movie was a pimp? It was humiliating, and soul-crushing, and it showed me that in the world of Superman, the only place for someone like me was as a pimp. In comics, it wasn't much better. But it is getting better, and this is why people of color need to see reflections of themselves across the pop culture landscape -- because no kid should grow up to think there is no place for them.

If Cyborg could solve any real-life issues facing the black community today, what would it be?

This is a difficult question, in part because the black community faces a myriad of complex issues, none of which can be solved by a single individual. Even if Superman were black, he couldn't fix everything the community faces. And as much as I love comic books and superheroes, I think it is dangerous to have them tackle complex problems and then solve these issues, when in real life that simply doesn't happen. Cyborg can take on an army extraterrestrials and save the day -- as a writer, I can make that work. But can he tackle police brutality and actually fix the problem, which itself is linked to other problems? If there is one issue that we can have Cyborg grapple with -- one that I believe is very important to the black community -- it would have to be self-esteem.

This is not to say that Cyborg can fix all the contributing factors that lead to so many young people of color suffering from low self-esteem, but by merely having him present—by having him being front and center, dealing with his own issues of self-worth and belonging—maybe he can help others with their struggles.

If you're interested in checking out Cyborg in his eponymous title series, CYBORG, the first issue is now available on bookshelves and digital outlets.

NYTimes | July 2015

**At St. Andrews, Renee Powell Rises Above Prejudices to
Become a Pioneer**

By Karen Crouse

An unexpected gift arrived last December at the public golf course that Renee Powell's father carved out of an old dairy farm in East Canton, Ohio. Interspersed with holiday mail was an envelope with a Scotland postmark. Inside was a letter of invitation for Powell to become one of the first seven female members of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club in St. Andrews, known as the home of golf.

During her playing days on the L.P.G.A. Tour from 1967 to 1980, Powell, who is African-American, received mail that reflected a nation's divisiveness. There were many "not so pleasant letters," as she described them, including signed death threats.

The missives from the Royal and Ancient Golf Club have driven home to Powell that her mailbox is no longer a minefield of prejudice, a reason for trepidation.

“I am just so thrilled when I see mail coming from the R&A,” Powell said.

Her correspondence from the club has included a letter inviting her and a guest to lunch with the club captain during this week’s British Open at the Old Course (she chose to be accompanied by the Pro Football Hall of Fame running back Franco Harris). A package arrived that contained a blue scarf emblazoned with the Royal and Ancient club logo, which Powell will wear proudly when the women take their place next to their fellow male members during the tournament. Joining Powell are Princess Anne and five other notable golfers: Laura Davies, Annika Sorenstam, Louise Suggs, Lally Segard and Belle Robertson.

Powell, 69, could not have imagined such a welcoming vibe in the golf world during the dozen years she played on the L.P.G.A. Tour and was, more times than she cares to remember, denied a room at tournament hotels because of the color of her skin, admitted to restaurants through the kitchen, or excluded from pro-ams because nobody would play with her.

“I think back to the times that as a young black girl playing golf, there were many places I could not play or unpleasant situations when I was finally allowed to play, and now I belong to the most exclusive private golf club in the world,” Powell said.

All her life, Powell has fought for equality and inclusion, and yet, when the day drew near for her to take her place at the Royal and Ancient clubhouse trophy room table, she realized she was wholly unprepared. On her way to the British Open, Powell made a stopover in Silvis, Ill., to attend the PGA Tour's John Deere Classic, which ended Sunday. When she dug her passport out of a drawer, she realized it had expired in March.

"Think I need better glasses," joked Powell, who was in nearby Moline to give a talk on diversity to several dozen employees at John Deere. A secretary at the company made a few calls on Powell's behalf and was able to expedite her passport renewal. After the speech, Powell stuck around to play in the John Deere Classic pro-am on Wednesday in a group with Ben Crane, a five-time Tour winner. The three other golfers on Crane's team were African-American: Marc Howze, a John Deere executive, and his friends Earl Graves Jr. and Billy Dexter. As far as Powell knew, they were the only black players in the pro-am.

It was Powell's first round of golf this year, she said, and she was nervous. On her first hole at T.P.C. Deere Run, the 10th, the tee captain recited Powell's credentials, including her Royal and Ancient Golf Club membership.

After splitting the fairway with her drive, Powell said, "I told him not to mention me like that."

It was hard enough, she explained, to be representing her race and gender. To also stand for the most hallowed club in the world while shaking the rust from her game was, Powell said with a laugh, "a lot of pressure."

