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Black Life, Arts & Culture

FADE *to* BLACK

Representation on screen is trending steadily upwards while recognition of our achievements continues to lag.

When the #BlackSoExcellent,
why the #OscarsStillSoWhite?

MARCH 2020 / COMPLIMENTARY

Ask the Expert

HEALTH ADVICE FROM ASCENSION MICHIGAN



Nicola Griffin, D.O.

Why does family history matter for your personal health?

Do you wish there was a quick way for you to help your doctor improve your family's health? Collecting information about your family's health history is an important step.

"Family history is used to assess risk of future health disparities of the patient," says Nicola Griffin, D.O., a board-certified family medicine physician with Ascension Medical Group. "Typically, the most important histories are those of family members including mother, father, siblings and children."

The National Institute of Health (NIH) says a family medical history is a record of health information about a person and his or her close relatives. A complete record includes information from three generations of relatives, including children, brothers and sisters, parents, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, grandparents, and cousins.

"The age of onset of disease is also important to note when preparing answers to family history questions as this affects when or if we begin screening for certain disorders," Dr. Griffin adds.

Your family's medical history matters for your personal health. A family medical history can identify people with a higher-than-usual chance of having common disorders, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, certain cancers and diabetes.

"When certain medical conditions are present within a family, screening and monitoring can be done sooner or more frequently to prevent disease or to diagnose at an earlier stage of illness," Dr. Griffin explains. "Many disease processes have genetic components that make family members more likely than the general public to have an occurrence."

For example, Dr. Griffin points out that colon cancer screening begins earlier for people with a close relative who had a disease diagnoses at ages prior to 50. "Obesity, diabetes and hypertension have strong family ties due to both genetics and common environmental factors," she adds. "Family history can also be very important to family planning with couples who are considering reproductive outcomes with disease processes."

The U.S. Surgeon General has created a computerized tool called "My Family Health Portrait" to help build a family medical history. Information you want to collect includes sex, date of birth, ethnicity, medical conditions, mental health conditions, including alcoholism or other substance abuse, pregnancy complications, including miscarriage, stillbirth, birth defects or infertility. For deceased relatives, the age at the time of death and cause of death is important to note.

Let your family know why this information is important.

"Be transparent with family members about why you are collecting histories and the implications for their personal health and the health of children or grandchildren," Dr. Griffin says. "Medical histories are protected under HIPAA, as is other information collected at office visits, and will not be shared or used in other capacities."

Preparing your family's medical history can help you and your doctor take action to improve your family's health.

"Even health conditions that are prevalent within families can be altered and even eliminated with changes in diet, proper exercise, improvements in technologies, changes in medications, and innovations in screening and detection," Dr. Griffin says.



MARCH 2020

INSIDE

4 Online at BLACdetroit.com

FEATURES

14 WALK OF FAME
Black representation in TV and film

18 MAKE IT COUNT
Detroit prepares for the 2020 census

22 FLAGRANT FOUL
The whitewashing of professional basketball

DEPARTMENTS

8 DISCOVER
A roundup of area popcorn shops, a flamboyant new restaurant, art exhibitions for the culture and more

13 DETROIT PROPER
Let it snow? Make it stop

26 ACCESS DETROIT
The best March events in and around Detroit

30 SEEN
The Dirty Show International Erotic Art Exhibition

SPONSORED

2 WHY DOES FAMILY HISTORY MATTER TO YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH?

6 OMARI RUSH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CULTURESOURCE

31 WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2020 CENSUS

Get BLAC Mail. Sign up for our weekly newsletter at BLACdetroit.com/BLACmail



Online in March

Visit BLACdetroit.com for web exclusives and to stay up on what's happening in black Detroit



March Happenings

Browse the expanded version of our Access Detroit calendar.



Well Read

Recently released books by black female authors.



Plug Your Event

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See the 'who's who' attending top events around you. Did we spot you?

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Calendar submissions: Access Detroit listings are free and photos are especially welcome. Send email submissions to calendar@BLACdetroit.com.

BLAC Detroit magazine is published 12 times a year. For advertising, call 248-398-3400. Subscription rate is $50/year.

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Grammy winning jazz powerhouse Terence Blanchard's
Champion
At the Detroit Opera House
March 28 - April 5, 2020



"I kill a man and the world forgives me... I love a man and the world hates me!"
– Emile Griffith, from "Champion"

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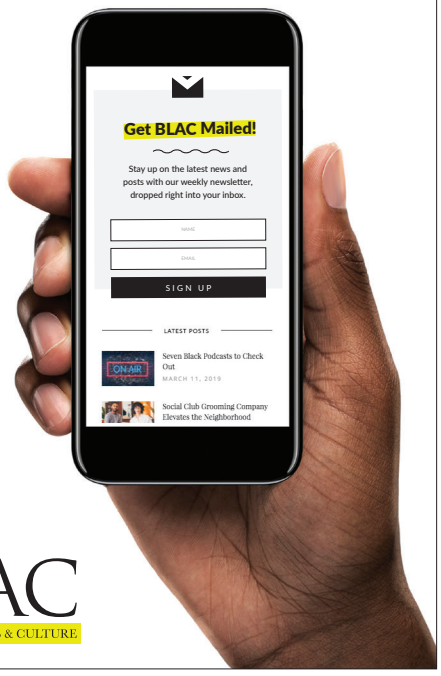
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BLAC
BLACK LIFE, ARTS & CULTURE

Ford Motor Company Fund

A year-long series featuring Detroiters who are driving positive change in their communities.

Driving Community

Sponsored by Ford Motor Company Fund



Omari Rush, Executive Director, CultureSource

This Tallahassee native heads a member association that nurtures southeast Michigan's arts and cultural organizations.

When you're passionate about a thing, it helps to affiliate yourself and your cause with like minds. Created in 2007, CultureSource is a member association for arts and cultural nonprofits, helping to connect these organizations with one another and further their missions by providing programming and a space to exchange ideas. It's "a coalition," executive director Omari Rush calls it, "looking to advance ideas of creative and cultural expression."

CultureSource – known as the Cultural Alliance of Southeastern Michigan until 2013 – operates in southeast Michigan, serving about 160 nonprofits in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, Livingston, Monroe and St. Clair counties. "We started from a community of folks saying, 'We really need somebody to help us learn and grow,'" Rush says.

Organizations who join CultureSource gain access to tailored programming, workshops and networking opportunities meant to further their reach and increase their impact.

"We're finding that people who are doing arts and culture activity in southeast Michigan have, most often, two things that they're needing help with – funding to do their work and finding audience members or people to experience their work," he says.

Monthly workshops at Co.act Detroit, in partnership with Aly Sterling Philanthropy, focus on

fundraising for the first part of the year and then get into marketing strategy during the second half, open to the public for a small registration fee but free for CultureSource members. Other programs address business development, leadership training, recruitment and the like.

The CultureMakers program invites young leaders, predominantly leaders of color, to share in artistic experiences and along the way, Rush says, "asking them to help us develop a definition and an idea of culture. And their concept of culture will be – and is – what CultureSource is using as our guiding principle and philosophy of culture."

To that point, two years ago they enacted their "7 Guiding Principles," one of which reads: "We have a responsibility to elevate voices historically oppressed by privilege." Yearly membership fees are scaled based on the member organization's annual operating budget to make CultureSource's services accessible to smaller groups. Another of those seven principles: "Organizations of all sizes can be valued as community anchors."

Raised in Tallahassee, Florida, Rush moved to southeast Michigan in 2003. When he came to the area, he was fascinated to learn of all the grassroots movements, from labor to religious, birthed in Detroit that grew to revolutionize the country and the world. He says at CultureSource, "Part of what we're trying to do is honor that legacy of people here having great ideas and finding a way, regardless, to do something with those ideas, to do something with those passions."

Rush started at CultureSource in 2017 after stints at the Ann Arbor Art Center and, before that, at the University Musical Society at the University of Michigan heading their K-12 education program, what he calls some of his "proudest work."

In June, CultureSource is inviting the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' director of hip-hop and contemporary music Simone Eccleston from Washington, D.C. for a mini-residency focused on representational justice. While taking care to spotlight those in southeast Michigan doing great work, the group often calls in reinforcements from elsewhere in the country which, Rush says, "creates a diversity of approach and perspective that ultimately enriches the work."

Collaboration is key to the CultureSource vision. Rush emphasizes that none of the organization's work would be possible without the partnership of myriad other collectives that support their goals, and they encourage that same connectedness among their members.

"We're thinking a lot differently about the ways in which our members show up in a space together and exist in that space as a coalition," he says. "That's a real set of colleagues and allies that create movements together and work toward some kind of greater good."

This year and the next will see the org concentrate less on trickle-down, regimented instruction and more intently on coalition building, networking and organic collisions for collective impact. Rush says, "We live in a networked society of dependence, and what a gift and resource it is for us in this area to have colleagues and allies who are doing similar but different work who we can learn from."

That education ultimately helps to foster a stronger arts and culture community. "We want as many people as possible – through arts organizations and through artists – to have access to the most inspiring, uplifting, joyful, creative experiences as possible."



"It takes a village to raise a child – but just one person to change a community."

As executive director of CultureSource, Omari Rush is a community leader driven to make an impact by connecting arts and culture organizations across southeastern Michigan. Like Omari, the Ford Motor Company Fund has also taken an active role in building awareness around art and culture across metro Detroit. Living Arts, headquartered at our Southwest Ford Resource and Engagement Center (FREC), provides a variety of artistic and community programs.

