

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKLORIST

FREE

Raising Awareness of African American Traditions and Folklore

Issue 2 - December 2020

Featured Folklorist of the Month
Todd Lawrence, Ph.D.



AN ARTS COMMUNITY RESPONDS to CORONAVIRUS
By: Doug Curry



Two Black Freedom Songs
By: Jim Hauser

Black Business By: Karleton Thomas
Black Death and We The Blues By: Corey Harris
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MOVING ONLINE

Musicians response to Quarantine



By: Michael Jones

After retiring from corporate America, Valerie and Benedict Turner began performing at folk festivals and conducting music workshops as the Piedmont Blūz. But like touring musicians across the world, in March, the husband-and-wife blues duo found that everything they did to make money was suddenly off-limits due to the Covid-19 pandemic. They couldn't be in crowds, meet with people face to face, or travel.

The Piedmont Bluz responded to being quarantined by taking their show online. Using a Samsung smartphone on a small tripod, the couple began live streaming 15-minute performances on

Facebook Live every Friday. The Piedmont Bluz Café attracts about 2,000 views per video. Benedict said the shows, archived on Facebook, have led to an uptick in merchandise sales on their website www.piedmontbluz.com. They are also interacting with new fans who are learning a little blues history. "One thing that people always say they like about our presentation is that we give some context to the song or the person that played the song," he explained.

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Contributing Writers For The African American Folklorist

Featured Articles by:

Corey Harris and Jim Hauser

Featured Poem by:

Anna Lomax & Woullard Lett



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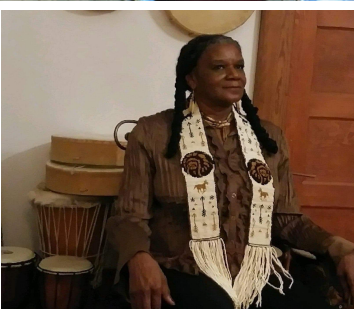
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Michael Jones Michael is an author and journalist who's research and writing reclaims the African American Traditions and music started popularized in Kentucky and traveled the world.

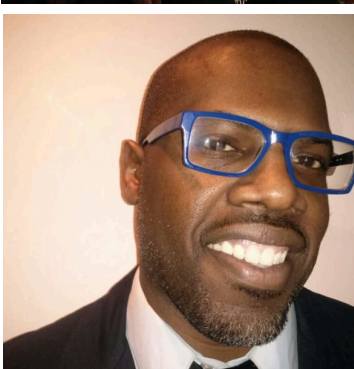
<http://www.jugbandjubilee.com/>

<https://twitter.com/michaeljones44>



Chief Elwin Warhorse Gillum

Queen of Tchefuncta Nation and the Chief of the Chahta Tribe. As appointed by the 365 Elders (Blood Members) of the Tribe, she was appointed the Chief of the Tribe in 1998 and took the throne of the Nation in 2009.



Karleton Thomas

Karleton Thomas is a business professional with extensive experience in retail, eCommerce, apparel manufacturing, and social enterprises. As an entrepreneurial coach, Karleton trains and consults start-up owner operators of underserved communities.

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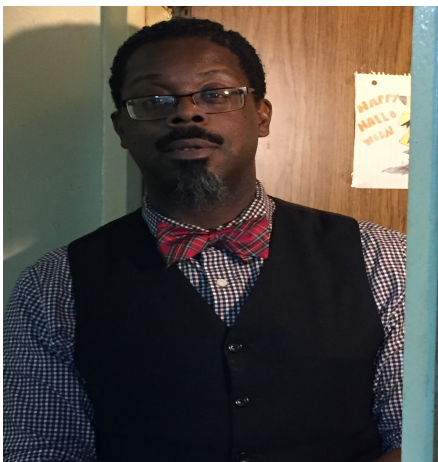
Our Founders



Denise Pearley

Project Manager/Co-Founder

Coming from a background in restaurant management with a degree in Digital Film and Multi Media, Denise has applied those skills to the production of Jack Dappa Blues Public Media content, as well as a healthy plant based cooking regimen that heightens the energy necessary for the team to work full throttle on programing and projects that resonate with the Jack Dappa Blues Public Media audience. She harnessed her program management skill in the early years of podcasting when her and Lamont Jack Pearley was of the first few shows to broadcast on Blogtalk radio in 2007, where their weekly syndication reached over 15,000 listeners.



Lamont Jack Pearley

Editor/Founder

As an NYC-based descendant of the Great Migration, my life changed dramatically in the mid-2000s when I returned to Louisiana and Mississippi to bury close relatives. Returning to these regions and their deep associations with Blues history, I felt the urgency to raise cultural and ethnic awareness of African American Traditional Music as it pertains to the Black Experience in America. I began using the methods of ethnography, genealogy, and archival research – in essence, the tools of the folklorist – to more thoroughly trace my family's lineage. Inspired by my discoveries, I began interviewing people outside of my family who had similar stories, including African American Blues musicians who play various forms of traditional blues.



The African American Folklorist is distributed by The Jack Dappa Blues Heritage Preservation Foundation.

The African American Folklorist is a monthly Newspaper that contains articles about traditions, traditional beliefs, the cultural context, geographical locations, music, dance and vernaculars of The Blues People and the role each plays in the lives of the people past and present. The publication also addresses the effects societal, and industry shifts have on the traditions and folklore.

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featured articles by:

Gideon Wiesen

Samara Pearley.

Lamont Pearley Jr



Todd Lawrence - Folklorist of The Month

By: Lamont Jack Pearley

In this issue, I interview our current African American Folklorist of the month, Dr. David Todd Lawrence, Associate Professor in American culture and Difference English at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. Todd teaches African American literature and culture, folklore studies, and cultural studies. Recently honored at the Annual American Folklore Society's conference for the project "The George Floyd and Anti-Racist Street Art," which Lawrence and the team he's part of called the "Urban Art Mapping Project" took to the streets to begin preserving and documenting street arts and the emotions of the community after George

Floyds death, culminating into an entire community effort. Check out the George Floyd and Anti-Racist Street Art database <https://georgefloydstreetart.omeka.net/>

LJP

I would like to introduce, welcome, and speak with the folklorist of this upcoming issue. Todd Lawrence! How are you doing, sir?

DTL

I'm doing great, man. I'm doing great. Thanks for having me on.

LJP

Thank you for accepting to be on. We met at

the American folklore society's annual meeting, right? We spoke via email with a plethora of other great folklorists for quite some time. And so we galvanized the African American folklore section, part of the American folklore society. So I want everyone to know that they can also join the AFS and become members of the organization, Section, and Facebook group. You can find the section group on Facebook the American folklore society slash African American folklore section. Now with all this great banter out of the way, let's get into your journey, good brother. Haven't you, as a matter of fact, tell us what you do right now? What is your position? Give us a nice bio.

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The News for Folklore and Ethnography

Todd Lawrence continues

DTL

Okay, so I am Todd Lawrence. I teach African American folklore, African American culture and literature, folklore, and Cultural Studies at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. I've been at the University of St. Thomas for my entire career. I did my graduate work during my Ph.D. at the University of Missouri. So I went to St. Thomas right after I got done in Missouri. So I've been here for almost, this might be my 19th year, I think. I'm starting my 19th year at the University of St. Thomas. Yeah, yeah. They haven't got rid of me yet. I think if you do it, if you're doing a good job, they're always thinking about like, how can we get rid of this guy? So yes, I've been there for a long time. I teach many different classes, yet the majority of what I teach is African American literature. And within African American literature, I focus mainly on the mid-century black genre writing, so I do a lot of stuff like mystery novels, crime novels, and things like that.

LJP

Black noir is what you're saying?

DTL

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Yeah. So, you know, I'm the only African American in my department. So when that's the case, you teach a little bit of everything. So I teach all the way back to the beginning of African American literature. I don't really do African literature. But we try to keep that connection alive when we're talking about African American literature. So yeah, we go way back to Phyllis Wheatley and all those folks around back in the day. So

LPJ

you know, something interesting, forgive me, just in case, I have to jot something down from one of your statements, I had to get my notebook. Interesting. So let me pose it as a question. Do you believe in these situations, collegiate, university departments, and organizations like AFS kind of group everything from the diaspora together rather than giving each its own respected lane?

DTL

I don't know if I'd say that or not. I mean, I think you do, so if I understand your question, right? You know, if you're teaching, working in academia, in fact, I was just talking about this with a friend the other day. The tendency is to really separate, let's say, an African American literature, it's just sort of independent, our literature in general, to separate it up into the kind of areas of African American and Native American, and you know, you know, medieval British or whatever. So we have these kinds of particular regions, specialized areas that people teach in. But what tends to happen when you're at smaller universities is that you end up really crossing over and doing a lot of things. And that's, it's not just a small university. So people throughout their careers by themselves interested in particular items. And I think English studies, which is a department, my department, I'm in the English Studies Department, tends to be really broad in what you can do in a department like that. So, and a lot of places, folklorist find themselves in an English department. English folklore fits into what happens in an English department because you're really studying storytelling language, and kind of like composition, but the oral composition, right, like, it all fits together. So I think, you know, sometimes we would like to have, I'm the kind of person interested in many different things. In my teaching in my work, you know, to try to find, like, what's the thing that really holds it all together? It really is African American folklore and African American culture. But it's really narrative because I mean, I've even done projects where I'm not even focusing on African Americans, right. Like, I've done ethnographic projects where it was just like, working on the idea of home for people in a particular city or something like that, you know, so, I mean, I do a lot of different things. I suppose what I sometimes say when I'm thinking about myself as a folklorist is that I'm really an ethnographer, and thinking about myself as an ethnographer means that I'm not really limited. I'm conducting ethnography on this group of people or this specific folklore genre or something like that. It's really, I like to do ethnography. I like to engage with groups of people, with communities, and, you know, sort of collaborate with them and have them share with me things that are important about their

Todd Lawrence Continued

experience. And that can vary, you know, that the groups can change, something that they're sharing can vary, it can vary, you know, they might be telling you stories, they might be telling you about jokes or telling you about, you know, whether it's like a kind of narrative.

I've worked on this project. Probably my most significant project, about disaster narratives and counter-narratives of blackness in a community whose town was destroyed. The book is really a narrative that the people in the town tell about their city's inception and all the stories that have kept their town alive over the years and continue to keep their community alive. Even after there is no more town. They had to move to a different place or dispersed across the country because they're not living in the same area anymore. But they engage in this tradition of homecoming, which many African American communities do, right? In the summertime, this time of year, get together, everybody comes back. And so they had a real vibrant homecoming tradition. And so that's one of the ways they keep their community alive, even though they don't live in the same town anymore. That place where they all grew up, where they really felt rooted to, nobody lives there anymore, you know, so, like that. I don't know if that explains precisely?

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Photo Credit Cassandra Hamer



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Photo Credit Carol M. Highsmith, Library of Congress



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LJP

No, it does.

It's, as they say, a loaded statement because there was so much to unpack right, in a good way, you know,

DTL

you might have to stop me sometimes.

To hear the full interview, log on to the African American Folklorist website.

www.wku.edu/fsa/folkstudies

Considering a career working with multicultural communities, social justice, museums, or cultural centers?
Storytelling, traditional arts, festivals, or foods?