She allayed her anxiety the way she always has, by deflecting the attention. During a wait on one tee, Powell struck up a conversation with a female tournament volunteer while two of her playing partners pulled out their smartphones and scrolled through their messages. She talked to Crane; his caddie, Joel Stock; and the local high school students enlisted as caddies for the amateurs.

“She’s changed a lot of lives with her gentle spirit,” Crane said, adding, “There’s a proverb that you don’t sit up front until someone calls you up, and that’s true of her.”

Special Sorority

Since the L.P.G.A. was founded in 1950, six African-Americans have played on the tour, starting with Althea Gibson in 1964. Powell persuaded three of the others — Shasta Averyhardt, Sadena Parks and Cheyenne Woods — to join her last month at her family’s course in Ohio, Clearview Golf Club, for a pro-am to raise money to cover the club’s operational costs.

It was the first time the four had been in the same place. Powell was certain that Gibson, who died in 2003, was there in spirit. The sixth member of the special sorority, LaRee Sugg, the associate athletic director at the University of Richmond, could not attend.

At a dinner for the participants and their guests the night before the tournament, those in attendance included the eight-time L.P.G.A. Tour winner Sandra Post, who met Powell at the 1962 United States Girls’ Junior Championship. Powell, then 16, was the first African-American to play in the event. Post, 14, was the only Canadian. They have been friends since.

Once they were on the tour, Post, the first golfer from her country to earn L.P.G.A. membership, often roomed with Powell. It was partly to save money but also to shelter Powell from prejudice. It amazed Powell how often her reservation was lost or how many times the last room would be claimed in the time it took Powell to walk past the lit “Vacancies” sign to the front desk.

At the motels where they stayed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Post would check in at the front desk so Powell did not have to fret about being turned away. Post remembered going to restaurants with Powell and watching everybody else get served while they waited and waited and waited. Many nights, they got up and left hungry without ever seeing their food.

Post said, “Renee would say, ‘I didn’t want to tell you, but it’s because you’re Canadian.’ ”

Powell competed in more than 250 professional golf events and won once, in Brisbane, Australia. Her best finish on the L.P.G.A. Tour was a tie for fourth at the 1972 Lady Errol Classic. Powell has on occasion wondered how much better she might have played if she had not encountered so many hazards off the course.

“People always ask me, ‘Was it fun being on tour?’ ” Powell said. “I say, ‘Well, if you don’t mind having threat letters on your life, if you don’t mind having people lose your reservation at hotels, if you don’t mind people not serving you, then, yeah, it was fun.’ ”

The Royal and Ancient Golf Club's headquarters are next to the first tee on the Old Course, which unlike the club is open to the general public. During the week in September when it was announced that the club's membership had voted to allow women, Post traveled to St. Andrews and played the course as a guest.

"I never thought my friend would be one of the first seven," Post said.

She pouted theatrically and added: "And she never told me. I had to read about it like everyone else."

If Powell shared the historic news, she risked having the membership offer rescinded. The letter of invitation from Peter Dawson, the club secretary, that Powell received the week before Christmas contained a passage that read, "The General Committee very much hopes that you will do the honor of accepting this invitation, which I would ask to be kept confidential at this stage."

So Powell kept quiet. She told her brother Larry, with whom she runs Clearview, but for almost two months, she held the news from everyone else until she thought she was going to burst.

"It was hard, but I just kept reading the letter over and over and thinking how wonderful it was," Powell said. "I knew it was important to keep their confidence in me. It was just, wow, a long time."

She laughed.

“I kept asking Peter Dawson, ‘When are they going to make this announcement? When can I talk?’ ”

Powers of Persuasion

Harris, who won four Super Bowls with the Pittsburgh Steelers, was known for being able to run away from people. But the 5-foot-5 Powell has had him in her clutches since their first meeting in 2007. Harris had taken part in a pro-am at the L.P.G.A. major tournament in Rancho Mirage, Calif., where Powell received the tour’s inaugural For the Love of the Game Award. After the ceremony, he introduced himself to Powell, who gave him her best pitch for why he should play in her family’s celebrity tournament later that year at Clearview.

Her powers of persuasion worked on Harris, who made the two-hour drive from Pittsburgh to East Canton. He took a lesson from Powell’s father, William, a security guard for the bearing manufacturer Timken and a scratch golfer who never had a chance to test his talents on the tour because of exclusionary rules that existed until 1961. Harris was awe-struck by William Powell and the 6,478-yard layout that he built nine holes at a time during a five-decade span.