Ford also supports art and culture by supporting a broad range of organizations that include the Detroit Institute of Arts, The Charles H. Wright Museum, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit and the Detroit Youth Choir.

Ford salutes Omari Rush and CultureSource for elevating historical initiatives and programs in the community.

– Pamela Alexander, director of community development for Ford Motor Company



CONNECT AND SERVE

For more information on CultureSource, visit **culturesource.org.**

By Arianna Smith

POP YOUR TOP

Garrett who? Thanks to black entrepreneurs with a nose for what Detroit wants, popcorn is making noise again in the Motor City. When you're in the mood for a handful of fun, sample one of these brands and see if they don't give Chi-Town a run for its money.



Poppin Top Hat Popcorn Creations

If the idea of steak-flavored popcorn makes your mouth water, then you'll love Poppin Top Popcorn in downtown Detroit. Co-founder Joi Little says popcorn is her passion, but it's no fun without some experimentation. "We get into the kitchen and make something no one's ever seen before. The classic cheese and caramel has to be respected, but we're specializing in every flavor imaginable," she says.

Little operates Poppin Top Hat with longtime friend Athena Hinojosa. Their kitchen churns out over 50 sweet and savory popcorn varieties from chili lime to cinnamon roll; expect a green St. Patrick's Day-inspired flavor to be unveiled this month. Poppin Top Hat hosts weekly themed events at their brick-and-mortar at Broadway and Grand River, and Little says she wouldn't have chosen any other location – she feels integrated into the renewal. She says, "We really feel part of the rising renaissance here."

1376 Broadway St., Detroit
poppintophat.com

Motor City Popcorn

Ronier Golightly got the idea for Motor City Popcorn by marveling at the Windy City's Garrett Popcorn Shops. "I instantly wanted to bring that vision and that success to Detroit. We haven't had a household name in popcorn since Otto's closed down," Golightly says. Motor City Popcorn debuted at the 2012 North American International Auto Show, and the classic favorites with a Detroit twist were an instant hit. "We don't sell the Chicago mixes. We have the Belle Isle Mix (and) Motor City Mix – and that's far better, in my opinion," he says.

Laurel Park Place Mall
37700 Six Mile Road, Livonia
motorcitypopcorn.com

Jetta's Gourmet Popcorn

Jetta's Gourmet popcorn started as a seasonal snack cart in 1997. After an offhand comment from her son about how much people loved the butter popcorn and wanted it year-round, Magita Barbee went with her gut and started bagging it to sell. The rest, she says, is happy history. She says, "We just listened to the customers and made what they wanted."

Jetta's Gourmet is mostly mobile and event-based, and find them on store shelves around the city. They make over 20 varieties of popcorn, but the signature is the D Mix, which comes in two hotly contested varieties: East and West Side. West is a mix of white cheddar, cheddar, caramel and barbecue. East is white cheddar, cheddar, hot cheddar and caramel. "People love talking about which one's their favorite and why. That's why popcorn has always been a passion for me. It brings joy to people and they have fun eating it," Barbee says.

jettasgourmetpopcorn.com

Good People Popcorn

No joke. Good People Popcorn's mascot is named "Poppy." Owner David Mott says, "It might be corny, but it's simple, wholesome and fun, and that's what Good People Popcorn is all about. We want the phrase 'good people' and Detroit to be synonymous." Good People started as a family business in 2009. Originally a brick-and-mortar shop with daily foot traffic, the operation has evolved to primarily bag popcorn for corporate events, online sales and fundraisers for local schools and churches. But feel free to … pop in on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Mott says he wants his business to show budding entrepreneurs that there are other successful paths aside from college. "No day is the same. Sometimes I'm up 'til 2 a.m. making batches of bacon-chocolate drizzle. It's a lot of hard work and it's very challenging to balance the business with family life, but the admiration and inspiration I see in my kids is priceless," Mott says.

633 Beaubien St., Detroit
gppopcorn.com



**Popcorns pictured from Poppin Top Hat Popcorn Creations*

Photo by Lauren Jeziorski

By Paris Giles, Cynthia Lee and Arianna Smith



CROWN JEWELS





Guyana-born, Emmy-nominated actress CCH Pounder has lent pieces from her extensive personal art collection to be displayed at The Wright through April 15. *Queen: From the Collection of CCH Pounder* explores themes of representation while celebrating black womanhood. Peruse works in various styles and mediums from artists of the African diaspora, including Harmonia Rosales, Kehinde Wiley (creator of President Obama's official portrait), Betye and Alison Saar, and others.

– P.G.

thewright.org



FOOT WORK

"Sneakers have played an important role in African American culture," says Cheresse Thornhill, the second woman of color to design footwear for Nike. Catch Thornhill's iconic designs and others at The Carr Center's latest exhibition, *GRAILS: The Sole and Black Culture*, on display through April 9.

"From Run DMC coming out with their anthem 'My Adidas' to having a legend like Michael Jordan become a symbol of success, across the world, every kid wants the perfect pair," she says.

Along with Thornhill's works – like the 16.5 Dwayne Wade PE, worn by the NBA legend on the court – browse classic pairs on loan from local collectors like Jason Johnson, owner of Bob's Classic Kicks, and enjoy multimedia presentations and personal love stories from enthusiasts.

The term "grails," as in the holy grail, has been adopted by sneakerheads as slang for *that* pair – elusive and, if possessed, coveted with intense reverence.

– *P.G.*

thecarrcenter.org

PLAY PLACE



Photo by Gadget's Geeks and Gamers

Back in August, Detroit hosted the 2019 League of Legends Championship Series Summer Finals, one of the biggest esports events in North America – winners took home a $100,000 purse and qualified for the world championships in Europe.

Lance McGhee took this as proof of the city's burgeoning gaming scene and, when he came into possession of a dilapidated building in the Fitzgerald neighborhood, an idea stood out. "I got possession of this raggedy building through foreclosure and I asked myself," McGhee says, "'What will people pay to do? Will they come to play video games in a community setting?'"

His Playa vs. Playa Gaming Lounge opened last month thanks to contributions from Comerica Hatch and the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, coupled with $20,000 of McGhee's own money.

Casual players and serious gamers alike are invited to choose from 10 different console systems and games from Nintendo to virtual reality, Street Fighter to Fortnite. Students can even earn discounts for good grades. "Feedback from real gamers drove our design, down to the height of the monitors.We want to wow you," McGhee says.

He plans to foster his own superstar team of seven young gamers at Playa vs. Playa, because he knows the best time to bring the billion-dollar esports industry to the city is right now.

– A.S.

15850 Wyoming Ave., Detroit • fb.com/playavsplaya

ALL *SEWN* UP

Highland Park resident Kristine Ferguson used her passion for sewing and tailoring to create a space for her neighbors' alteration needs – and a way to stitch her community together. Ferguson opened Backstitch, a sewing and alterations shop, in December in Highland Park.

"I live here in Highland Park and see what's readily available here. There's a couple cleaners and dry cleaners, but nothing just for general tailoring or a place to just to learn to sew. I felt it was important to provide something like that," says Ferguson. "I figured, why not post up a store to provide all those services?"

It was a group effort to take the store from idea to reality. Utilizing family help and crowdfunding, she celebrated with a small, quiet opening. Along with sewing and tailoring, Backstitch also hosts workshops.

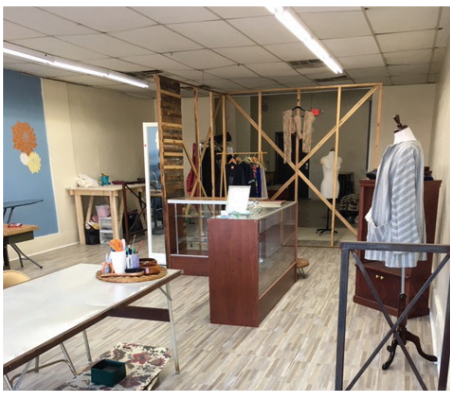
"We recently had a pre-Valentine's Day workshop for people to make lingerie. It was just a nice event for women to get together to commune and just be women, have fun and learn something new." Ferguson offers one-on-one workshops for people curious to learn how to mend items use a sewing machine and more.

To her, it is more than a business. It's a resource for her community. "It's kind of needed," Ferguson says. "It's beneficial to have a place for people to learn how to sew or (for) tailoring needs that's local. Little cities like Highland Park need a place where they can go.

"Kind of like the bakery is, how they go to get their bread, I want to be the place where they get their tailoring."

– C.L.





12521 Woodward Ave., Highland Park • fb.com/backstitchhp

By Arianna Smith

DINNER *THEATER*



No meal is ever boring at Imaginate, the Southfield restaurant taking dining to a theatrical level. "Imaginate is a stunning experience that will amaze you from the minute you walk in," executive chef Omar Mitchell says. "We focus on creating social media-worthy arrays of culinary delights served with theatrical props and surprises."

At Imaginate, themed events and menu items give presentation an extra sparkle. The swordfish sushi comes with a Japanese katana. Ordering barbecue? Your ribs are presented on a smoking grill rolled right to your table. The bananas Foster is flambéed inches from your face.

"This is my core study. I always wanted to be an executive chef. It excites me to see my guests in awe and totally surprised or impressed with what I have to offer. It's all about the 'wow' factor of the dining," says Mitchell, also the mind behind Detroit's TABLE No. 2.