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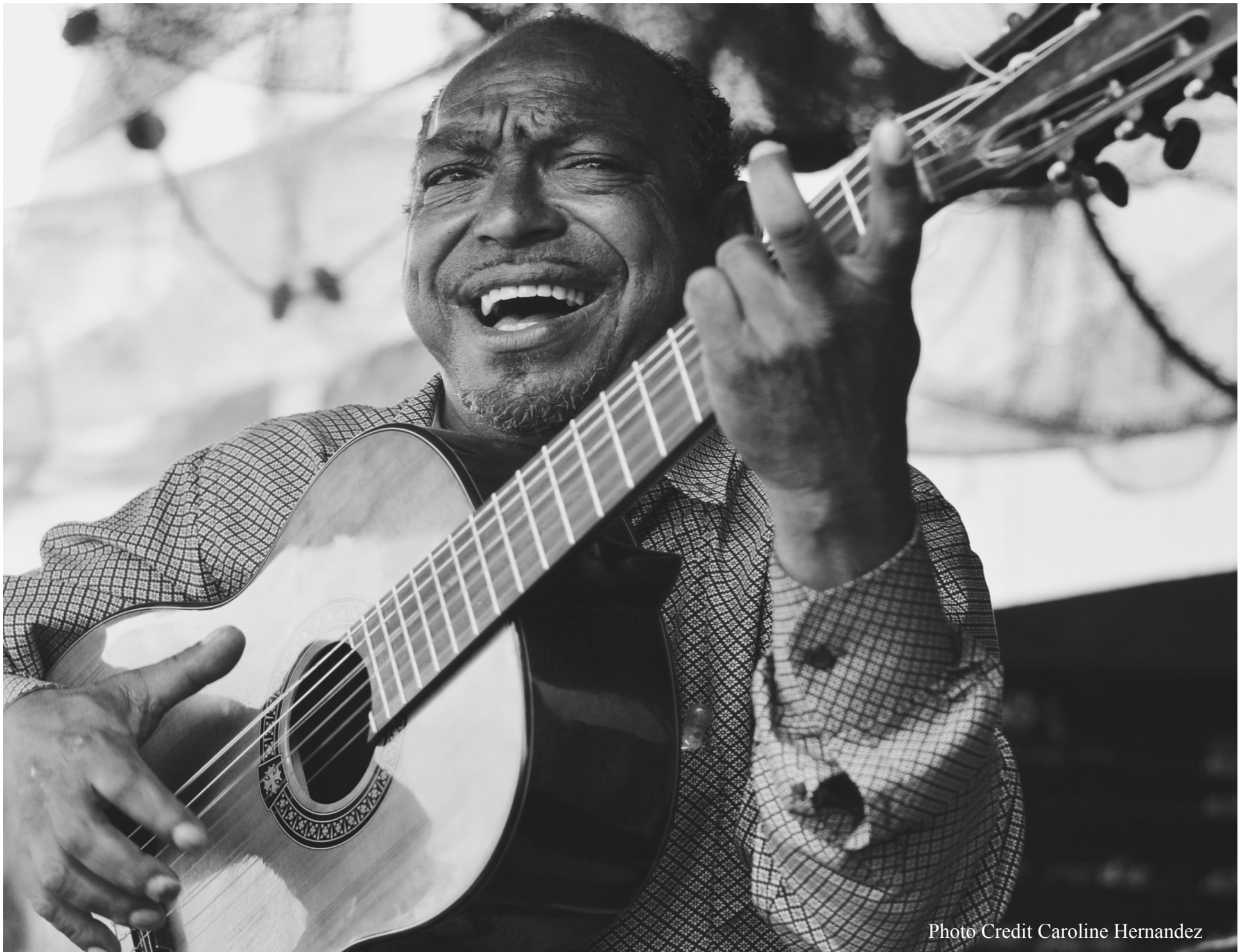


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AN ARTS COMMUNITY RESPONDS to CORONAVIRUS:

WOC ART COVID -19 Live ROC Benefit

By: Douglas Curry

Rochester, New York, is the third-most populous city in the Empire State, ranking behind New York City, of course, and Buffalo. The July 2019 United States Census Bureau estimate of the city's population is 205,695. It is the focal point of a metropolitan area of some 1.2 million residents. The city's residents are roughly 53 percent non-white. Once a robust and industrial influential town and corporate headquarters, the city has floundered for decades in seeking redevelopment and a new purpose and identity. Amid a tepid economy, Rochester's minority populations have suffered a high incidence of poverty and attendant violent crime, as well as low educational

attainment.

Despite its challenges, Rochester has maintained an excellent environment for professional and amateur sports, health care, higher education, and the arts. In the arts and cultural scene, the city boasts international festivals, a world-class philharmonic hall and orchestra, and literary and dramatic arts practiced at every level. When not locked down by the pandemic, one may find a professional or community theater performance on practically any given night. Literary events and musical performances abound, attracting audiences and performers of every stripe.

Enter Covid-19.

The reality of the Covid pandemic hit suddenly. It didn't take long for all to know that this was real and deadly but survivable. But in Rochester and many communities like it, it also became quickly apparent that damages incurred would not be confined to sickness and death. A vibrant arts community became a shut-in casualty of the pandemic and a weak governmental response to it. In a city that is 63 percent non-white, that meant a complete shutoff of a measure of income for an inordinate number of artists and other creatives of color.



FOLKLORIST OF THE MONTH *Todd Lawrence*



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The Arts Community Respond to Coronavirus Continued

Sheltering in place meant a lack of mobility; it meant the closure of all performance venues.

There would be no regular jobs for the foreseeable future, no playing for tips, teaching, waiting tables, or any of the trickling revenue streams that had always supported emerging artists, a variety of creatives, and gig workers. There would only be fear of the known pandemic and the unknown- the staring into the abyss of their incomes disappearing. Under such duress, a community's resources may be marshaled in unexpected ways.

When the Covid pandemic's legitimate threat became apparent, collaboration and the optimizing of collective resources were not new concepts to Rachel DeGuzman. A longtime creative and advocate, she had founded the 11-member WOC ART Collaborative (Women Of Color Art Collaborative) a year earlier, bringing together an array of women of color, known for their art and activism. These were 11 women with their own enterprises, organizations, agendas, and followings. Banding together was to focus their individually powerful forces into areas where such women were not being heard from and even to create forums for discussions that no one was having yet.

It was with this backdrop that in early March, Ms. DeGuzman joined hands with Akwaaba the Heritage Associates, Inc., Akoma Choir, and the Rochester Area Community Foundation to stage an unprecedented event. With the recollection of "Live Aid" throbbing in her mind, Ms. DeGuzman envisioned a similar event with a FUBU inclination – 'for us, by us.' Local creatives could bring their talents and reputations to bear AND attract their fans and constituents' attention. The vision was of a benefit show, an effort to raise money to directly benefit those creatives of color whose income was disappearing in the pandemic.

They developed the event as a benefit show similar to yore's telethons; there would be 24 hours of presentations, art, and entertainment provided by artists of color and their allies. Each artist would have the public eye and ear for up to 30 minutes, presented over Zoom. Donations would be requested, and from those donations, grants would be distributed to the artists in need. It was to be that simple.

'Simple' does not always mean 'easy.'

The value of top-level collaboration shall be a significant take away from this entire experience. The inclusion of the Rochester Area Community Foundation as an event partner proved an effective stratagem. Because the foundation was a known and respected administrative agent and program funder, its presence lent an air of legitimacy and credibility to an effort that would openly request donors reach into their pocketbooks. The tax-deductible donations would be received and processed by the foundation. A programming committee was established to create what would become a media extravaganza. There would be a grants review committee to watchdog the disbursement of personal grants from the event's proceeds. Sister WOC Art members Delores Jackson-Radney and Reenah Golden took on the respective tasks of recruiting and training on-screen performers. Organizing members would take on shifts as hosts for the grueling 24-hour show. Very importantly, there would be training in the use of Zoom and all necessary technology for all involved, especially for the creatives who would appear and perform. Many of them had never used this technology before.

On April 15, 2020, all hopes and preparation finally came down to crossed fingers and a few prayers.

At 7 pm, Rachel DeGuzman appeared on the screen. Covid-19 Live ROC was underway, kicked off with some words of explanation, and a welcome to all, including the performers. The first to appear was Mexican American poet Rachel McKibbens. She delivered the opening salvo of artistic expression fearlessly, relentlessly. For the balance of the next 24 hours, there came and went a steady stream of local favorites and surprising newcomers. There were singers and dancers, actors, poets, instrumentalists, and lecturers who presented various healthful practices and socio-political ideas. All the while, contributions flowed in vastly varying amounts, all welcomed. The Ryan Family Memorial Foundation posted a pledge to match contributions of up to \$15,000, and that encouragement seemed to work. Spirit was buoyant as the money came in, and the

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Arts Community Respond to Coronavirus Continued

various performers came and went. The think was getting done! Any uneasiness over the prospects of Covid-19 Live ROC melted away under the warmth of a community raising its collective rent.

WOC ART member Reenah Golden closed with a poem, a coup de grace, the rousing, inspirational, "Do You Believe" For the preceding 24 hours, Rochester arts community's people of color had given affirmation that there was, indeed, much to believe in, and in doing so had manifested reasons for such belief. Forty-four creatives had provided entertainment and enlightenment over 24 hours. Approximately two hundred donors had contributed what would amount to over \$32,000 that would be distributed within an arts community of color, being ravaged by the economic privations of Covid -19. The mission of doing something because it was right and necessary, and doing it 'for us, by us' had been accomplished. In the aftermath of the success of the Covid-19 Live ROC zoom-a-thon, there was much to reflect upon.

A donor pool of almost 200 persons, drawn from the small city of Rochester, NY, had contributed \$32,000. If those same ratios were applied to a more massive metropolis, the community's caring and sharing depth amplified. With a population of 8.4 million, such participation in New York City would bring a 24-hour yield of approximately \$1.3 million as an extreme example. These are not just dollar figures; they measure a community's ability to care for itself and respond to their own needs.

The role of digital technology and its availability throughout the community was also now etched as a reality, no mere passing thought. Many participants - creatives and observers alike – had never put such technology to such use. Where would they and this event have been without the training that

went into staging this? A community need was thus recognized. However, the more telling point is that they did pick it up and use it; they taught and were taught. They led and were led.

Little did they know that in the coming weeks, a crisis would arise that would be even more urgent. In the small city of Rochester, NY, the WOC ART Covid-19 Live ROC experience was, in its way, preparation for the unrest and activism to come.

Doug Curry
blacksnblues@hotmail.com

Segments of the benefit are available for viewing by typing WOC ART Covid-19 Live ROC into the search box on Facebook

For more information: Rachel DeGuzman:
rdeguzman@wocart.org

To donate to Covid-19 Live ROC:
racf.org/liveroc

****Disclosure:** the writer participated in WOC Covid-19 Live Aid ROC as a performing creative and as a donor.

Featured Poscast Of The Month **By: Courtland Hankins**



An American Hero & Anti-Hero Talks
Reparations - The Story of Ari Merratazon
(Audio) Most of you are familiar with the movie Dead Presidents starring Larenz Tate. I bet you don't know that Tate's character was inspired by the real-life story of decorated war hero and Vietnam Blood, Haywood Kirkland - now known as Ari Merratazon.