The course, the first to be designed, built, owned and operated by an African-American, is included on the National Register of Historic Places. Harris became a friend of the foundation and is a sponsor of the annual pro-am.

“What Renee’s father did, building this course — to me he encompasses the American spirit in so many ways,” Harris said. “It’s important to keep that legacy going, and it’s great that

Renee and Larry have followed him in this industry. People have to know a story like this, know about a man and a family like this, know that people can take things into their own hands and build something lasting.”

When Powell received the invitation to bring a guest for lunch in the trophy room at the Royal and Ancient Club during Friday’s second round, she thought of Harris. He became close to Powell’s father in his final years. If William Powell, who died in 2009, could not accompany her, Harris was a worthy stand-in.

“When she asked me to accompany her to that luncheon, it was one of those moments that I’ll always treasure and remember,” Harris said. “I’m so excited for her. And now to be able to be part of this historic moment, in this capacity, I’m kind of speechless. I’m hoping that the moment doesn’t overwhelm me.”

Harris compared this British Open for Powell to his 1990 induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

“When they announced I was in the Hall of Fame, my first reaction was, ‘What could be more special than the career that I had and what our teams accomplished?’ ” he said. “I didn’t know if anything could be as good as that. But that moment you put on that gold jacket, it sums up the whole history of the sport. I tell people, I put that jacket on and it was like every player who played this sport was in that jacket.”

Harris and his wife, Dana, have to leave Scotland before the final putt is struck in the tournament because he has a prior commitment Sunday night in the States. But there was no way he was going to miss the occasion of Powell walking through a clubhouse previously off-limits to women in the birthplace of golf.

He nodded vigorously as Post, who was seated next to him at the pro-am dinner, said: “Renee’s career has been so much more than playing golf. In fact, the tour part is very small compared to everything else she’s accomplished.”

On the Front Lines

Powell, whose marriage to a Briton in the 1970s ended in divorce, spent a year working as a club pro in Surrey, England, before returning to her roots. Home for Powell is a two-bedroom apartment at Clearview. Her lack of a commute affords her more time for what really drives her, which is spreading the game to individuals often overlooked by the sport’s governing bodies.

As an African-American woman, Powell has been deployed to the front lines in two wars.

“When you face discrimination, no matter what it is, I think it is hurtful and difficult,” she said. “So I’ve always seen this correlation between prejudices against women and prejudices against people of color. I sort of equate the two together in a lot of ways.”

She added: “My mom was so sweet and so special. She taught me a lot about diplomacy and just being nice to people, and I think educating people by example.”

This summer, Powell is teaching separate classes for women who are beginners, adults with dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, and female military veterans. Her lessons, along with her responsibilities associated with the course, keep her busy. Like some of the wildlife in the woods surrounding the course, Powell spends the winters largely in hibernation.

On a Friday night in June, Powell welcomed a dozen women, a few of them newcomers, to her group golf program for military veterans called Clearview HOPE, which stands for Helping Our Patriots Everywhere. The sessions are part technique, part therapy. Since starting the program in 2011, Powell has heard heartbreaking stories from women traumatized by sexual abuse at the hands of men in their units, as well as the women’s experiences in combat.

The week of the United States Open, the 18-time major champion Jack Nicklaus visited a veterans’ course in a Seattle suburb for which he helped design a nine-hole extension. After hitting the first shot, Nicklaus expressed the desire to do more such projects “because we’ve got a lot of boys coming back that need our help.”

A lot of women, too. In Powell’s group lessons, the veterans can learn a new game and make new friends with women with whom they share a language, and experiences, that few others can understand. One woman, an Army veteran, said by way of

introduction: “I served in a unit with all men. I’m just glad to be around some women.”

The daughter of another Army veteran said, “I like coming out every Friday and hanging out with some of the strongest women I know.”

Powell’s quiet strength has made an impression on golfers who have never met her. Tiger Woods, who won his first British Open title 15 years ago at St. Andrews, said, “What Renee did in her pioneering efforts, people tend to forget it.”

He added, “But those of us who are minorities in the game of golf, who grew up not really being able to play in all the places, we understand their sacrifice.”

Woods said he was happy to see Powell take her place in a select group that includes Nicklaus, former President George H. W. Bush and Peter Alliss, a player turned commentator and architect, as honorary members of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club.

Woods, who is not a member, said, “I think she truly does deserve it, and it’s been a long time coming.”

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