A Detroit native, Mitchell studied culinary arts at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island. He says he wants to bring back the "old-school style" of fine dining. "At my restaurants, we say 'my pleasure' when greeting people. Servers are dressed nice and every need is tended to. A lot of folks nowadays come to restaurants to feel better, and a good fine dining experience can be like medicine to take them away from their day and let them feel pampered and happier about their situations," he says.

Opened in February, Mitchell says the key difference between him and his competitors is the quality of the food at Imaginate. He says, "They might have the theatrics, but there has to be that gourmet aspect, as well. No matter how big the props and the events are, you have to have a foundation of the best food."

28100 Franklin Road, Southfield • imaginaterestaurant.com

CULINARY COURSE



Brandi C. Shelton, owner and founder of The D Loft, describes the brand as a "collaboration." She says, "It's not a banquet facility, and I wouldn't restrict it to just an incubation space, either. D Loft is a social engagement environment. We host events, but we also do conferences and seminars and we help people looking to build their businesses."

The newest branch, the D Loft Café, opened last August as a social space for "food-preneurs" and restaurant hopefuls to develop their best dishes and grow a following around their unique culinary styles.

"The café brings fellowship to the food environment. We find people with these amazing gifts and talent for food and give them a platform for their grand ideas," Shelton says. "D Loft loves the weird, diverse and quirky. The more innovative and delicious, the better."

D Loft Café currently supports 35 tastemakers from a range of colorful backgrounds, all from metro Detroit. Once they pass their audition, they're interviewed, trained and given a crash course in culinary business before claiming a space in the kitchen The D Loft shares with Fellowship Chapel. From there, the fellows start preparing grab-and-go dishes for The D Loft's themed days and events.

The most popular dish right now is probably the shrimp and grits three ways, a creation by Chef Clinton Moore that Shelton says has people "breaking the door down." She says, "Networking is huge here. We're very close – we share everything. We support each other and our events. The group chat is lit! D Loft is like the jack-of-all-trades of community engagement, in the best way possible." B



Photos by William Patterson

13710 W. Nine Mile Road, Oak Park • thedloft.com

The Silly Gooses That We Are, We Flew North and Now We're Stuck with the Winter



BY DESIREE COOPER

Winter is where my soul goes to die. I hate the death-defying slalom otherwise known as the morning commute. The asphyxiating swaddle of winter wear. The popsicle toes that take all night to thaw. The painful subzero air that needles your skin and burns your eyes. The salt-ruined shoes. The dirty summits of shoveled snow. The seven-month gloom.

Apologies to poet Robert Frost, but there is nothing about "easy wind and downy flake" that makes me want to stand in the dark woods and contemplate the meaning of life. In fact, the only question winter makes me contemplate is: "Why do black people live here?"

We know the historical reason. It must have been pretty bad, that Jim Crow South, if we were willing to trade Atlanta's weather for Detroit's. I get why millions of blacks left the South during the Great Migration, but why didn't we follow the ones who went to Los Angeles? Y'all let Henry Ford wag a few dollars in front of you and now look, generations later, you're still living where you have no business being.

It's a scientific fact: Black people don't do cold. There have only been two black people in history who said, "Yay, more snow!" One was Matthew Henson, the black man who in 1909, is reputed to be one of the first humans to reach the North Pole, along with white explorer Robert Peary and Inuit guides. And the other was that kid in *The Snowy Day*.

I searched the internet only to discover that scientists aren't willing to say that people are genetically predisposed to live in certain climates. There's little doubt that blue eyes and blond hair are Darwinian adaptations to the cold, while dark skin and thick hair are adaptations for the heat. But researchers say that the biggest influence on our ability to stand heat or cold is cultural, not biological. Many of us have preconceived notions about why we like hot, cold, snowy, sunny or rainy weather that aren't entirely based on our bodily reactions. Two people standing in 40-degree weather, for example, can have very different tolerances to it — while their bodies are reacting the same, physiologically.

> *"But researchers say that the biggest influence on our ability to stand heat or cold is cultural, not biological."*

And in 2001, researchers concluded that skin color has more to do with vitamins than weather tolerance. Folate, which is necessary for healthy fetal development, can be destroyed by too many ultraviolet rays. People in the tropics have developed dark skin to block out the sun and protect their body's folate reserves. Vitamin D, which is found in sunlight, helps fetal bone growth. Therefore, people in colder climates have lighter skin to take in as much vitamin D as possible from the sun's weak rays.

Whatever. I know what I know. If black people were really supposed to live in the cold, then why did Gold Bond have to invent Ultimate Hydrating Lotion Radiance Renewal cream-oil with coconut oil, cocoa butter and African shea butter? We were fine with our Ponds and Vaseline until we came North, where avoiding "ashiness" is practically an Olympic sport.

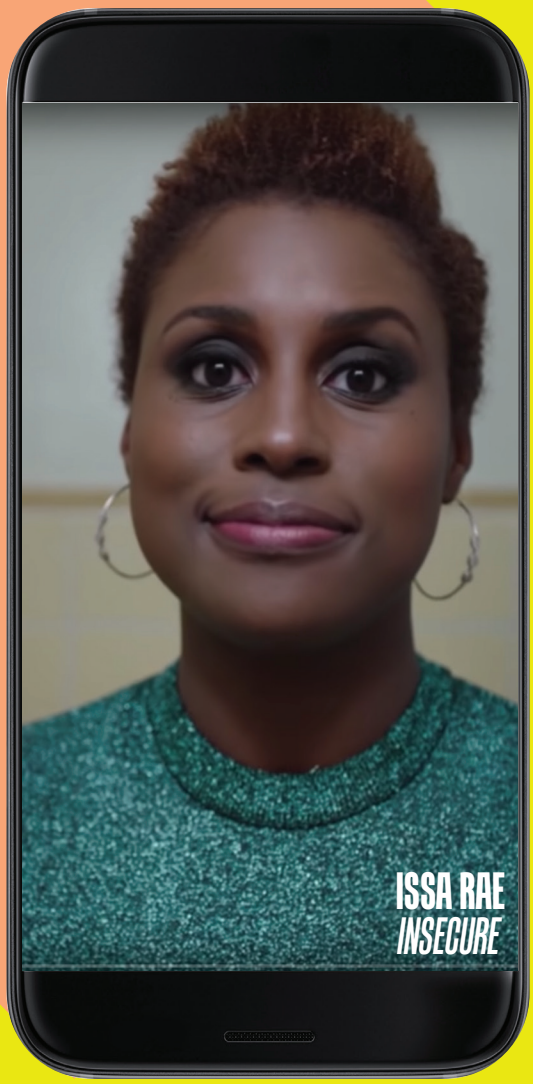
I guess we still live in Detroit because, by the time we arrived at this last stop on the Underground Railroad, we weren't in the mood for any more acclimation. Nothing white had killed us in our search for a better life; we weren't going to let it start with snow.

So, as black Detroiters, we do what we do to get through the winter. We grill our chicken in oil drums, even when it's snowing. We avoid the flu shot because the last time she got one, our second cousin on our mama's side got pregnant. We laugh at the white people who go "up north" for the holidays. We eat sweet potatoes when it's not Thanksgiving or Christmas. We pretend we like Kwanzaa. We wear fur coats and dare PETA to say somethin'. We don't leave the house on Martin Luther King Day. And, on the date we spy the first white person in cargo shorts and flip flops in February, we play that number.

I'm bringing this up now, my fellow African descendants, in order to warn you that it's always darkest (and coldest) before dawn. March may be coming up daisies for the rest of the world, but for us, it's just a lousy tease. Don't be hoodwinked, bamboozled and led astray! This winter may have been mild, but spring ain't even close. But you've been living here since the 1800s. You should know by now. B

DESIREE COOPER IS THE AUTHOR OF *KNOW THE MOTHER.*

BEST PICT



Once upon a time in Hollywood, black faces on screen were as elusive as *Willy Wonka*'s golden tickets. But recent years have seen culture-conscious voices behind-the-scenes translate into a more authentic, fully realized representation of black life in front of the camera. Still, recognition for our achievements in TV and movie magic have been hard to come by. The powers that be promise a committment to 'diversity,' but we may just have to etch our own walk of fame.



URE

BY **JIM MCFARLIN**

When I was very small, as my family gathered around the flickering gray screen of our living room TV night after night. The mere sight of an African American entertainer caused all activity and conversation to cease. "Colored on TV!" my father would shout. Some of us actually leaned toward the set to get a closer look. It was such a rarity. You had a better chance of seeing a talking horse – which you soon could, every week – than a black man or woman in front of the camera.

Nat King Cole, the legendary crooner, was the first male Negro (as we were called then) to host a network variety series in prime time. For 15 minutes. Once a week. And even though the program was in black and white, studio technicians had so little experience lighting and filming someone of color that the ebony-hued Cole looked like an amorphous ink blot sitting at a piano. I remember crying.

THE PILOT

Against that historical backdrop, it seems almost inconceivable that at any time, much less in the last 10 years, we would see: A sitcom called *Black-ish* become such a hit that it spawns two spinoffs, *Grown-ish* and *Mixed-ish*; the most successful talk show host in history would be a black woman powerful enough to launch her OWN television network; a series about a sepia superhero, *Black Lightning*, be popular in prime time; a female African American producer, Shonda Rhimes, literally transform the shape of television through such diverse ensemble dramas as *Grey's Anatomy* and *How to Get Away With Murder*; Tyler Perry dragging himself out of his onscreen Madea persona to create the largest TV and film production studio in the U.S. and become the first African American to own a major studio outright; Steve Harvey, everywhere.