According to Mr. Merratazon, the heart of his life story actually began where the movie ended. If you remember the film, Larenz Tate's character was sentenced to prison after being convicted of robbing an armored truck. Mr. Merratazon did serve time in prison for armed robbery; however, it was to raise money for the Black liberation movement, which he became a part of shortly after leaving the military. While in prison, Mr. Merratazon founded the Incarcerated Veterans Assistance Organization and was personally honored in the White House by President Jimmy Carter. There's a laundry list of remarkable accomplishments in Mr. Merratazon's storied life. However, he is most proud of his work fighting for reparations. He is a "soldier" dedicated to achieving reparations for the descendants of Africans enslaved in the United States. Everyone should know his story and his current reparations work. Courtland W. Hankins, III (aka The President of Hip Hop) recently sat down with Mr. Merratazon to talk about his life and the reparations movement. It is a must-listen. The audio is on our website and can be accessed as follows:

<http://theafricanamericanfolklorist.com/>



In Photo: Izzy Leggat at Gantry State Park
Photo Credit: Ismael Fernandez Photography (<https://www.ismaelfoto.com/>)

Coronavirus Blues: Dancers Coming Together, Even When Forced Apart

By: Virginia Jimenez

Across the United States, dance organizers host blues dances once a week, bi-weekly, or once a month; several scenes host annual weekend events featuring lessons, live music, social dances and a variety of activities related to the culture of blues music. Some scenes support their local live music scene by going to blues bars and dancing in the available space. As non-essential businesses closed in mid-March because of the COVID-19 pandemic, blues dancers found themselves in variations of the same situation: social dancing events are cancelled.

Because blues dances are social environments where there are many folks packed into a (usually) small space, these events look like a feast for a contagious virus. Blues social dances are the opposite of social distancing: Folks dance with each other, changing dance partners every (or every other song); people sweat (especially in the summer time) and breathe in the same air for several hours. The goal of our events is to connect with others – physically, mentally, emotionally – through blues music. How can our communities continue to achieve this goal in the midst of a pandemic?

Conversations about how to continue blues dancing and keep our communities together became prominent on social media. By now, many scene leaders have established virtual lessons and social dances for their communities while also creating opportunities to support local musicians and full time dance instructors – a small fraction of the gig workers who suddenly found all their work canceled.



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Coronavirus Blues: Dancers Coming Together, Even When Forced Apart Continued

Here is a snapshot of a few Blues dance scenes in the US and how the pandemic has changed them:

Philadelphia, PA – Powerhouse Blues

The organizing team of Powerhouse Blues, the local blues dance group in Philadelphia, held an emergency meeting when non-essential businesses closed. After exploring their technology options and asking their community what they want to experience, they started their weekly Tuesday night social dance online. They've built in 15 minutes of social time before a 45 minute class that focuses on solo movement and dance steps, followed by one or two hours of DJ'd blues music.

When asked how the community is responding to the online transition, organizer Genevieve Senechal says, "There are people who used to come every week in person, but we haven't seen them since we started doing events online. Which is disappointing, but people should take care of themselves first before they engage in community. It's a challenging time."

Genevieve is also an organizer for Philadelphia's weekend Blues dance event, Blues Muse, which usually takes place in October. At the time of her interview, Genevieve shared that the Blues Muse organizing team had yet to decide if they would host the event in person or not, and if not in-person, then how to host it online. "It's difficult to determine how a virtual event will work because we have no data to base ticket prices off, or have any idea of how many people will attend or be interested." She says, "It's like starting from scratch." From a purely financial perspective, running a large scale online event is also tricky because each community member has a different situation. "We don't want to require people to pay, and we want to be able to pay our musicians if we stream live music. We won't have to pay for venues – which is helpful - and we have more time to get people hyped. We have event staff put together and we'll be ready for anything."

Naturally, looking toward October means paying close attention to reopening guidelines set by Pennsylvania and Philadelphia. Powerhouse Blues won't be able to hold in-person dances or events until the city goes into the green phase. "The markers that allow us to go into the green phase seem very strict and seem very far away," Genevieve says. "I expect that restarting a weekly dance could happen more gradually – it's easier to be responsive to changes when the state is giving us a week's notice before phases change." Though she doesn't expect that blues dances will begin immediately after Philly hits the green phase, she is hopeful that the blues dance community will find ways to connect: perhaps dancing in public parks while wearing masks and also maintaining a safe distance from each other. As they move forward, the organizing team in Philadelphia has more than their dance community in mind: "We're not just taking care of ourselves, we're taking care of everyone we casually interact with."

Durham, NC – RDU Blues

Charlley Ward, a blues musician and respected dancer, reports that everything in his area is canceled – both dances and music events. He suggested it seems to be the safest route because the blues musicians in the Durham area are older folks and so is their audience. Some members of the community meet in person for "micro dances," small social dances with a few close friends.

Though Charlley has started a Facebook group for high risk folks, many of them dancers, the virtual activity for the Durham scene is minimal. "When Brother Yusef is live, I post links on our Facebook page – but everything has just stopped. Everyone has decided to keep their heads down. We're not coming out until there is a vaccine or a solution. Those of us who use dance as exercise are now struggling physically. I have no idea how we're gonna come back from this."

Charlley is primarily concerned with the future. As North Carolina starts to reopen, he worries that infections will spike. "It's probable that a regular dance event could start a contagion. Organizers will have to decide what to do to take care of us. We have several people in our scene over their 60s, and I could not live with myself if [someone] came to our dance, got COVID and keeled over."

In the meantime, Charlley is able to keep his community engaged by sharing music and ideas about how dance events might look as the area reopens. He believes firmly that if technology can advance as much as it has in his lifetime, then someone can definitely figure a way out of the pandemic.

Portland, OR - Portland Blues and Jazz Dance Society

Before non-essential businesses closed due to COVID-19, the Portland Blues and Jazz Dance Society (PB&J DS) ran two weekly dances: a Blues dance on Tuesdays and Barefoot, a Friday night fusion dance. The dance community supported the lively music scene in Portland by going to blues bars hosting monthly live music dances. In response to the pandemic, they now have their monthly online dance party hosted by one of their instructors and talent coordinator, Brenda Russell. She teaches the lesson and books live music in order to continue support for local musicians. While folks can donate to the musicians, PB&J DS uses their savings to pay them a fair base wage.

Brenda is one of several instructors who makes a living teaching African American dances, but she also teaches mindfulness based movement techniques like Qigong and the Franklin Method. What she chooses to teach is very much driven by Facebook. "I scan Facebook for the general mental health state of the community, and I make classes based on what I see." While she hosts many Zoom parties and offers a number of different classes virtually, she occasionally teaches small classes (1-4 people) in her studio. Students, musicians and teachers wear masks and are able to space out during the course of a session.

Coronavirus Blues: Dancers Coming Together, Even When Forced Apart Continued

As a result, she is teaching more than pre-COVID, and has made a serious investment in her equipment for her small studio. Her set up allows her to plug live musicians into a Zoom meeting, and a large TV displaying her students via Zoom allows her to see her students better (and bigger). This means musicians in the studio can see and hear their audience, which doesn't happen through Facebook Live or radio streams.

Huntsville, AL – Wilkerson Blues Dance

A wonderful and unique element of the dance scene in Huntsville, Alabama is that the Balboa scene, the Swing dancers, and the Blues folks are all very tight knit. It sounds tough to find a dancer who doesn't do all three styles of dance. Before the pandemic, they would congregate at the weekly Thursday night Swing dance, a monthly Blues house party, a bi-monthly Blues dance, and practice sessions led by Adam and Krystal Wilkerson. Though they can't dance in-person, the Huntsville social dance community remains connected by having virtual events, and the occasional social distance hangout, where small numbers gather in someone's driveway. Krystal and Adam are international level Blues dance instructors who organize dances and practice sessions for their local dance community. Since going digital, they lead three regular practice sessions where they get to engage with folks from all over the country, in addition to their local friends. Because Adam and Krystal are not full-time dance instructors (they're still employed as a cyber security engineer and an ambulatory care dietitian respectively), they're focusing on hiring outside instructors who are full time Blues dance instructors. They charge participants a sliding scale fee (\$0-20) for the workshops, and guarantee an hourly minimum to the instructor. "None of the money that is raised goes to us," Adam said. "We use a PayPal pool so that people can see how much they contribute, and 100% of the pool goes to instructors."

Grey Armstrong, who is also located in Huntsville, regularly collaborates with the Wilkersons. Grey is a writer, speaker and dance instructor who created Obsidian Tea: A Blackness and Blues Blog. Through his love of the blues, Grey is dedicated to teaching and speaking about black culture and history and race relations. The pandemic has centered his mission in the virtual world, where he teaches virtual workshops on healing through blues music, and artistry and style of Blues dance. "I've been leaning really hard into classes that are different than technical classes to give people a more balanced experience." Most recently, Grey led a workshop titled "Grief, Rage and Power." This workshop centered on the emotional aspect of blues and blues dancing creating "a gentle exploration of how to bring these aspects into your dancing, how to hear it in the music, and use dance as a way to release emotion."

New York City, NY – Blues Dance New York

As one of the cities most affected by COVID-19, New York City has not looked the same since March 15th. All social spaces closed overnight and like so many other businesses, Blues Dance New York issued a statement of "canceled until further notice." Friday Night Blues is the weekly blues social dance in New York City, and the organizers, myself and Sabrina Ramos, were most concerned about preserving that Friday night activity for the community. "My main concern is keeping a presence for the community," Sabrina said. "As we've all had our routines disrupted, we've focused on maintaining a weekly event as a way for people to keep connected." We held the event online following a format that is similar to our in-person event: a lesson followed by a DJ'd dance. It started by using Facebook Live and sharing playlists, and slowly graduated to a Zoom conference. By focusing on employing our local instructors and DJs who are full time gig-workers (not necessarily full time blues instructors), we've been able to help them financially. We initially offered Virtual Friday Night Blues for free, but are not in a

financial position to sustain that. We're now asking the community for suggested donations. The regulars in the scene reach out often even if they don't attend the virtual events because "they miss their friends and the physical connection too much." As a result, Sabrina and I are looking for new ways to engage them with their community. We've hosted listening parties where we talk about music, and hope to host watch parties where we can watch Blues related documentaries or content together.

Organizing events of any kind can be very draining, even if it's in the digital world. And yet, we have found comfort in being able to give our community something to look forward to. Sabrina says, "I have found that continuing my organizing efforts has given me something positive to focus on."

Re-opening: How and When

Due to the very nature of Blues dance event, most organizers expect that social dances will be one of the last activities to "return to normal." It will depend on the guidelines and re-opening phases of local governments; how those guidelines affect the venues that Blues dancers rent out or frequent; how those guidelines affect individuals in our community who are high risk or immunocompromised. For the present, it is likely that Blues dancing will continue in a virtual capacity.

Of course, it's not all bad.

One of the benefits of exploring online learning for dancers is that individuals and communities nationwide can access each other easily. For example, Powerhouse Blues (Philadelphia) has regularly teamed up with Bluesy Tuesy, Boston's Tuesday evening blues dance. Blues Dance New York (NYC) has done a DJ and instructor swap with Powerhouse Blues and collaborated once a month with Brenda Russell (Portland). Adam and Krystal Wilkerson (Huntsville) regularly host workshops employing blues instructors from cities all over the United States. Often Blues dancers in Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia join the workshops as well. Grey Armstrong is excited to reach an international

Coronavirus Blues: Dancers Continued

audience, he says, “I’ve never left the country, but in a way I get to leave the country.”

While our national and international sense of community is able to grow in this virtual world, Genevieve Senechal (Philly) observes that “it stops fulfilling some of the local community aspects.” It easy to agree, and while we’re putting the health of the community first, we can’t wait to get back to dancing and celebrating the Blues.

MOVING ONLINE CONTINUED

“Country blues music can speak to any topic. Sometimes we don’t keep that history going in the African American community with this type of music, but it reminds us of the hardships and joys we’ve already experienced as a people.”