So the state of blacks on TV as we begin the second decade of the 21st century is truly a matter of perspective. "I think it's progress," says Mekeisha Madden Toby, the Cass Tech alum and former Detroit News television critic who now works as a staff writer for TV Guide. "I remember when it was a big deal to see a black person on television," Toby says. "And even though sometimes, unfortunately, us watching was not enough to save the show – like *Frank's Place* – it still was exciting to see a black person in a show of their own, especially if they were the lead and not a sidekick."

In Toby's view, the current landscape "is kind of two-tier. We have seemingly gotten over the hurdle of not seeing ourselves represented, and I think I can safely say we have gotten over the hurdle of being presented as a monolith. We don't all like Tyler Perry, but for those who do, he's there. We may not all like Issa Rae (creator and star of *Insecure,* now featured in the movie *The Photograph*), but for those who do, she's there.

"There's Donald Glover, Lena Waithe, all these black creators, many of whom are under 40 and are great examples of how you can't wait for someone to deign you worthy. In Issa's case, she created her own web series and made Hollywood pay attention to her, because she didn't fit what they would have picked anyway."

What's true in TV also could be said of film in 2020. If someone had told you 10 years ago that a movie with an all-black cast about a gay male relationship (*Moonlight*) would win multiple Academy Awards including best picture, or that a superhero blockbuster with a predominantly African American cast (*Black Panther*) would gross over $1.3 billion worldwide, or that comedian Jordan Peele's first feature film, *Get Out*, would win an Oscar for its script and become one of the biggest horror movies of all time, wouldn't you have asked that person to seek some help?

RECCURING ROLES

"It is a good time to be black in Hollywood," Rob Edwards smiles. "It is really interesting." He should know. The Detroit-born screenwriter and producer has been in the rooms where it happens for decades, writing animated feature films for Disney and currently developing projects with Chris Rock and acclaimed producer-director Reggie Hudlin. However, one of those ventures underscores the ▸

BEST PICTURE



blatant, continuing struggles that still exist for black filmmakers in Tinseltown.

"I had a project with Reggie, a modern-day Western, and we had Chadwick Boseman attached," Edwards says. "Chad and Reggie had just finished *Marshall* (the biopic on Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall) and they were like, 'What's next?' So we take it to a bunch of studios and everybody says, 'We like the script, but is anybody really going to watch an action movie with a black protagonist?' Those were the conversations we had. One guy said, 'I love this, but I've got to go upstairs and try to sell it. If it was Tom Cruise or somebody like that, that's an easy sell. Who is Chadwick Boseman?'

"Then a month or two later, he signs to do *Black Panther,* so we went out again. 'Hey: Chadwick Boseman. *Black Panther.* Don't you want to have the movie right after?' And they *still* weren't sure. Then, of course, *Black Panther* comes out and it goes crazy."

There's also the matter of wage discrepancy. Actress-comedian Mo'Nique won an Academy Award in 2009 for her role in the movie *Precious* but hasn't worked significantly in films since. Some say it's because of her celebrated dustup with director Lee Daniels; she has another explanation. "You know how in sports you can see what all the players are making?" Mo'Nique asks. "You know how you see the *Forbes* lists and see all the white actresses listed? Have you ever seen a black actress listed? What I would say is, if we believe it's getting better, let's just put all our numbers on paper and then compare."

For that reason, says Juanita Anderson, the nationally known documentary filmmaker and head of media arts and studies at Wayne State University, we must emphasize putting our money where our movies are. "I think we are pretty much in the same place we were 10 or 20 years ago in terms of the industry's response to financing black people on film," says Anderson, whose landmark 1987 docu *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, which she produced, is being considered for restoration.

"We're experiencing a real desire to go back to business as usual, even though the old reasons why business as usual existed have been proven not to be true. *Black Panther* certainly demonstrated something black folks have always known: that there are audiences out there for black people on screen, and all the lies they've been telling us all these years just don't hold up domestically or internationally," Anderson maintains. "So it's like, 'OK, now how do we find other excuses?'

"What we have not seen is the growth of black folks other than those already in the entertainment industry rallying to say, 'Let's finance these films.' Until we collectively as a people find ways to support our film artists, we're going to keep having these peaks and valleys. On television, you have that new series (ABC's *For Life*) Curtis '50 Cent' Jackson is putting his money into. That is a powerful thing to do, and it's not the first time he has done it.

"So the real question becomes: How do we want to see ourselves on the screen?"



SNUBBED

We barely saw ourselves at all at the 92nd Academy Awards in February. Toby, who was on the red carpet, correctly predicted every major winner except South Korean import *Parasite* for best picture. "I knew Cynthia Erivo (nominated for best lead actress and original song for her work in *Harriet*) wasn't going to beat Renée Zellweger, and she certainly wasn't going to beat out Elton John," Toby says.

She had already written her TV Guide victory story for ex-athlete Matthew A. Cherry's delightful animated short *Hair Love* because, "Just speaking frankly, that was

the only category a black person had a chance to win."

Erivo, starring in a film that took seven years to get to the screen, was the only person of color among the major nominees. #OscarsStillSoWhite.

That exasperates veteran entertainment journalist Shaun Robinson, currently seen on such TLC series as *90 Day Fiancé*. The native Detroiter says there weren't many black faces on either side of the red carpet when she began working for the TV newsmagazine *Access Hollywood*. But that was in 1999.

"When the Oscar nominations came out I thought, 'What the heck is going on?'" Robinson remembers. "Are we going in reverse?" She points to figures released by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences that claim the Academy has added more than 2,000 new voting members in the last three years, raising its total composition of racial minorities … to 16%.

"We were happy the Academy opened up its membership to more people, but I was left scratching my head, as were so many others. You see the lack of diversity in terms of people of color and women and you just wonder. Are the voters not engaged in the process? Are they not doing their due diligence in terms of finding projects that have diverse casts? That's their job. I don't know if they're just voting on 'the buzz' or what their friends tell them, but we have got to fix this. This is 2020, and it seems the same as 1980. It's so frustrating," Robinson says.

Greg Russell, who estimates screening well over 2,000 films in his years as film critic for *Live in the D* on Detroit's WDIV-TV and host of the syndicated series *Movie Show Plus*, predicted *Parasite* could win for best picture and suggests that, in an odd way, its win could improve Hollywood's acceptance of black films.

"It could be the Academy saying, 'OK, we've got to be inclusive to *everyone*," he says. "So, yes, hopefully it will open up the doors wider for African American films."

However, there also exists an undercurrent of infighting surrounding black British actors flying in to claim iconic American movie roles, like Erivo as Tubman, David Oyelowo as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in director Ava DuVernay's *Selma*, or John Boyega in recent *Star Wars* blockbusters.

"My son-in-law is the perfect example," Russell says. "He gets upset any time he realizes a lead character is actually British. I don't have a problem with it as long as they do a good job. David was great as MLK."

Echoing Toby's observation about a celluloid youth movement, Marshalle Montgomery Favors, founder and co-director of the Trinity Detroit International Film Festival, celebrating its 14th year Aug. 20-23, says that in one year, she and her husband Lazar attended 32 premieres for feature films by African American Detroiters. She marvels, "32! If we start talking about these filmmakers collectively, that's a story. I just feel there's always need for the pushback. Not just for diversity and inclusion, but for equity as well."



In *They've Gotta Have Us*, the controversial must-see Netflix docuseries from British producer Simon Frederick that strikes at the heart of this issue, the late director John Singleton closes the final episode entitled "Black is the New Hollywood," by saying, "I'm very optimistic that this moment right now is a pivotal point, and actually what I call the new normal. We have evolved and changed culture and cinema forever with the work that we've done."

Singleton died last April. May his optimism live on. B

"WE'RE EXPERIENCING A REAL DESIRE TO GO BACK TO BUSINESS AS USUAL, EVEN THOUGH THE OLD REASONS WHY BUSINESS AS USUAL EXISTED HAVE BEEN PROVEN NOT TO BE TRUE. BLACK PANTHER CERTAINLY DEMONSTRATED SOMETHING BLACK FOLKS HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN: THAT THERE ARE AUDIENCES OUT THERE FOR BLACK PEOPLE ON SCREEN, AND ALL THE LIES THEY'VE BEEN TELLING US ALL THESE YEARS JUST DON'T HOLD UP DOMESTICALLY OR INTERNATIONALLY. SO IT'S LIKE, 'OK, NOW HOW DO WE FIND OTHER EXCUSES?'"

JIM MCFARLIN IS A VETERAN ENTERTAINMENT JOURNALIST.



A NUMBERS GAME

New technology, fear of deportation and a generally undereducated populace. This 2020 census may just be the toughest one yet – but don't count us out.

BY **PARIS GILES**

Black folks are slow to invite you into their business. I mean … why? Who wants to know? Couple that with the complicated relationship we have with the U.S. government, and it's no wonder why cities, local organizations and community leaders have been on the offensive for months, scrambling to settle nerves and educate the public about the upcoming census count. The 2020 census is just up the street, and an accurate count is remarkably important. Census results help determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding flow into states and communities.

Detroit and Wayne County are home to large swaths of some of the most historically undercounted populations: African American moms, children under 5, immigrants, black males, seniors. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that upwards of 26,000 people living in Detroit weren't counted in 2010. That's many millions of dollars of money lost over 10 years, funds that affect everything from safety net and child abuse prevention programs to highway planning and public transit systems. Census data also determines how many Congress seats each state gets. The House of Representatives' 435 seats are divvied up based on the number of residents – states with higher pops get more representation.

The irony is that the sectors of our society least likely to be counted are the ones most in need of the funding and political voice that comes with an accurate census count. This one will be particularly tough. This is the first time the Census Bureau has instruction from Congress to prioritize cost over quality, according to reporting by Reveal, from The Center for Investigative Reporting. This is the first time that census forms are able to be completed online. And we black and brown people, especially, are looking over our shoulders at an administration that's tried to weaponize the census. Still we rise – and still we count.

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

MEET THE LOCAL PEOPLE AND ORGS HELPING TO SPREAD THE WORD.



AMBER LEWIS

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA, CITY OF DETROIT

In true millennial fashion, Lewis has harnessed the power of social media and co-opted the influencer marketing formula, the bread-and-butter format that sells everything from handbags to lifestyles, to sell Detroit's young people on the census.

"My goal is to use voices that don't always necessarily interact with city government or you wouldn't expect to hear from on city government to kind of connect with those hard-to-count populations – so, essentially, influencer marketing," she says.

She and her team have flooded the city's social media pages and YouTube channels with posts and videos featuring rappers Kash Doll and Icewear Vezzo – "He's super passionate and excited about census and making sure we know that we count" – and they've commissioned art projects from KaCey Kal and the Whlgns (pronounced "hooligans"), which they offered for free.

Through February and into March, Lewis is partnering with event planners to coordinate special census sign-up events and social hours, hangouts with "happy hours vibes, but come learn about the census and why this matters to you."



WARREN EVANS

WAYNE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Wayne County faces a unique set of challenges in that the poverty rates are high and we've got a significant immigrant community; Dearborn is home to the largest population of Arab Americans in the U.S. And, of course, many of our Latino brothers and sisters call Detroit home, concentrated on the southwest side.

Ongoing deportation fears, stoked under Trump, will certainly play a role in this census. "This is not the best time in our world to trust government, anyway, so when you have those kinds of repressive tactics, it discourages people from wanting to participate and come forward," Evans says.

For years, the county has been strengthening relationships with representatives of these hard-to-count communities to act as ambassadors, to connect to, galvanize and educate their neighbors. "If those people, who people in the community trust and believe in, are the ones making the ask to come forward, my sense is it'll be more effective than otherwise."

They're also focusing on reaching seniors and parents with children under 5, who are hugely undercounted. Evans reminds that while it may feel unimportant to report that toddler, the census only comes around every decade. Results will determine access to resources that'll affect things like education and health care as she grows.



TAMEKA RAMSEY

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MICHIGAN VOICES

State Voices is a network of nonpartisan coalitions working year-round to create a more accessible, inclusive and representative democracy – and, as head of the Michigan "table," Ramsey works to promote civic engagement and uplift grassroots initatives, particularly those that benefit communities of color.

From Head Start to housing subsidies, these programs, the ones that can help us lift our people out of poverty and start to create generational wealth, live or die by the census count, she reminds. "We don't always understand how making sure that we're counted brings money to our communities that we can then use to help our families grow."

They've been out since last summer, educating communities of color and debunking those "old wives' tales." She says, "We are aware that it takes people over seven times to get something, to hear it, to understand it – to move and act on it." As the forms start to go out, they'll set up in community centers, libraries and the like to walk people through filling out the census, focusing especially on the online forms.

"Older black women are 60% of the reason census forms are completed in the black community. They're not always computer savvy, so we can have someone to help them." ▸

A NUMBERS GAME

SAVE THE DATES

IMPORTANT 2020 CENSUS TIMELINE INFO

MARCH 12-20:

Households will begin receiving official Census Bureau mail with detailed information on how to respond to the 2020 census online, by phone or by mail.

MARCH 30-APRIL 1:

The bureau will count people who are experiencing homelessness by visiting shelters, soup kitchens, mobile food vans, the streets and non-sheltered outdoor locations like tent cities.

APRIL 1:

Census Day is observed nationwide. By this date, every home will have received an invitation to participate in the 2020 census. You should respond for your home online, by phone or by mail, and you'll tell the bureau where you live as of April 1, 2020.

APRIL:

Census takers will begin visiting on-campus college students, people living in senior centers and others among large groups of people. Census takers will also start conducting quality-check interviews to help ensure an accurate count.

MAY-JUNE:

Census takers will begin visiting homes that haven't responded to the 2020 census to help make sure everyone is counted.

DECEMBER:

The Census Bureau will deliver apportionment counts to the president and Congress.

TRUTH TALLY

LOCAL ADVOCATES AND THE CENSUS BUREAU BUST MYTHS ABOUT THE 2020 CENSUS AND PUT FACTS FIRST.

"IF YOU OWE BACK TAXES, CHILD SUPPORT OR TRAFFIC VIOLATION FEES, THEY'LL USE CENSUS INFO TO FIND AND COME AFTER YOU!"

Wrong. The Census Bureau is bound by Title 13 of the U.S. Code to keep your information confidential. The information you provide is protected from any other entities or government agencies – including law enforcement agencies – for 72 years.

"THE CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL ASK IF YOU'RE A U.S. CITIZEN, SO IF YOU AREN'T OR IF YOU'RE UNDOCUMENTED, DON'T RESPOND OR YOU COULD BE DEPORTED!"

Not true. Despite Trump's efforts, in June 2019, the Supreme Court ruled to continue to block the question, "Is this person a citizen of the United States?" The 2020 census forms will have no citizenship questions, and your information is protected from any immigration agencies.

"IF THE ADDRESS ON YOUR ID OR DRIVER'S LICENSE IS DIFFERENT FROM WHERE YOU LIVE CURRENTLY, YOU CAN'T REPORT FOR YOUR CURRENT ADDRESS!"

Wrong. It doesn't matter what's on your license. You should report for the household in which you live, eat and sleep as of April 1 – even if you're just temporarily coach surfing.

"YOU CAN ONLY FILL OUT THE CENSUS FORM ONLINE!"

Not true. The 2020 census questionnaire can be completed online, by phone or by mail. Online and phone responses can be given in 13 languages including Spanish, Arabic, Haitian Creole and Chinese.

"CENSUS TAKERS WILL ASK FOR MONEY OR FINANCIAL IDENTIFIERS LIKE YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER!"

Wrong. The Census Bureau will never ask you for your Social Security number, money or donations, anything on behalf of a political party, or your bank account or credit card numbers. If anyone contacts you asking for any of these things, they're a scammer and you should not cooperate.

"IF YOU LIVE IN SECTION 8 HOUSING AND REPORT PEOPLE LIVING IN YOUR HOME WHO AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE, LIKE A BOYFRIEND OR A BROTHER, YOU MAY LOSE YOUR SUBSIDIES OR BE EVICTED!"

Not true. Again, The Census Bureau is barred by law from sharing data with any other government agencies or entities, including landlords. B

PARIS GILES IS BLAC DETROIT'S SENIOR EDITOR.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE 2020 CENSUS, VISIT 2020CENSUS.GOV.

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Chloe Rothschild is a young adult, self-advocate and author who educates people about autism from her perspective. She loves discussing the lesser-known "sense" of feeling and being in touch with the body – often a challenge for those with ASD.