Live streaming, simultaneously recording and broadcasting media online in real-time, has been prevalent among popular music artists for years. But some blues and folk artists have avoided the new technology because of cost or a reluctance to cannibalize their live performances income. But with Covid-19 closing live venues and making festival unfeasible for the near future, folk artists embrace the internet. In addition to the Piedmont Bluz, blues artists like Guy Davis, aka the Kokomo Kid, and Jerron “Blind Boy” Paxton posting performances online.

Davis also records his show on a cellphone, but his goals are a little more ambitious than the Piedmont Bluz. “Coffee with Kokomo” broadcasts Sunday through Friday at 10 a.m. on Facebook Live. Davis models his presentation after a traditional radio show, including commercials for Wallace’s Coffee and pitching the Kokomo Kidd coffee mug found on his website, www.guydavis.com.

“I always listened to Garrison Keillor when he did ‘A Prairie Home Companion. I’ve got that stuff in me. Not like Garrison Keillor, but I like to sing and tell stories,” he said. “I’d like to increase the production values, but this is all new to me.”

Davis performs old and new material on his



Photos Credit Joseph A. Rosen

show. He said that Covid-19 had inspired several new songs, including “I Got an Angel Six Feet Away.” Davis would like to continue doing his show after the Covid-19 situation passes, but less often and with better production values. He would need to find a way to monetize the streams because the increased attention and merchandise sales from the live streams still do not make up for the money lost from canceled gigs and educational workshops.



Photo Credit Dennis Anguige

Valerie Turner said the fact that she and her husband are deliberate about the song selection for their live streams because they don’t want to give away their best material for free. “I’m a little bit resistant to playing too much of our current repertoire because if you put that out there, then what new thing are people going to hear when they can eventually see you live,” she explained.

“It is kind of a balancing act. You want to play something that you think is nice, that people might like, but you also don’t want to perform things you’d rather have them purchase a ticket to hear you or watch you play.”

Grammy-winning artist Dom Flemons has used his Covid-19 induced free time to reflect and comb through the material he has already created. Flemons lost several shows because of weather a few years ago, and he said it put him in a tough financial spot. The situation forced him to focus on alternative ways of making income with his music like streaming, publishing, and educational programming. He also downsized his touring team. This and the fact that he is not putting out money for travel expenses has insulated him a bit from the Covid-19 shutdown.

Except for a tribute to Rev. Gary Davis that he released in May, Flemons has not recorded any new online material. But started his career with the Carolina Chocolate Drops in the early 2000s, Flemons already has a backlog of online videos. He curates that older material rather than creating new videos to store on digital platforms that he does not control.

“I just don’t think the idea of more content and more content is going to work in the future. As a live performance artist, it’s hard for me to wrap my head around a digital platform. Not that I won’t adjust in one form or another eventually. But it is a big jump to go from a live performance space into a digital platform that has all its own problems from buffering to any number of things that happen when you post things on the internet.”

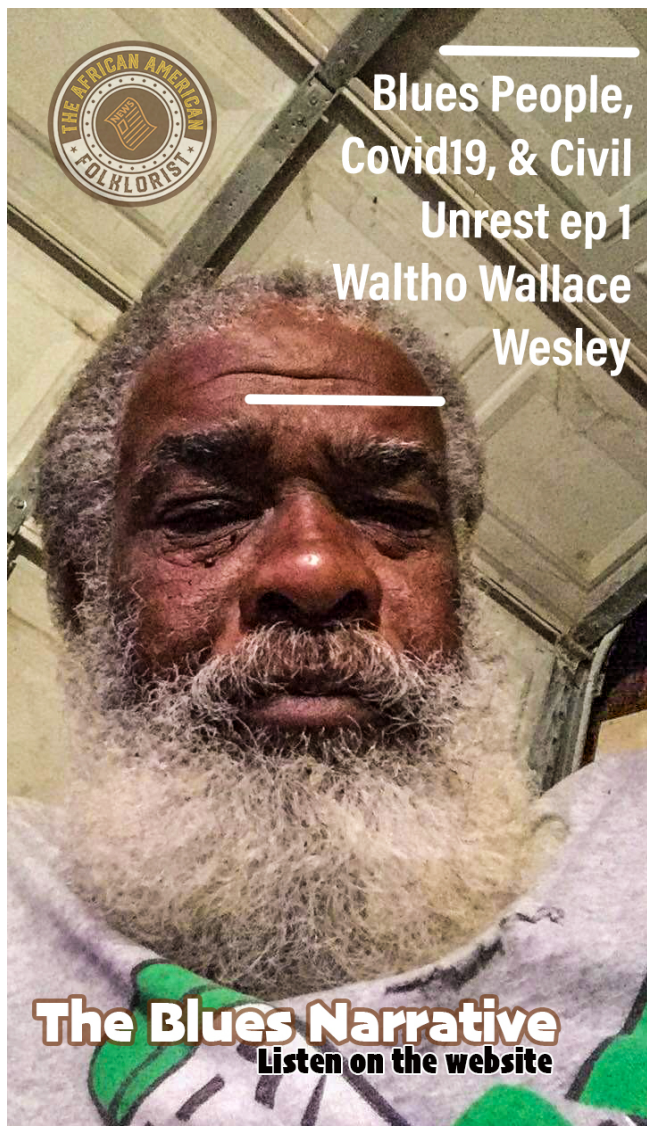


Photo Credit: Scott Baxter

Moving Online Continued

The Piedmont Blūz explores ways to make their show ticketed events, maybe on another platform besides Facebook. But Valerie Turner said the critical thing for them is that blues continues to be performed in some form.

“These songs tell a story about the history of the African American people,” she said. “It is valuable to have them presented in this new platform because it’s going to be used frequently going forward. But for me, streaming has always been a scary thought. It’s intimidating because you can’t judge the reactions of people that you can’t see. You don’t know if they are smiling or laughing. What is happening on the other side of this camera?”



The Blues Narrative – “Blues People, COVID19 & Civil Unrest” is a first-person account of the life and experiences of African Americans, Black Indians, Pan-Africanists (individuals and families), aka The Blues People, during this moment in history where there’s a global pandemic, quarantines, protests, and riots happening ALL AT THE SAME TIME and in real-time.



The Black Business Community

By: Karleton Thomas

As enslaved Africans gained their freedom in colonial America, they used the labor activities learned in slavery to start a new life. Across the cities and towns of this nation, free Blacks set up agribusinesses and took up as bricklayers, gunsmiths, shoemakers, nurses and innkeepers to form the initial steps of the Black business community. Collectivism underlined the economic activity of free Blacks in colonial America as they worked to successfully establish independence in an outwardly racist society.

Those days are long gone and blatantly racist laws, such as those barring credit to free Blacks, no longer sit on the books of American cities. By comparison, the discriminatory laws of today hold little weight when viewed next to laws in place during colonial America. Few, if any Black businesses of that time were allowed to grow outside of the community but colonial era Black businessmen thrived when compared to those of today.

Many arguments have been made regarding the decline of the Black business community - integration, angry white mobs, racist laws, etc. Though all contributing factors, none can fully explain the demise of the Black business community. As markets opened up and Blacks were able to walk through doors closed to previous generations, one would expect burgeoning Black business metropolises to follow, but despite our best efforts, that never happened.

Today, most Black businesses fail within four years. For all the businesses being started by Black entrepreneurs today, 87% will gross less than \$15,000. Most can be categorized as lifestyle businesses - entities run by its founder for the benefit of its founder. That’s a hard sell in a community but despite this, the age of individualism looms on. It wasn’t the angry mobs or racist laws that first slowed and then stalled progress, it was the varying motivations developed amongst the Black community. Now, instead of a few options, Blacks were able to chart individual pathways designed for their sole benefit. This produced outstanding, singular results, but for many Black entrepreneurs the lack of community has proven to be an insurmountable obstacle.

The Black Business Community Continued

Our formerly enslaved, African ancestors practiced collectivism because pulling together to ensure a chance at survival. Collectivism does not make much sense today but the principals live on in cooperative business practices. A cooperative business model is one that responds to the needs of all stakeholders; employees, customers, suppliers, the local community, the environment and future generations, as well as investors. The adoption of the cooperative business model as the framework for current and future Black business communities presents two huge benefits: the recirculation of Black dollars and low unemployment.

The Black dollar and its effect or lack thereof has been well documented across academic journals. At one point, it was reported the average lifespan of the Black dollar in the Black community was six hours compared to 28 in Asian communities. That fact was proven to be false but when the majority of businesses in Black communities are owned by individuals who do not live or hire from that community - the truth is not far away. It is safe to assume that over \$.50 of every dollar spent leaves the community.

When a business in the Black community is owned by someone who lives and hires from the community - we all benefit. Cooperative business models present a number of workforce development opportunities for free Blacks who have been denied entry to the traditional job market. As more cooperatives are formed, unemployment in those areas will dramatically decrease, so will crime, drug use, and dependence on government programs. Grocery stores wholly owned by the community can employ 100's of employees with an invested interest in that venture's success. They would live and work in the same area - tending to and protecting their future.



Words From Corey Harris Black Death and We The Blues

Influenza is the kind of disease,
Makes you weak down to your knees,
Carries a fever everybody surely dreads,
Packs a pain in every bone,
In a few days, you are gone.
To that hole in the ground called your grave.
- 1919 Influenza Blues, unknown

Diseases are as old as time itself. The annals of ancient history in every land are replete with tales of plagues, epidemics and pandemics. Though they don't happen every year, even one in the span of a lifetime creates ripples that reverberate. Generations later descendants sing old songs and write newer ones that recall the pain of their ancestors. It's natural. It's tradition. As this quite unforgettable year known as 2020 progresses (sidenote: I want a refund on those black eyed peas I ate in January) we have seen the wealthiest nations on the planet be overwhelmed by a non-sentient piece of RNA that we are told emerged from a bat cave somewhere in southern China and eventually infected millions. Seemingly overnight, we learned a whole new way of speaking, new terms and new ways to do

even the most mundane tasks. We did it because we had to. In the beginning we really had very little information on how the virus worked, so much so that in this hyper information age rabbit holes of misinformation sprung up everywhere like prairie dog towns.

This modern phenomena, along with the administration of a morbidly obese Orangutan-in-Chief who refuses to be seen in a mask or even face the reality of an invisible enemy that doesn't vote red or blue and needs no passport to travel, meant that the most powerful nation on earth was quickly brought to its knees.

The world looked on aghast at the spectacle of MAGA American exceptionalism on steroids wandering aimlessly with its eyes gouged out. All the inequalities of the system were already at the boiling point. Add a virus to the mix and the result is just like the horror movie where the Black guy is always the first to die, except this disaster is on the scale of many thousands. This is truly a total and unmitigated catastrophe. The worst part is that it is not even close to being over. As a people, we have a long history of suffering as well as triumph with the songs, stories and folkways to go along

Words From Corey Harris Continued

with it. The oracle seems to be telling us that it's time for us to meet the blues all over again. Yes, it has been awhile, but while we changed our styles, music, food and got 'woke', the blues was in the back kitchen holding down our collective souls with an ancient black skillet, a bag of grandma's self-sufficient grit and old fashioned know-how along with a healthy portion of certified prayers that were fully washed in the blood of the lamb.