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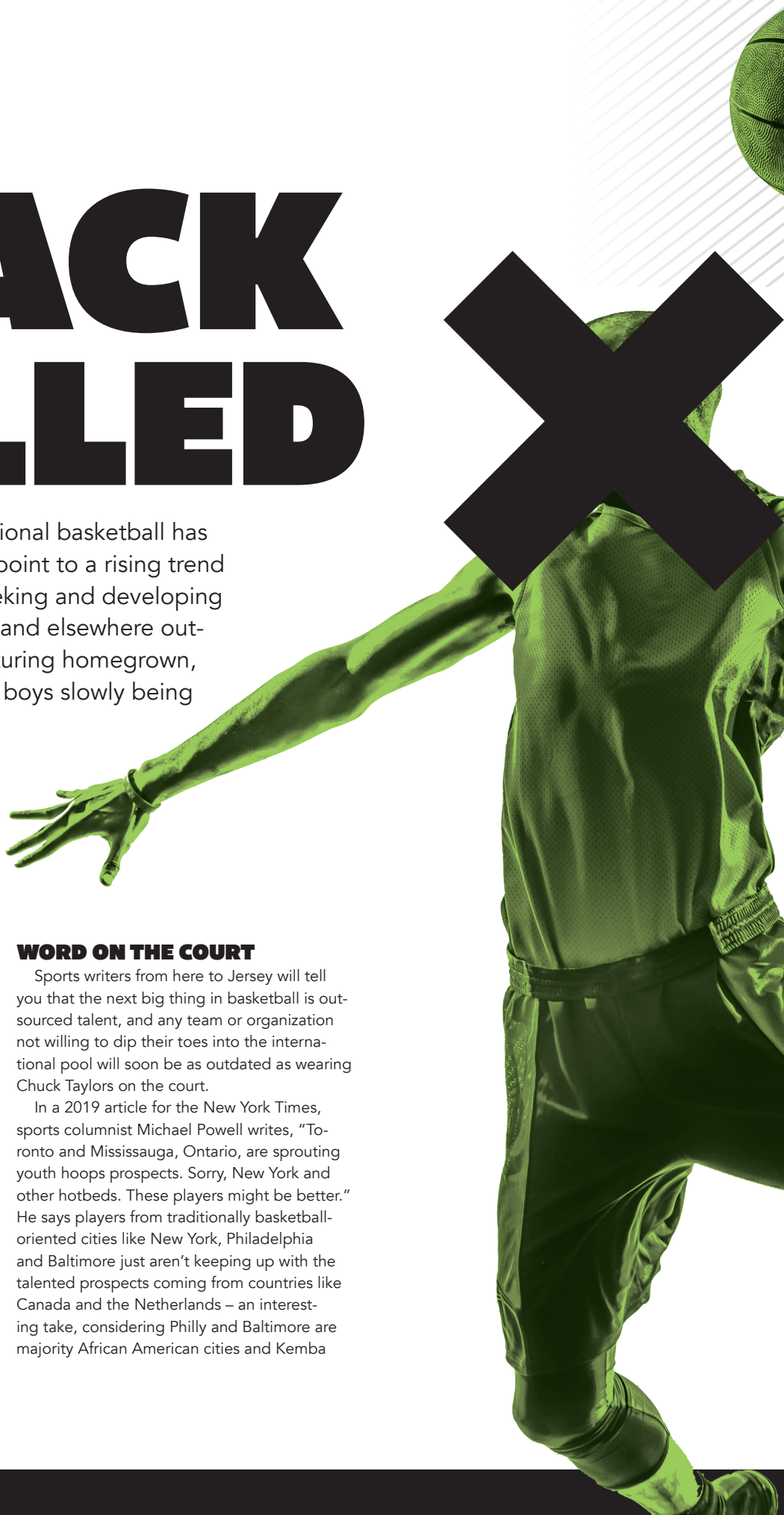
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BLACK BALLED

For nearly half a century, professional basketball has been a black thing. But experts point to a rising trend of NBA and NCAA recruiters seeking and developing elite, white players from Europe and elsewhere outside of the States instead of nurturing homegrown, African American talent. Are our boys slowly being squeezed out?



BY **ARIANNA SMITH**

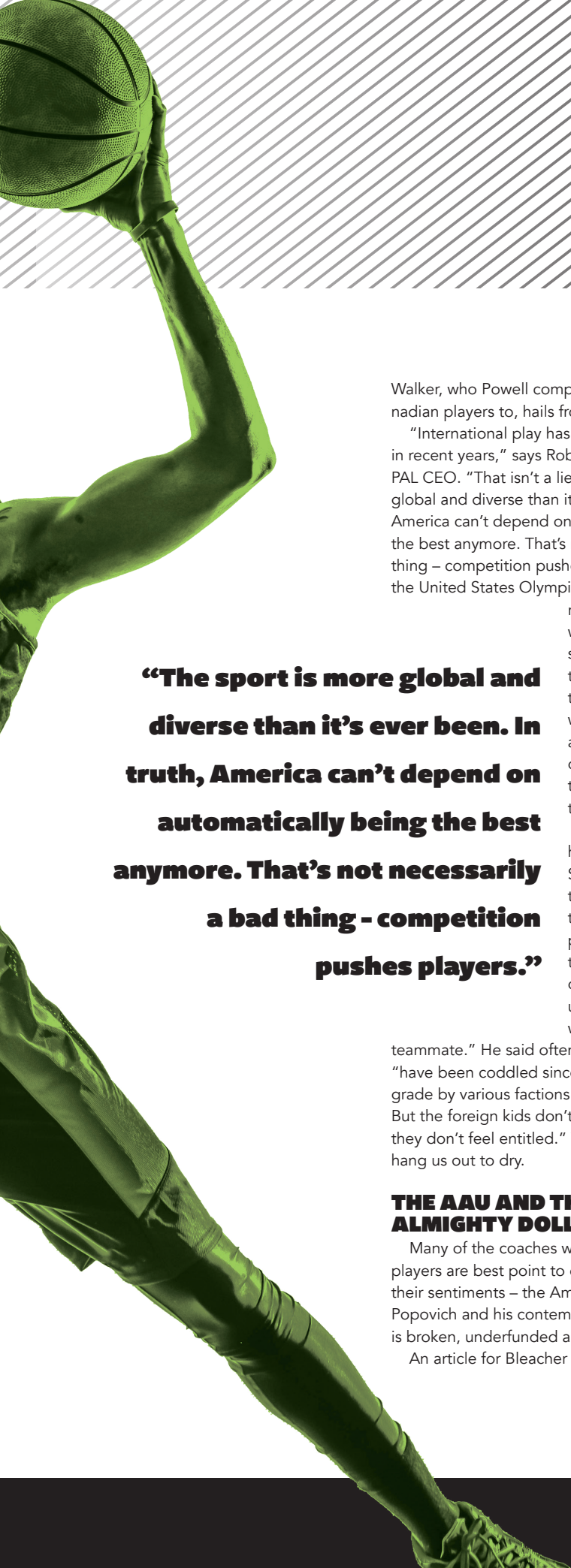
Serbian-born Darko Miličić was the No. 2 pick in the 2003 NBA draft over Dwayne Wade, Carmelo Anthony and Chris Bosh. In 2006, Italy native Andrea Bargnani was the No. 1 pick over Texan LaMarcus Aldridge. And Czechia-born Jan Vesely was the No. 6 pick in the 2011 NBA draft, over Kemba Walker, black and from the Bronx. It seems the NBA is steadily losing a bit of its color.

The era of basketball – and football – being "black sports" may be approaching an end thanks to the rising trend of NBA and NCAA recruiters seeking elite players from Europe and other foreign lands instead of cultivating homegrown, African American talent. And with youth sports participation rates dropping in sharp contrast to cost, black and brown players might get priced out of the sport entirely.

WORD ON THE COURT

Sports writers from here to Jersey will tell you that the next big thing in basketball is outsourced talent, and any team or organization not willing to dip their toes into the international pool will soon be as outdated as wearing Chuck Taylors on the court.

In a 2019 article for the New York Times, sports columnist Michael Powell writes, "Toronto and Mississauga, Ontario, are sprouting youth hoops prospects. Sorry, New York and other hotbeds. These players might be better." He says players from traditionally basketball-oriented cities like New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore just aren't keeping up with the talented prospects coming from countries like Canada and the Netherlands – an interesting take, considering Philly and Baltimore are majority African American cities and Kemba



Walker, who Powell compares his favorite Canadian players to, hails from New York.

"International play has definitely improved in recent years," says Robert Jamerson, Detroit PAL CEO. "That isn't a lie. The sport is more global and diverse than it's ever been. In truth, America can't depend on automatically being the best anymore. That's not necessarily a bad thing – competition pushes players." Even still, the United States Olympic basketball team is ranked No. 1 in the world. NBA ratings soar every night as thousands of people tune in around the world to watch LeBron and Steph Curry ball out of control. So why the sudden aversion to American players?

"The sport is more global and diverse than it's ever been. In truth, America can't depend on automatically being the best anymore. That's not necessarily a bad thing – competition pushes players."

Gregg Popovich, head coach for the San Antonio Spurs, told ESPN in 2013 that he looks for players with "character," who've "gotten over themselves who understand team play, who can cheer for a teammate." He said often, American players "have been coddled since eighth, ninth, 10th grade by various factions or groups of people. But the foreign kids don't live with that. So they don't feel entitled." Yikes, Pop. Way to hang us out to dry.

THE AAU AND THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR

Many of the coaches who say European players are best point to one specific culprit in their sentiments – the Amateur Athletic Union. Popovich and his contemporaries say the AAU is broken, underfunded and predatory.

An article for Bleacher Report once described the AAU as "a loosely regulated, exploitative construct that preys on teenagers for profit. It builds them up, tells them they're great and waits for the payoff." It went on: "So it shouldn't be a surprise that American basketball prospects emerge from the system without much perspective on – or appreciation for – team basketball."

Instead of dealing with the AAU, teams copy the model of Tiago Splitter, a Brazilian player who was trained and tutored in Spain specifically for the Spurs. Splitter, assured a spot on the team already, developed with the Saski Baskonia team while the Spurs improved their professional roster and pulled him to play when he was good and ready.

Brendan Winters, head coach of Philadelphia's top AAU team, says that the org isn't completely in the clear for a lot of these recruiting issues. "American basketball players are the best in the world! With that being said, there are some problems. The AAU tends to focus on winning, winning, winning, and not so much the hallmarks of a strong game," Winters says.

David Greenwood, director of Detroit PAL athletics, says the focus on winning and flashy skills is drowning out the need to teach kids the fundamentals. "Some AAU people are only invested in cherry-picking skills that fill the gyms up. The attraction is the flashiness. If you create these super teams of players, you only have a few to choose from and the rest are neglected. You have two or three elite, coddled teams and the rest are trash. It echoes into the NBA," Greenwood says.

Tiffany King, head coach for the girls' basketball team at Communication and Media Arts High School in Detroit, says the kids are not to blame – the coaches are. King says, "It's easy to lose sight of what we're trying to teach them. The attention gets to your head, and you start feeling like an NBA coach if you get one or two ballers on the team and everybody notices. But you can't ignore the others, and winning and shooting can't be the main thing.