Late last year before most of us had even heard of Wuhan, I found myself in Appleton, Wisconsin talking to a local promoter at a blues concert about life in the South. I mentioned that I would soon be traveling to North Carolina and he bemoaned all the racism of the region in a way that made clear that he preferred the North. When I told him that I really saw no difference in North or South, since they are both part of the same white supremacy system that is the United States, he looked dumbfounded for a few seconds. It literally had not occurred to him that racism was not the monopoly of the South. With the mythology that is often employed to talk about the Civil War, Jim Crow and the civil rights movement, it is easy to prop up a racist South as a contrast to the supposedly less racist North (of course the real history tells a drastically different story) in a way that makes Northerners feel superior since their ancestors fought to 'free the slaves'. Nevermind the fact that President Lincoln presided over the lynching of 38 Sioux warriors and his widely quoted assertion that he would have gladly kept Africans in bondage if there were any other way to win the war. Racist oppression has always been, for many white people, something like terrorism or hijackings - something that happens to other people, not them. I went through Minneapolis on that same tour. Little did I know that in a few short months the only thing that could divert peoples' attention from a raging global pandemic was the police murder of an innocent man, caught on video for the world

to see. Eight minutes and forty-six seconds of Amerikkkan murder porn wherein the law demonstrates that it is actually so easy and commonplace to kill Black people, they even do it with their hands in their pockets in broad daylight, all with a thoroughly nonchalant and utterly relaxed demeanor. This had happened before, time and time again in various ways and settings, but this time was different. Now young white people were marching en masse, and buildings were burned to the ground. Something had definitely snapped.

Black folk already knew that even though the virus was literally having its way with our communities, the real reason that the impact was so severe where we live is not because of Covid itself, but because of racism, capitalism and all the inequalities that are mandated for the system to function and serve the interests of the ruling white class. Imagine a scenario where you and some housemates share a home in the wilderness. One night they get together and decide to lock you out of the house in the middle of a freezing snowstorm. If you don't survive, we can always say that the hypothermia killed you, but wasn't it really your wicked roommates who left you to die in the cold?

As soon as we began to learn the language and concepts of epidemiology in this new global war against a virus, we realized that we had been living with a much more deadly and insidious disease. Like a mystery virus, it adapts and updates its genetic code to suit the host, capitalizing upon any weaknesses, infiltrating any cracks or fissures in the system like a metastatic cancer. Indeed, even though racism/white supremacy is foundational to the United States, plaguing millions since its inception in the dark psychological recesses of post medieval Europe, most of us know next to nothing about how it has worked as a system over time. Without films like Ava DuVernay's 13 or books like Michelle Alexander's The New Jim Crow, Marimba Ani's Yurugu or Frances Cress Welsing's The Isis Papers, even the best and strongest among us would still be

adrift in a sea of racial confusion, reacting emotionally to the numerous daily pains and indignities without any organized plan for how to get to shore. Along with the work of Neely Fuller, these warrior thinkers have pointed the way forward for Black blues people just like a North star sighted on a cold night on the run from the slave patrollers. Without an understanding of what race is and how it operates as a system over time, we will be stuck navigating in circles of repeated trauma, which is only amplified by daily repetition on television and social media. How many times must we see and hear George Floyd cry for his mother? Is 100 times or 500 times enough? And after that, what do we do with the hurt? What does this do to our mental state? Like sister Lauryn Hill sang, "How you gonna win if you ain't right within?" Without the pressure valve called the Blues and the African culture that it came from, Black folk would have collectively exploded long ago. Yes, we lament, but the fact that we can voice it and put it to words and music means that we can look our pain in the eye. In doing so, we make our struggles noble and give meaning to our experience. As Toni Morrison tells us, "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives." The Blues is our language of life and the building blocks of our art, music, food and culture, we African folk who have dared to survive Amerikkka against all odds. The Blues has kept us righteously angry but still sane, hopeful yet realistic, funky but sacred, loving yet ferocious. The Blues is our book of life.

Continued on pg 18



American Folklore Society

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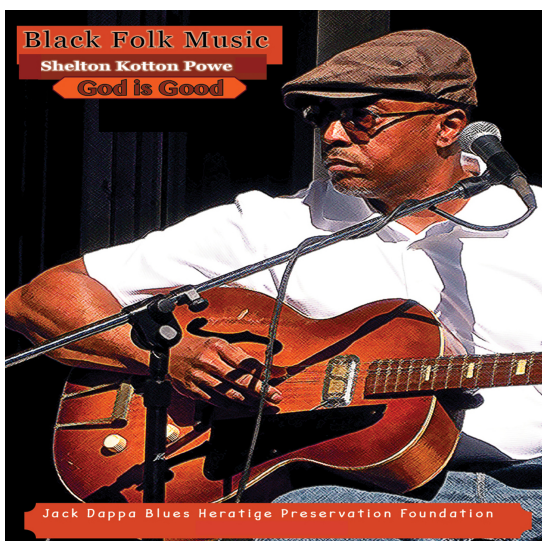
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NOLA BLUE, INC. was established in 2014 with blues legend Benny Turner as its first client. Recognizing the need for Benny's story to be told and music to be heard, work began across three major areas: worldwide distribution of his music, active marketing of him as a world-class performer and collection of photographs and interviews for his autobiography.

Field Recordings



BLACK FOLK MUSIC: GOD IS GOOD, VOL. 1 – SHELTON KOTTON POWE JR

Jack Dappa Blues Heritage Preservation Foundation releases its first album from our Field Recording series. Check out Shelton Kotton Powe Jr. He is a current Black Traditional Music Practitioner.

On All Major Streaming Platforms

Words From Corey Harris Continued

At this point in history, when we say ‘racism’, we are operating with drastically different assumptions and definitions based upon our experience, culture and historical knowledge. Without a thorough consideration of these parameters, we will easily fall into the trap of thinking that racism can be reduced to racial insults and individual mistreatment, rather than focusing on the history and nature of the system that produces such a climate. We will continue to be stuck in a cycle of emotionally reacting to insults and slights without understanding how the whole game works. Racism/white supremacy can not exist without power - the power to systematically deny employment, housing, education, and civic rights to a group of people. White folks asked why we stopped singing the blues. The truth is that Black people never stopped. History tells us that mainstream America just couldn’t relate anymore. After constructing an entire culture from the ashes of racial oppression, it seemed that no matter how much we altered the message, white America still refused to listen. Peaceful protests, marching, kneeling and candlelight vigils were rejected, the participants chided and told to find a more ‘respectful’ way.



After 400 years, the frustration is finally boiling over. Even Mississippi is now seriously talking about removing the confederate emblem from their state flag, and that bastion of southern good-ole boy macho known as NASCAR has already abandoned the stars and bars, making an abrupt about-face overnight in its stance against injustice. Thousands of Confederate flag waving fans be damned. Contrast that to the NFL’s belated, tone-deaf and very lukewarm acceptance of its own complicity in silencing players who protested against police brutality. The more astute observers among us will note that it was not a change of heart but rather a realization of lost profits and corporate panic that has motivated such overtures. Still, it can not be denied that we are at the crossroads. Papa Legba is there, calling our names to the tune of an ancient blues. It’s time for revolutionary change. Can we hear him? Where will we go from here? Black culture, that culture of survival that sustained our elders, gives us all the tools we need to make it out of this modern Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Experts tell us that most of the people who die from Covid have pre-existing health conditions, ‘comorbidities.’ But if we have learned anything from the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and thousands upon thousands of others, it is that racism/white supremacy is the predominant comorbidity. It is a sickness that has ravaged the world for centuries that has combined with the pandemic of the century to produce exponential levels of death, fear and suffering. The virus is perhaps the only color blind party in this whole drama. Society has always inflicted the harshest penalties and consequences upon its Black citizens, and this present pandemic is no different. It’s not a bug. It’s a feature.

When the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, I recall watching CNN and seeing James ‘12’ Andrews along with his brother Trombone Shorty playing jazz as they walked through the French Quarter. The message was simple and clear: these brothers were saying, “we still here yeah.” This is what the blues has always done in the face of death and hardship. When we draw from our rich heritage and treat it like the sacred text that it is, we will get the strength we need for the long road ahead to liberation. The blues is calling. Are we listening?



Blacks & Blues notes

By Doug Curry

Here’s some blues you can definitely use. There are so many great blues talents about that it is a shame for anyone to think of these black blues as a dying art. It is equally a fallacy for anyone else to believe he is ‘keeping them alive.’ This month, we present to you a review of a great cd by a fine young bluesman:

Andrew Alli, **HARD WORKING MAN**
Andrew Alli's self-describing **HARD WORKING MAN** will serve to introduce this youthful newcomer to many in today's harmonica blues scene. Alli’s youth and work belie the notion that young blacks

My Journey With The Blues Continued

have turned away from the blues. Up until now, Alli's best exposure to many has been some appearances and great YouTube videos, playing with blues wunderkind Quon Willis. Willis, himself a contender for a 2019 Grammy, has called Alli, '... a pure talent' and, 'an overall great person.'

HARD WORKIN' MAN is a solid 12 song offering of blues from end to end.

The music:

Quite naturally, just as any harp player since the mid fifties, Alli displays a debt to the groundbreaking innovations of both Walters on 'AA Boogie,' 'Walter's Sun,' and 'One More Chance,' but leaves them behind on 'Chron-A-Thick.' But his invention and execution does not end there. There is throughout the made-up, on-the-spot exuberance that recalls the two Sonny Boys, and an even deeper, personal intensity that pours forth on 'Hard Workin' Man' and '30 Long Years.'

The excellent minimalist backing work is by Jon Atkinson's band which boasts Atkinson and Danny Michel on guitars. Devin Neal and Buddy Honeycutt on drums, and the incomparable Carl Sonny Leyland on piano. They chug along with Alli, and he rides their waves of rhythm and groove, punching with bursts of staccato and 'laying in the cut' with chromatic swells you can really feel.

This is an excellent outing for anyone, but particularly one so new to the scene, to whom fellow 'future of the blues' bluesman Quon Willis attributes a 'solid vocal delivery, harp mastery, ' and a presence that demands that 'you have to see him 'live.'

Doug Curry
blacksnblues@hotmail.com

POEM SECTION

The Blues 19: Corona
By Nascha Joli



It came without warning
This Sinister Plague
Its destruction was jarring
But the instructions were vague

I heard the people talk about it
In the streets and in the news
Could my people be exempt
Or were they made to look like fools

The brothers on the corner rapped about it
As the sisters walked to and fro
The elders shook their heads
At the state of the world
Like me, they didn't know
Whether to stay or to go

Soon the troubles of the world
Broke out in a rash
No one was spared and
Nothing could save you
From the virus' wicked lash

The poor and the wealthy
And everyone in between
Would feel the wrath of Corona
Soon to be called Covid 19

The blues were a-coming
But no one was prepared
It didn't matter to Corona who you were
Because very few would be spared

A lockdown was ordered
Masks and gloves
Were the wardrobe of the day
But my people on the corner
Seemed to look the other way

The word was out
But the Message was conflicted
A consensus couldn't be reached
Except to the pain of the afflicted

The numbers grew and grew
There seemed to be no end in sight
The hospitals and their staff
Became overwhelmed
The future didn't look so bright

Agent Orange brought out a new task force
Their daily reports were bleak
Muddled confusion reigned supreme
Every time one of them would speak

The Devil had the world in his grip
And he wasn't letting go
Every form of life was hit
Even the global market cash flow

The economy began to tumble
As the bodies began to pile
The people began to grumble
The stench of our troubles began to foul

Days turned into weeks and
Weeks turned into months
The markets began to crash
And Agent Orange got a new hunch

POEMS CONTINUED

He declared that the worst was over
And it was time to start a new path
The country was to reopen
He had already done his math

You see the numbers of the afflicted
Had hit our country hard
Where some thought we'd be exempted
Too many had not been on guard



Photo Credit Mustafa Omar

The Devil had caught them sleeping
And the innocent paid the price
While our loved ones are a-weeping
Agent Orange has rolled the dice

Our country has begun to reopen
And gambling with our fate
Praying that masks and social distancing
Will be Corona's ultimate checkmate

And though we long to leave our quarantine
I can't help but wonder
If our timing is ill conceived
And if Corona will once again takeover?
28 June 2020

--

Nascha Joli
www.naschajoli.com

Land of the Free, Home of the Brave
By Anna Lomax



Photo Credit Josh Hild

Not a real poem, more a reflection
Just a few items
I thought I would mention
To everything we know, there is a new
dimension.