BLACK BALLED



It's a disservice to ignore the mental part of the game." King's daughter Taylor agrees, saying that she loved traveling and playing with the AAU in high school while also noticing the discrepancies. "It never really happened on my teams, but there were some coaches and parents that only cared about your shooting game and if people were talking about you. They'd pick the ones they think 'had a shot' and the rest of us were just backup," Taylor says.

Greenwood acknowledges those problems but also says that the AAU is often one of the only outlets for basketball outside of school leagues for inner-city kids across the country. "Exposure and experience creates the best overall basketball players. A lot of AAU leagues aren't working with the top paid agents or rubbing elbows with recruiters at top schools. We don't have the advantages and privileges other leagues might," he says. "Teams like the Pistons run clinics – in the suburbs, for fees."

ALL AMERICAN

No one's calling the NBA racist – it's still very much dominated by black players and, compared to other professional sports leagues, has the highest percentage of head coaches of color at 33%, according to The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida's 2019 National Basketball Association Racial and Gender Report Card, an annual report.

The NBA earned an A+ on the issue of racial hiring, a B for gender hiring practices and an overall grade of an A. And in 2018, 16% of the NCAA's student athletes were black; with regard to men's basketball specifically, that jumps to 45%.

Still, critics of the AAU say that their broken system is the cause for a growing disinterest in homegrown talent. It goes without saying that the majority of those getting passed over are brown and black kids, snubbed for the Tiago Splitters of the world who had the luxury of being trained in Europe and hand delivered.

However, there are those who say fundamentals in American basketball aren't dead. In fact, they live on in the style and prowess of the foreign players.

"In a lot of ways, basketball wouldn't be a global market if not for American, inner-city players," Greenwood says. "People like Kenny Smith went over there to play internationally and gave them the basics. Without American basketball, there would be no European or any-other-country basketball."

This country has also historically made black people and boys feel like one of the few paths to legitimate validation is through "black sports." Black Americans – albeit a small number – have used football and basketball to build wealth and notoriety. So to now value them less than players coming from abroad because of a broken American system is a bit of a slap in the face.

"We just need to get back to the basics," coach King says. "Once we have a strong foundation here in the states, the foreigners won't be able to touch us. American talent is strong and innate. The NBA and the colleges could pump money into the programs, and that would help a lot." B

ARIANNA IS BLAC DETROIT'S EDITORIAL INTERN.



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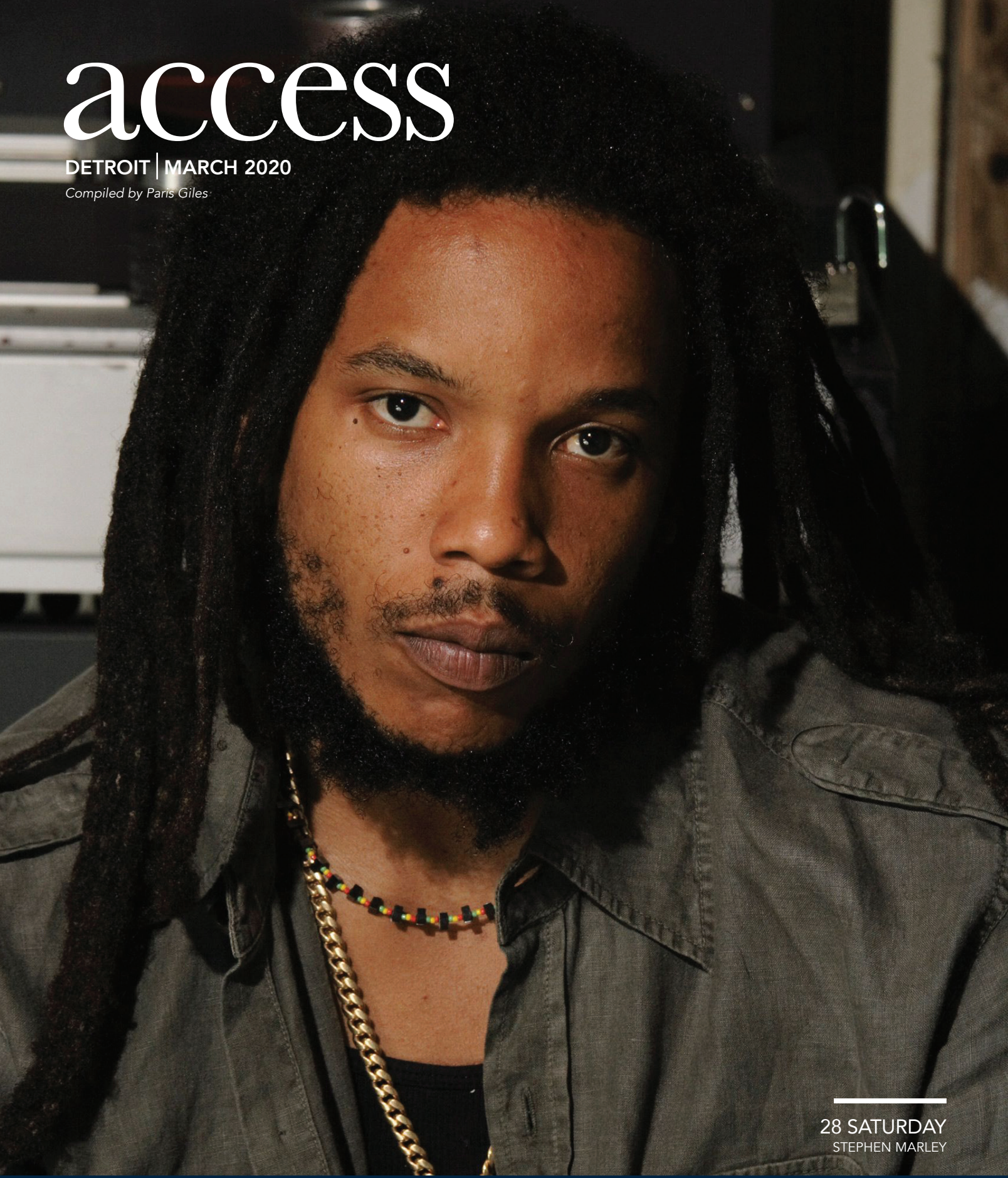
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DETROIT | MARCH 2020

Compiled by Paris Giles



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6 FRIDAY

SILENT DISCO. Celebrate the downtown ice rink's closing weekend with a silent disco and party. Slide and glide as three DJs spin live. $8-$10 (plus $5 for skate rental). 5-9 p.m. today and March 7, noon-8 p.m. March 8. Campus Martius Park, 800 Woodward Ave., Detroit. downtowndetroitparks.com

7 SATURDAY

SPOKEN WORD. Join this spoken word open mic night and share a poem, sing a song, tell a joke or just feel the vibe. $5. ZAB Cultural Collective, 16927 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. fb.com/zabcccoworking

10 THURSDAY

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF. Tony-winning director Bartlett Sher and the team behind *South Pacific*, *The King and I* and *Oslo* bring a fresh and authentic vision to this beloved theatrical masterpiece. $45-$85. Times vary today-March 15. Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. broadwayindetroit.com

11 WEDNESDAY

BRIDGETT M. DAVIS. The novelist, essayist, teacher and filmmaker stops in for the next installment of the QUEEN Voices lecture series. Free. 6 p.m. Charles H. Wright Museum, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. thewright.org

12 THURSDAY

CUBAN LITERATURE. Matthew Pettway, Ph.D. discusses his book *Cuban Literature in the Age of Black Insurrection: Manzano, Plácido and Afro-Latino Religion*. Free. 6 p.m. Charles H. Wright Museum, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. thewright.org

13 FRIDAY

MOTOR CITY MYSTERY. Celebrate 313 Day by working with a team or on your own to solve puzzles and question suspects to solve a murder mystery in the Motor City; enjoy cocktails

To list an event in ACCESS Detroit, send facts and photos two months prior to calendar@BLACdetroit.com. You also may upload information to BLACdetroit.com/Calendar or mail to Metro Parent Media Group, BLAC Calendar, 22041 Woodward Ave., Ferndale, MI 48220. Submissions may be edited or omitted.

Be sure to call before attending events in case of changes. For an expanded version of the calendar, visit BLAC online at BLACdetroit.com.

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and hors d'oeuvres afterward. $20-$25. 6-10 p.m. Detroit Historical Museum, 5401 Woodward Ave., Detroit. detroithistorical.org

FRIDAY NIGHT SMACKDOWN. See your favorite WWE superstars live in action. $35-$70. 7:15 p.m. Little Caesars Arena, 2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

WHITNEY CUMMINGS. The comedian takes the stage. $35-$45. 8 p.m. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. royaloakmusictheatre.com

14 SATURDAY

ST. PATRICK'S DAY. Party with live entertainment, lawn games, Irish beer and cocktails, free activities for kids and more. Free. 1-5 p.m. Beacon Park, 1903 Grand River Ave., Detroit. downtowndetroitparks.com

LARRY JUNE. The San Francisco-born rapper stops in. $30-$35. 7 p.m. El Club, 4114 W. Vernor Highway, Detroit. elclubdetroit.com

BLUES. The annual Motor City Blues Festival is back with Bobby Rush, Calvin Richardson, Pokey Bear, Melvia "Chick" Rodgers-Williams, Sir Charles Jones, Lenny Williams and Theodis Ealey. $52-$125. 7 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

HARLEM DANCE. The Dance Theatre of Harlem returns with a program to celebrate 50 years of commitment to access, art and black excellence. $30-$93. 7:30 p.m. today, 2:30 p.m. March 15. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit. michiganopera.org

15 SUNDAY

ST. PATRICK'S PARADE. Call on the luck of the Irish and enjoy this St. Patrick's Day Parade featuring live entertainment, food service, Irish step dancing and more. Free. 12:30 p.m. Michigan Avenue, Corktown, Detroit. detroitstpatrickparade.com

MARCH BADNESS. Yo Gotti, Moneybagg Yo, Blac Youngsta, 42 Dugg, Kash Doll and Kevin Gates perform. $54-$134. 7 p.m. Little Caesars Arena, 2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

16 MONDAY

SENIOR EXPO. Connect with dozens of local organizations and experts dedicated to helping metro Detroit seniors and their families. Enjoy free health screenings, giveaways and more. Free. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. dia.org

17 TUESDAY

JESSICA CARE MOORE. The poet and author kicks off the book tour for her fifth collection of poems, *We Want Our Bodies Back*, hosted by Rochelle Riley and featuring live art by Sabrina Nelson and a poetry reading by moore. $25. 2-4 p.m. Charles H. Wright Museum, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. thewright.org

19 THURSDAY

BRIAN MCKNIGHT. The legendary crooner takes the stage. $44-$57. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

WILD 'N' OUT. Nick Cannon brings the MTV antics to town live. $49.50-$299.50. 8:30 p.m. Little Caesars Arena, 2645 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

20 FRIDAY

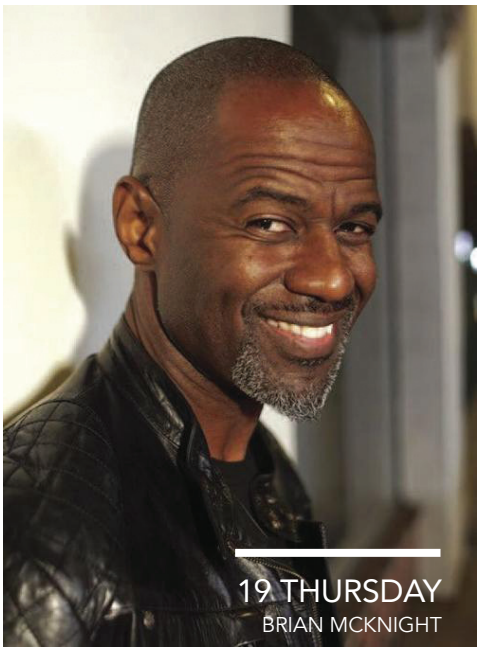
LESLIE ODOM JR. The Grammy and Tony Award-winning performer and star of the Broadway phenomenon *Hamilton* performs songs from his third full-length album *Mr.* $30-$35. 7 p.m. El Club, 4114 W. Vernor Highway, Detroit. elclubdetroit.com

21 SATURDAY

LAUGHS. Sommore, Gary Owen, Lavell Crawford and Don "DC" Curry stop through for Festival of Laughs. $59-$125. 8 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com



14 SATURDAY
LARRY JUNE



19 THURSDAY
BRIAN MCKNIGHT



20 FRIDAY
Leslie Odom Jr.

28 SATURDAY

NATURALISTA LIFE EXPO. The brand that promotes plant-based nutrition and healthier living is back with its two-day expo. Actress, activist and vegan Kimberly Elise serves as keynote speaker. $15-$50. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. today and March 29. TCF Center, 1 Washington Blvd., Detroit. tcfcenterdetroit.com

GREGORY AND LEDISI. Gregory Porter and Ledisi stop through during their 10-city national tour. $49.50-$69.50. 7 p.m. Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

STEPHEN MARLEY. The Grammy Award winner and second son of Bob and Rita Marley presents *Evening With: Stephen Marley Acoustic Soul*. $30-$75. 7 p.m. Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress St., Detroit. saintandrewsdetroit.com

PARSONS DANCE. Known for its remarkable athleticism and stunning ensemble work, Parsons Dance fuses the gestures and movement of contemporary dance with the discipline and precision of a classical company. $45-$95. 8 p.m. Music Hall Center, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit. musichall.org

29 SUNDAY

TRACY REESE. The celebrated fashion designer stops in for the next installment of the QUEEN Voices lecture series. Free. 3 p.m. Charles H. Wright Museum, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. thewright.org

KENNY G. The iconic musician performs. $45-$47. 7:30 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

SADA BABY. The breakout hometown rapper performs live, hosted by DJ Fingers, Latrice Hull and Red Wing Everything. $65. 8 p.m. Garden Theater, 3929 Woodward Ave., Detroit. thegardendetroit.com

2 THURSDAY

LYFE AND CHRISETTE. Lyfe Jennings and Chrisette Michele take the stage. $35-$47. 8 p.m. Sound Board at MotorCity Casino Hotel, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 313presents.com

The Dirty Show International Erotic Art Exhibition

For its 21st year, The Dirty Show returned to the Russell Industrial Center in Detroit two weekends in a row – Feb. 7-8 and Feb. 14-15 – to deliver the area's largest erotic art exhibition. Attendees browsed thousands of flush-worthy pieces from renowned artists and enjoyed interactive displays and performances, from burlesque to aerial arts.

Photos by Sydney Kispert-Bostick



Ariel Rue, Brianna Bee



Amanda Sweet, Amanda Snowden



Melissa McCurtis, Alonzo McCurtis



Stacey Stoney



Lovely Pruiett, Gilbert Pruiett



Robin Nero



Sean Jackson, Nia Jackson



Kamaria W.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

THE 2020 U.S. CENSUS

THE 2020 U.S. CENSUS IS COMING UP. HERE, THE DIRECTOR OF NEW MICHIGAN MEDIA EXPLAINS WHAT THE CENSUS IS AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU PARTICIPATE IN IT.

2020 is a census year. In fact, you may have already received your census letter in the mail or seen a couple of commercials about it coming up. But what *exactly* is the U.S. census and why should you be bothered to fill it out?

Hayg Oshagan, a Wayne State University professor and the director of New Media Michigan – a network of ethnic and minority media across the state – delves into what the census is, why it's important and how it can benefit your community.

THE CENSUS, EXPLAINED.

The U.S. census is quite simply a headcount of all the people living in the United States.

"The U. S. Constitution requires that the federal government count every person living in the United States (and) the U.S. census has been conducted every 10 years since 1790," Oshagan explains.

And the census is important because the amount of funding the federal government gives to each state is directly determined by the number of residents counted in the census.

"If a state has a low census count, it will get less money from the federal government, every year, for the 10 years after the census count. Recently, Michigan has gotten about $30 billion a year based on the 2010 census," Oshagan adds. If the census count is low, "Michigan, and every county and city in Michigan, gets a lot less money for all the programs the census pays for."

These programs include Headstart, Bridge Cards, school lunches, WIC, Pell Grants, Section 8 housing and Medicaid.

In addition, Oshagan explains that the census also determines the number of congressional seats each state holds.

"Because of a low census count, Michigan lost a Congressional seat in 2010, going from 15 Congressmen and Congresswomen in the U.S. House of Representatives, to the current 14," he says.

HOW DO YOU FILL IT OUT?

In the past, a paper questionnaire was sent out in the mail that each household was supposed to fill out and send back. In 2020, most people will instead get a card in the mail with an I.D. number that allows them to fill it out online – paper versions will still be mailed out in areas where internet access is slow or limited, and there's still an option to call in and complete the census.

The census is just nine questions, according to Oshagan, and will be mailed out on March 12. If you don't respond, you'll get reminders on March 16 and 23 and April 8 and 20.

If you don't fill out or send the census back by the end of April, census workers will come to your door.

"They have badges and identification from the Census Bureau and they will ask you to complete the census," Oshagan explains. "It is much better to fill it out on your own, and not wait for the census workers to come by. We get a much better count that way."

WHO GETS COUNTED?

In short, everyone who currently lives in the U.S. gets counted during the census – no matter their age or immigration status.

"It doesn't matter if you are a citizen or not a citizen, if you have a Green Card, or a visitor visa, or an expired visa, a student with an F1 visa or an employee with an H-1b visa, if you live in the U.S., you count for the census," Oshagan says. "Make sure to count everyone in your household, including children and newborns. And if you sublet to anyone, you need to count them too."

If you're living in the U.S. on an expired visa, or you're worried about your citizenship status in any way, Oshagan says you shouldn't be.

"The United States has a law specifically for the census, to make sure it is 100% confidential. The census Act, Title 13, of the United States Code, has the strictest confidentiality laws on the federal books," he says.

The information collected by the census can't be shared with any other agency – including ICE, the FBI, the IRS or homeland security – business or person and over the last 50-plus years, the law that protects this information hasn't been broken, ever.

The only people who are not counted are those here as tourists that are planning to return to their home country.

"We only have one chance to get counted (and) there is a lot of funding tied to the U.S. census that helps everyone in our communities, from our children to the elderly," Oshagan says. "Make sure to fill it out when you get it. The 10 minutes we spend filling out the census now will affect our communities for the next 10 years."

NEW MICHIGAN MEDIA

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE 2020 CENSUS, OR DETAILS ABOUT NEW MICHIGAN MEDIA, VISIT NEWMICHIGANMEDIA.COM/CENSUS-2020.

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