Did you know?
Over 5,500 black women, men, and children
Shot by police "in the line of duty"
In the Land of the Free, Home of the Brave
IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS
Four every day, four every day
In the line of duty

In the Land of the Free all men declared equal
All men breathe the air of Liberty,
How sweet it is
All men choose their destinies
It was called democracy
God-fearing men fought for white skinned
women
Clean and righteous they were
They loved what was theirs

From lands destined for them ,
They removed ungodly savages
Enclosed them in reservations
Those we didn't slaughter
They knew their duty to civilization
In the Land of the Free

We struck black gold in Africa
We brought you to our blessed land
We traded, shackled, used you
While you fed us, nursed our babies,
Built our homes, cities, railroads,
You made us rich with the cotton you raised
Slow down, raise a finger, say a word--
We sold your little girls down river
To the house of the rising sons
Threw you in the vats
Of the sugar cane you grew

And from the sugar empires rose

The shining cities of France and England,
Stately homes, fine plantations,
Our Southern towns, brick by brick
Yes we did, for three hundred years
We are decent and God-fearing
Our women are good-looking

Soon after Freedom
Jim Crow was declared
Between Civil War and Civil Rights.
Holocaust like a virus spread
Another century slowly passed
Vast prison plantations we created
In every Southern State
We rented you to farmers
Yes we worked you and your children
To your unmarked graves
You rose up

We pushed you down
A game of smoke and mirrors
We played Down South
Everybody poor, whites poor too
Barefoot, hungry, can't hardly read
You kept their wages low
Gentry didn't like it but our hands were tied
We looked the other way
Folks had to let off steam.
5500 public lynchings documented
Slow death, day long,
Men, women, children watching, smiling,
pointing
Hangings, maimings uncounted
In the woods, In a field, in the sheriff's
backroom
Exclusion and humiliation every blessed day
No future for your children
For one more century,
In the Land of the Free
We have to talk about it now
Look at the photographs
Read the accounts
Say it happened.

POEMS CONTINUED

Some of us, we broke out
Went to school, learned to read
Built colleges, universities
Beat the Harvard debaters
Became doctors, lawyers,
Opened our businesses
Fought in the wars with the best of you
Left the South, went up North
Broke into sports, made our music
Transformed the world
Made a new America
Been pretty nice about it.

Now? Now?
Why bring up ancient history?
We didn't do anything
Did it really happen?
It wasn't that bad
We treated the help fair
I never noticed
It was so long ago,
Why don't they get on with it?
Look at the lazy bums
My tax dollar funds
With Medicaid, welfare, Section 8,
ObamaCare --that's what I hate

No, Sister
This is true. This is now.
You must listen, you must look
We cannot ignore
The lies and atrocities,
The criminality of local laws
Our supremely selfish economy
I know an old lady who works to keep alive--
Should she declare her income
Or lose her medical?
No way, no way I'm gonna let you
Cheat on the system, have it both ways
No, ma'am, if you can't live on \$460 a month
It's not my fault
Why should I pay for you with my tax dollars?
We work hard for our money.

It's our money, our country
You shouldn't have come here
Who invited you?
What do you expect
Those people
Pushing out babies

Living off the gravy

But it IS your problem, baby
You are going down too
In the Greatest Country in the World
After all, baby, it is
The Land of Free To Live on the Streets
Where we elect
Cold-hearted piggy banks
Well-dressed bank accounts
Without mercy or tears
To chart our course
The health of health insurers
They hold very dear
And the Middle East
They do love to save
Iraq in ruins, well, never you mind
Syria's next and Afghanistan
Millions died, not our doing
What're you gonna do with a bunch of fanatics?
Hey! Send the poor boys over
The ones without a future
Pick them up in a parking lot
Give them something to do
Tell them they gonna study
They gonna get somewhere
Too bad it didn't work out
We can hardly afford
Rehab and the VA
You got PTS, you're a hero
You lost your face, you're a hero
You're legs are gone, hero
You can't get a job, hero
Mow lawns hero
You are heroes now
In the Land of the Free
Can't help the dead

Let them be the heroes
We'll make the money.

Our R&D leaders don't care about the poor
Don't care about people in trailer homes
Don't mention them
Unless you're gonna joke about them
Don't use the word "poor"
In America
Homeless folk--it's the life they choose
Working class, service class
They feel cheated

By the welfare class
Let them boil in resentment
While we cut Obama Care and Medicare
Screw them all, whoever they are
Gotta pocket our dollars from Insurance and
Pharma
An infrastructure program to create real jobs
To rebuild and heal our country?
We'll talk about it but won't allow it
God forbid another New Deal
Another damn socialist program
Let them build prisons
And let them be inhabited

The children
Need their parents at home
Sorry kids, they're in prison
Millions of black men, women, and youth
From their families and communities taken
In solitude forsaken
Oh! can you tell us, please,
How does rape take place
On the watch of Law and Order
How do folk get beat to death
Under the eyes of the Law
In your prisons
Your "facilities"
Human beings locked away
For 23 out of 24
In 7 x 8 boxes 23 of 24 hours in the day.
Right outside the Christian city
There's one of those

Mostly solitary
Hear the screams as you drive by
My mother, my daddy, my baby boy
Your uncle, brother, nephew, self
ONE IN TWO OF AMERICANS

Log on to AfricanAmericanFolklorist.com for
the entire piece

We The Blues People

POEMS CONTINUED

The Messenger
By Woullard Lett



Photo Credit Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona

I was approached on the street
by a wild-eyed, disheveled, unkept, slightly
graying,
self-proclaimed prophet,
A black man who was once someone's little
boy.

Now a man,
apparently homeless, possibly mindless but
convinced that he was
blessed with a divine wisdom
that he must share
and I was chosen to receive the blessing.

He says, "I wrinkled up my nose when those
white people passed.
You know why? It wasn't perfume I was
smelling. It was Mel-a-non!
They smell that way because they eat Black
people.
They eat red and yellow people too, but
especially Black people."

I looked at him and saw his sincerity and
conviction.
I thought about how African chants became
field work hollers and spiritual songs were
adapted to blues and gospel styling.

How Ray Charles and Aretha Franklin, then
Whitney Houston took those chants with their
gospel phrasing and embedded them in wax.

I thought about the journey of jazz from
Bourbon Street in New Orleans to the Cotton
Club of Harlem.

I thought about the history of Race music
that was birthed from the blues in Memphis,
Tennessee on Beale Street
and electrified by Bo Didley and Chuck Berry
and a thousand Black voices.

I thought about how white people bought it
up, lapped it up, ate it up and created country
and western sounds, produced Bennie
Goodman and Glen Miller's tin pan vibrations

and petrified the sound of rock till it didn't
roll anymore.

I stood transfixed, casually leaning against a
car and nodding my head as he said that
"Elijah Muhammad thought white people
were grafted from Blacks
and created by the evil scientist, Yacub. But
he was wrong.
They are demons.
They eat dead Black people. But be careful
because they eat living people too."

I peered into the black irises of his bloodshot
eyes, eyes streaked with red veins
swollen from not enough sleep, not enough to
eat, not enough of the things that sustain life
and too much stress.

Stress caused by poor choices, stress caused
by powerful circumstances, stress that found
an outlet through his desperate words

seeking an audience that would entertain his
coal black verbal images that were pressed by
stress into a crystalline analysis

that cut glass and revealed a world
of white demons feasting on Black flesh as a
functional metaphor of the
oppression of white supremacy.

What did it mean? Mel-a-non. Non- melan-in.
No-melan-in. No melanin.

This prophet of the presence of melanin
deficient monsters
monsters seeking sustenance from the souls
of sun-scorched Simbas.

This seer of cannibalistic creatures craving
colored carcasses,
creatures seeking to collect the creamy
chocolate-filled center of cultural
consciousness.

This knower of knowledge that clung like
congealed pus to ivory white
bones that clash against ivory white teeth
in the ivory white mouths of ivory white
beasts.

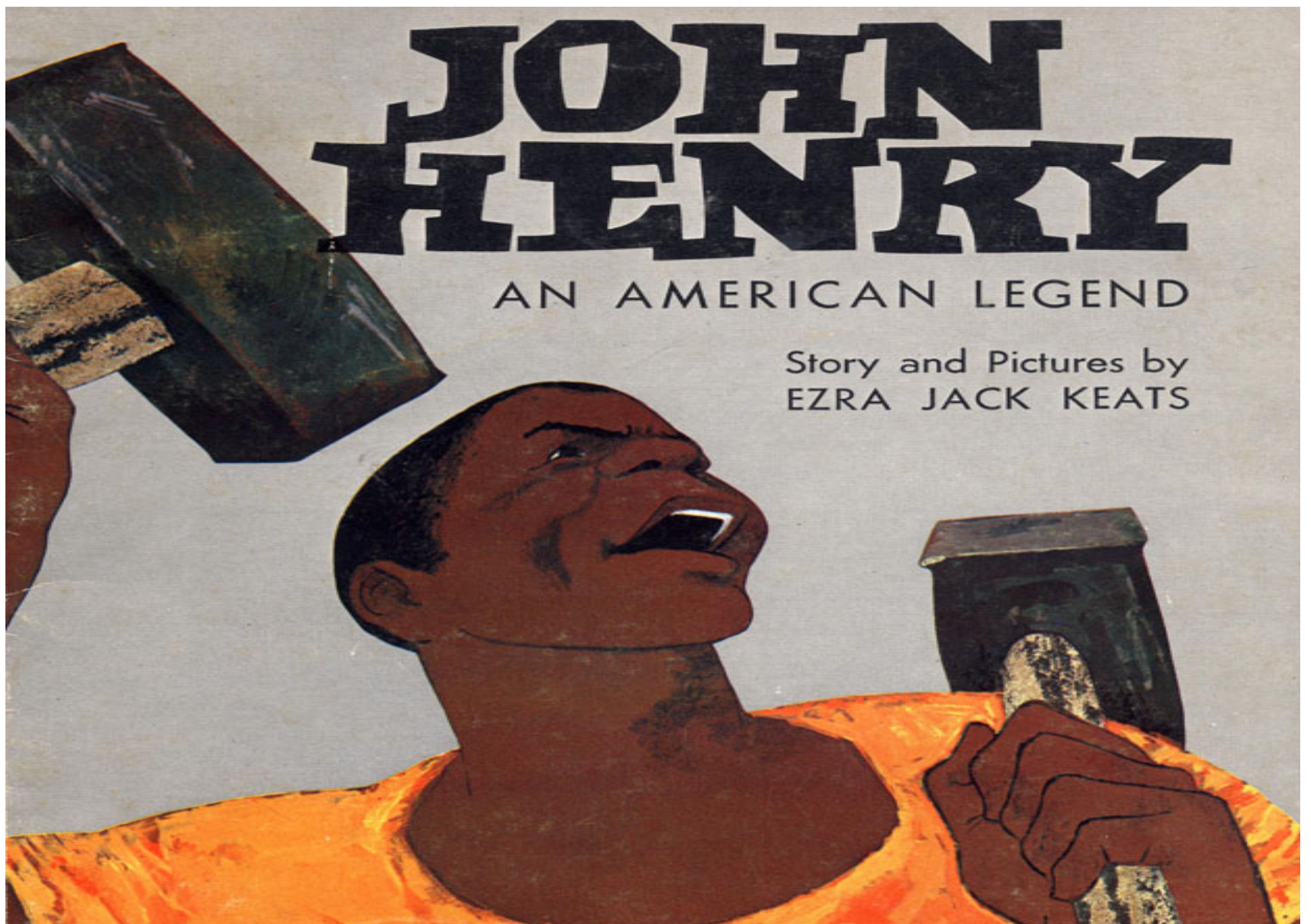
This holder of divine wisdom hidden in the
face of homelessness.

This knower of holy things concealed from
all who would not be debased. This prophet
of terror concealed behind the face of profit
that bought flesh,

sold humans, stripped spirit from soul, tore
muscle from bone,
ripped culture from consciousness, mauled
meaning from minds,
pounded people into a bloody mass of broken
self-images
and fractured feelings of self-hate and
mistrust.

This seer of sacred somethings who was
soothed by the telling
said to me, "be careful."

January 8, 2014



Stagolee and John Henry: Two Black Freedom Songs?

By Jim Hauser

Are the African American ballads “Stagolee” and “John Henry” freedom songs? What I mean is, Do they express racial resistance, protest, and rebellion? I’ve been researching both ballads for well over a decade, and I believe the answer to this question is “Yes.” A key thing necessary to really understand these songs is to realize that they are both about black manhood and that they both originated and became extremely popular during a time when African Americans were denied their manhood—and their humanity--by the dominant white majority. It also helps to have some knowledge of black history and what everyday life was like for African Americans in the Jim Crow era. If we possess that knowledge and keep in mind the importance of black manhood in both ballads,

then we are better equipped to “hear” the resistance, protest, and rebellion when we listen to recordings of these ballads. And maybe we might even see the possibility that Stagolee’s fight with Billy over a Stetson hat and John Henry’s race against a mechanical steam drill could be symbolic of the African American fight for manhood and the struggle for black freedom. But before taking a closer look at these ballads, I want to bring your attention to the quote below.

These songs didn't come out of thin air... If you sang "John Henry" as many times as me - John Henry was a steel-driving man / Died with a hammer in his hand / John Henry said "a man ain't nothin' but a man / Before I let that steam drill drive me down / I'll die with that hammer in my hand." If you had sung that song as many times as I did, you'd have written "How many roads must a man walk

down?" too. --Bob Dylan (from his MusiCares Person of the Year speech, February 2015)

Let’s start by looking at an important function of ballads. According to Paul Oliver in his book *Blues Fell This Morning*, “A ballad symbolized the suppressed desires of the singer when he could see no way of overcoming his oppression. It is a vocal dream of wish-fulfillment.”

He goes on to say that the ballad singer “projected on his heroes the successes that he could not believe could be his own.” So when a black musician sang about Stagolee fighting Billy to get back his stolen Stetson hat, exactly how did that battle symbolize fulfillment of the singer’s wishes?

Stagolee and John Henry Continued

And when a black worker sang about John Henry challenging a steam drill to a race and defeating it, what unreachable success was that worker projecting on his hero John Henry? Could it be that the fight over the Stetson and the race against the steam drill symbolized something of great importance to them and had something to do with their freedom? It certainly seems possible to me. Let's investigate that possibility by taking a closer look at each of the ballads.

Let's begin with "Stagloee." According to folklorist and educator Cecil Brown, in his book *Stagolee Shot Billy*, to understand the meaning of Stagolee "we must search for the symbolic meaning behind constantly recurring motifs such as the Stetson hat." He explains that at the time the ballad originated in the late 19th century, African American men wore Stetsons as symbols of masculinity, status, and power. In other words, the Stetson was a symbol of manhood, or to be more specific, black manhood.

Is Brown correct about what the Stetson represented? Through my research, I've found a good bit of evidence which supports his claim. Specifically, I've identified a number of early black musicians who clearly wore Stetsons to project a certain image, and that image had much to do with male sexuality and manliness. For example, in his autobiography *Stachmo: My Life in New Orleans*, Louis Armstrong wrote that Stetson hats were a prized possession which were often purchased by African Americans on an installment plan. He also noted that "when a fellow wore a John B. Stetson, he was really a big shot." Armstrong's book also describes an incident in which his woman chased after him with a razor because she believed he had cheated on her. He lost possession of his Stetson while fleeing, and she took it and immediately sliced it up with the razor. With her use of the razor, she was sending a message to Armstrong about what she was angry enough to do to him... or certain parts of him (i.e. his "manhood"). Also, two of Armstrong's fellow jazz musicians wore

Stetsons. The stride piano player Willie "The Lion" Smith wrote in his autobiography, *Music on My Mind*, that he regularly wore a twenty-five-dollar Stetson hat. And in Jelly Roll Morton's 1938 Library of Congress recordings with Alan Lomax, the jazzman related that there was a time when he yearned for a Stetson and didn't rest until he got one.

An article written by David Joyner in the October/November 1997 issue of *Jazz Player* magazine, titled "Early Jazz Pianists: Issues of Image and Style," helps us to understand why Stetsons were so popular. Joyner points out that early jazz piano players such as Morton and Smith were particularly concerned with their image and sexual identity. He writes that Morton revealed to Lomax that he was reluctant to take up the piano as a youngster because it was thought of as a woman's instrument. In Morton's words, "I didn't want to be called a sissy. I wanted to marry and raise a family and be known as a man among men when I became of age." It sure seems likely that this fear of being thought of as womanly played a part in creating Morton's great desire for a Stetson. Joyner's article also discusses Willie Smith's commanding appearance and his reputation for intimidating fellow pianists. His nickname "The Lion" appropriately reflected the image of authority and manliness which he projected, an image which he must have deliberately reinforced through his sporting a Stetson hat.

So if the Stetson represented manhood, then Stagolee and Billy's fight for possession of it could have been symbolic of the black man's fight for manhood. And I believe that we could take that one step further and say that if it symbolized the black man's fight for manhood, then it also symbolized the struggle for black freedom. And that's because black manhood and freedom are inextricably linked. I can quote a fairly long string of black leaders and writers who have commented on the connection between the two, but I shouldn't need to go any farther than to quote Martin Luther King, Jr. who

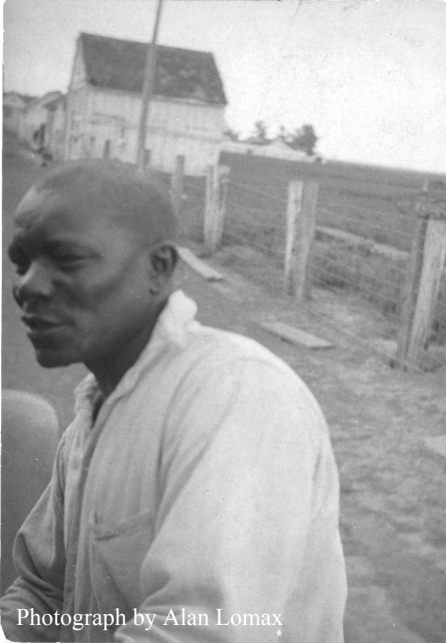
said, "If the negro is to be free, he must move down into the inner resources of his own soul and sign with a pen and ink of self-assertive manhood his own emancipation proclamation."

Those readers who are familiar with the historical roots of the legend of Stagolee might argue that it does not make sense to claim that the fight over the Stetson symbolized the fight for black freedom. They would point out that the legendary figures Stagolee and Billy DeLyon were based upon the real-life historical figures Lee "Stag" Shelton and William Lyons, both of whom were black. And they would ask how a fight between two black men could have come to symbolize a struggle between the black and white races. They'd ask, wouldn't one of them have had to be white and the other black?

I can think of two possibilities to counter that argument. First, the symbolism may not have developed until years after the song was created and history had been transformed into legend. As the years passed and as the ballad spread from St. Louis (its place of origin) to other parts of the country, the connection between the ballad and the historical event which inspired it would have been lost. At that point, those who sang "Stagolee"-- and those who heard them sing it -- would not have known that the real-life figures behind the ballad were both black, and this would have freed them to use their imaginations as far as the racial identities of Stagolee and Billy were concerned. And considering the symbolic nature of the Stetson to African Americans, it's likely that many of them would have imagined Stagolee to be a black man and Billy a white man.

Now let's look at a second possibility of how the Billy DeLyon of legend could have been thought to be a white man even though the historical William Lyons was black. Possibly Lyons occupied the role of a black surrogate for the white power structure. If that happens to have been the case, then the ballad about Stagolee and Billy may have symbolically

Stagolee and John Henry Continued

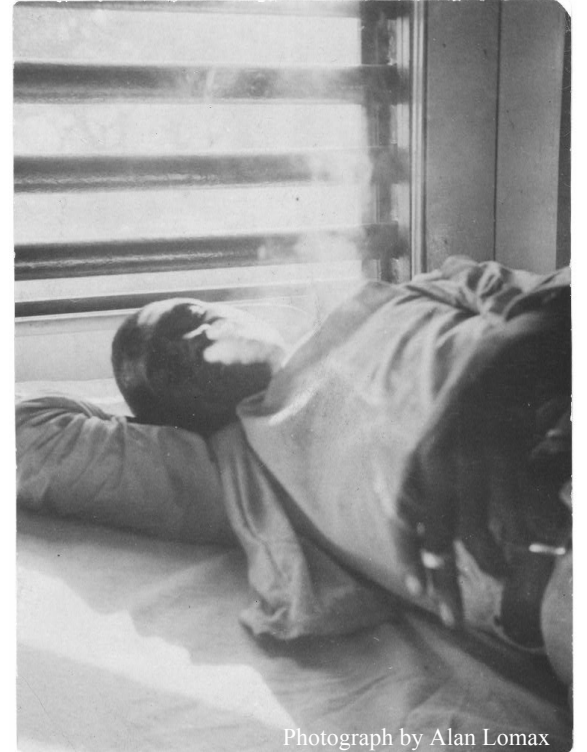


represented the black struggle for freedom right at the very moment it first took shape. And that's because even though Lyons was black, he would have been an ally, a tool, an agent of the white system of power.

So if Lyons was a black surrogate for white power, how did that happen? Possibly through his occupation and through his reputation for being a bully. According to Brown's book, Lyons worked as a levee hand and the local police knew him as "Billy the bully." "Levee hands" were men who built and repaired levees, but the term may also have been applied to other men who labored on the levees such as the roustabouts who loaded and unloaded cargo from steamboats. But it doesn't seem likely to me that Lyons would have performed the dangerous and backbreaking work of constructing/repairing levees or loading/unloading the heavy cargo of steamboats. Not likely because he probably lived a reSo if Lyons was a black surrogate for white power, how did that happen? Possibly through his occupation and through his reputation for being a bully. According to Brown's book, Lyons worked as a levee hand and the local police knew him as "Billy the bully." "Levee hands" were men who built and repaired levees, but the term may also have been applied to other men who labored on the levees such as the roustabouts who loaded and unloaded cargo from steamboats. But it doesn't seem likely to me that Lyons would have performed the dangerous and backbreaking work of constructing/repairing levees or loading/unloading the heavy cargo of

steamboats. Not likely because he probably lived a relatively advantaged life for a black man – according to Brown's book, Lyons came from a family that was fairly well-off financially and he was the brother-in-law of Henry Bridgewater, one of the wealthiest and most politically connected black men in St. Louis. Considering his relatively high status, Lyons's job on the levee must have been less dangerous and less physically demanding than performing the hard manual labor involved in levee construction or in being a roustabout. Possibly he worked on the levee in a position of authority. His bullying disposition may have led him to be employed as black muscle for controlling the levee hands, roustabouts, and other tough rivermen who worked on the levee. In that case, his occupation would have been the St. Louis counterpart to Mississippi's armed shack bullies and murderous hired guns that Alan Lomax wrote about in his book *The Land Where the Blues Began*. Black muscle was used to redirect the anger of the brutally treated laborers away from the white bosses and towards other black men. So if William Lyons – the historical figure behind the legendary figure of Billy DeLyon – worked in a position in which he bullied black levee hands, this may have become incorporated into the legend and this would have resulted in Billy being a surrogate, a black agent for the white system of power. And it would have followed that, in doing battle with Billy, Stagolee also would have been symbolically doing battle with the white system of power. And, of course, the connection between history and legend would eventually have been lost, thereby allowing Billy to be transformed from a black surrogate for white power into a white man who was part of the white power structure.

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Stagolee and John Henry Continued

One big reason I believe that many African Americans envisioned Billy DeLyon as a white man deals with Stagolee's reputation as one of the baddest of all black badmen. In African American speech, referring to someone as "bad" could denote that the person is viewed unfavorably, as in "no good", "mean" or "evil." Or, it could mean that the person is viewed favorably, as in "good," "impressive," or "great." But, regardless of the intended meaning, for a man to become famous as one of the baddest of badmen there exists the implication that he is extremely powerful, tough, aggressive, and/or fearless. During the days of Jim Crow, probably the baddest thing a black man could do was challenge or fight a white man, especially a white bully or a white lawman or other white authority figure. It rarely happened, and that was because of the terrible consequences it would bring. Professor Molefi Kete Asante, in his book *Erasing Racism*, points out that "even the baddest man in town would seldom attack the vilest white man." If that was the case, then the key to measuring the degree of Stagolee's badness involves looking at how the ballad's figure of Billy existed in the minds and imaginations of the black singers of "Stagolee" and their black audiences. Was Billy thought to be a white man or a black man? If Billy was thought to be black, then Stagolee's reputation for being one of the baddest of black badmen would seem to have been extremely overblown. But what about the other possibility? What if Billy actually did exist in the minds and imaginations of African Americans as a white man, and possibly even as a white bully, or a bullying or racist white lawman? If that was the case, then Stagolee's battle with and victory over Billy would have

served as proof that he truly did possess an exceptional degree of badness, and his reputation as one of the baddest of black badmen would indeed have been well-deserved.

Read the entire article at
TheAfricanAmericanFolklorist.com



Can't Classify This

By: Giselle Y.H.

A little boy had read numerous stories in his children's books about different life and death struggles between a Man and a Lion. But no matter how ferociously the lion fought, the Man emerged victoriously every time. Puzzled, the boy asked his father. "Why is it, Daddy, that the Man always beats the Lion, when everybody knows that a lion is the toughest cat in all the jungle?" The father answered, "Son, those stories will always end that way...until lions learn how to write." John Oliver Killen calls this the Black Man's Burden.

Let us ask the question: if the lion learned to write, how would his story sound? The lion loses every time, so would his side of the story misrepresent what actually happened, framing the lion (and all lion-kind) as victorious, or would it be honest and humble in defeat? Would it be angry and bitter or humorous, laughing through the loss? The answer: it would be all of that—and more. The lion's tale is the tale told by Black folks, and there is no body of work richer and more informative, exciting and entertaining, tragic and painful, humorous and healing, provocative and unnerving, universal and distinctive.

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Can't Classify This Continued

The themes of these tales are not simply stated, nor easily differentiated by genre or style. They can be an amalgamation of genres and styles, and many are oxymoronic in their combinations. In the etiological tales—those that explain how things came to be as they are—a surface reading might lead one to believe that these stories make fun of the Black man and woman's physical attributes, poverty, and laziness. These stories can be seen as the Black personae operating in an absurd situation created by White values, hypocrisy, and prejudices with introspective and reflective eyes. As Paul Laurence Dunbar so eloquently said, "We wear the mask that grins and lies, it hides our cheeks and shades our eyes." The etiological tales are parodies of myths with Black folk, ostensibly, as the butt of the joke. With proper awareness, however, we see that the real targets of ire are the racist structures America was built on and continues to perpetuate.

The following folktale exemplifies the Black Man's Burden, told as a joke:

The Mojo

Adapted from Richard M. Dorson's *American Negro Folktales*:

There was always the times when the white man been ahead of the colored man. In slavery times John had done got to a place where the Marster whipped him all the time. Someone told him, "Get you a mojo, it'll get you out of that whipping, wont nobody whip you then."

John went down to the corner of the Boss-man's farm, where the mojo-man stayed, and asked him what he had. The mojo-man said, "I got a pretty good one and a very good one and a damn good one." The colored fellow asked him, "What can the pretty good one do?"

"I'll tell you what it can do. It can turn you to a rabbit, and it can turn you to a quail, and after that it can turn you to a snake." So John said he'd take it.

Next morning John sleeps late. About nine o'clock the white man comes after him, calls him: "John, come on, get up there and get to work. Plow the taters and milk the cow and then you can go back home — it's Sunday morning." John says to him, "Get on out from my door, don't say nothing to me. Ain't gonna do nothing." Boss-man says, "Don't you know who this is? It's your Boss." "Yes I know— I'm not working for you any more." "All right, John, just wait till I go home; I'm coming back and whip you."



Photograph by: Alan Lomax

Well, then the white man he falls against the door and broke it open. And John said to his mojo, "Skip-skip-skip-skip." He turned to a rabbit, and run slap out the door by Old Marster. And he's a running son of a gun, that rabbit was. Boss-man says to his mojo, "I'll turn to a greyhound." You know that greyhound got running so fast his paws were just reaching the grass under the rabbit's feet.

Then John thinks, "I got to get away from here." He turns to a quail. And he begins sailing fast through the air— he really thought he was going. But the Boss-man says, "I will turn to a chicken-hawk." That chicken-hawk sails through the sky like a bullet, and catches right up to that

quail.

Then John says, "Well, I'm going to turn to a snake." He hit the ground and begin to crawl; that old snake was natchally getting on his way. Boss-man says, "I'll turn to a stick and I'll beat your ass."

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The African American Folklorist Kids and Youth Section

The Harlem Hellfighters, by Max Brooks, published 2014

By: Gideon Wiesen age 10

In 1919 during WW1 many people of color signed up for the United States military on the second floor of a dance studio in Harlem. There, one of the main characters, Mark Edge, meets other prospective soldiers, David Edward Scott, Henry Johnson, Desmond Scatliffe. As they are on a boat to France, all the white soldiers are given a parade. While the 369th infantry regiment is in France, white people beat, laughed, and stared at the 369th. When they were sent to the trenches, David Edward Scott was shot in the head by a sniper, and that was only one out of thousands of casualties. The Harlem Hellfighters were bombed, shot, and got sick...until they made a mad charge at the enemy trench, killing every German inside. Soon after that, the United States government sent a letter that basically read "keep Black morale as low as can be" because the Harlem Hellfighters were doing better than the white soldiers, and that was "disliked by the public (aka the government)". At the end of WW1, the 369th infantry regiment was given a parade only to find out there were riots, protest, and murders back

COVID 19 in 2020

By: Samara Pearley, age 11

February 2020 is when I became aware of covid 19. In the beginning, I wasn't concerned because I thought it was just bacteria only found in china, but then the virus arrived in America, and people started to get sick from it. It made me worried about my dad and everyone who went outside. What I found was, this virus was dangerous to those who have weak immune systems, especially adults and elders. The virus was said to be airborne according to new sources and everyone talking about it around me. It started spreading in countries and states and cities, and more people began dying from the virus. It started getting scarier when we got in quarantine and



stores began closing, and there was a shortage of toilet paper at supermarkets. The drought was so bad to the point where there was almost no more toilet paper in stores! Schools started closing, but I was already participating in homeschool.

My brother, mom, sister, and I was scared when my dad would go outside to go to the store/supermarket because people could spread the virus to other people, including my dad. My brother and I would sometimes go with him to help with bags and help remind him of the things we needed. Everyone brought cleaning supplies for their home to protect themselves from the virus. Things started to get crazy once people began to protest against the police. The murders of George Floyd and Breanna Taylor ignited the response of black lives matter. People began rioting and starting fires because they were mad at the police for killing innocent black people. This was going on across the nation, including my neighborhood. I was terrified that this would get to the point where the citizens and the police would wanna go to war with each other. There was also extreme racial tension that was shown on tv and the internet. This concerned me because everyone was on lockdown watching tv or the internet. My family and I handled quarantine because we stocked up on food, water, and fruits. We also drank a lot of tea, and my mom made home remedies. Praying and reading the bible was primary. I am hoping the worst of it is over. However, the 2020 election might bring new excitement.

The Experience of a Young man in Quarantine By: Lamont Pearley Jr. age 13

The first week of quarantine I felt calm. I believed things would go smoothly and a vaccine would be distributed quickly but when I found out that people are dying from it and that it's in my city I started to get nervous thinking that it would affect me and my family. Intentionally there were rumors that Covid-19 didn't affect African Americans, but living in the city buildings and close proximity to our neighbors seemed to have proven that theory incorrect. One of the first outbreaks in New York City happened 7 minutes away from where I lived. Not to mention that experts were saying it would be several months to a year before any vaccine would be available. When my older sister was feeling symptoms from the virus I felt nervous and prayed hoping for the best that nothing bad would happen to her. She quarantined herself in our living room while my younger sister and I stayed in the room we all shared. After she finished her self-quarantine we all felt relief. Things were going well until one day I woke up coughing. I was afraid that I caught the virus. I didn't get tested because I did not have any symptoms specific to Covid-19.

It turned out that I was reacting to sleeping directly next to the air conditioner which also triggered coughing with my sister as well. It got to the point where any little sneeze, cough or god bless you had everybody on edge. Then something terrible happened. The side of my dad's face began to stiffen, and his blood pressure was high. He had a virtual doctor's appointment on zoom because of the lockdown, and his doctor suggested he go to the emergency room. I was crying in fear because of what I just heard, plus we were in the thick of the pandemic. The hospitals in our community had to make separate areas inside their facility for non Covid-19 cases. Majority of the patients in the hospital were there because of Covid-19 according to news

We The Blues People

The African American Folklorist Kids and Youth Section

The Experience of a Young man Continued

sources and community shared information. A Lot of people went into the hospital and didn't come back home. 5 of my dads friends died in the hospital. Which is one of the reasons he was stressed and why our family was stressed in the event he had to go to the hospital. Intentionally he declined the doctors decision to go to the emergency room but ended up going a couple of days later. Luckily threw the grace of god he came back safe and Covid-19 free. With all the work and stress going on it was affecting him, so he had to take a little break for a while. He started working again but took it easy. My mom wasn't feeling sick, but she was getting tired from all the work she was doing. All of this was happening while citizens were celebrating first responders on one hand, and on the other hand the city bursted into flames as the result of civil unrest. Little by little restrictions on traveling moving in and out of the city was being lifted. This was something we were excited about because we were planning to move for some months. I was a little anxious because the thought of Covid-19 still made me nervous. We moved on July 15 and left around 12 pm. It was about 15 hours but felt way longer like it was forever. When we got to our destination everyone felt fine although my younger sister got car sick during the ride. My older sister didn't move with us she stood at our old home. For a few weeks I was a little homesick, the good news is still no one contracted the virus. We found out that cases were rising in the state we moved to. But our immediant area has been safe so far. Though happy we are still cautious. Protests has continued and the threat of another lock down seems very real.

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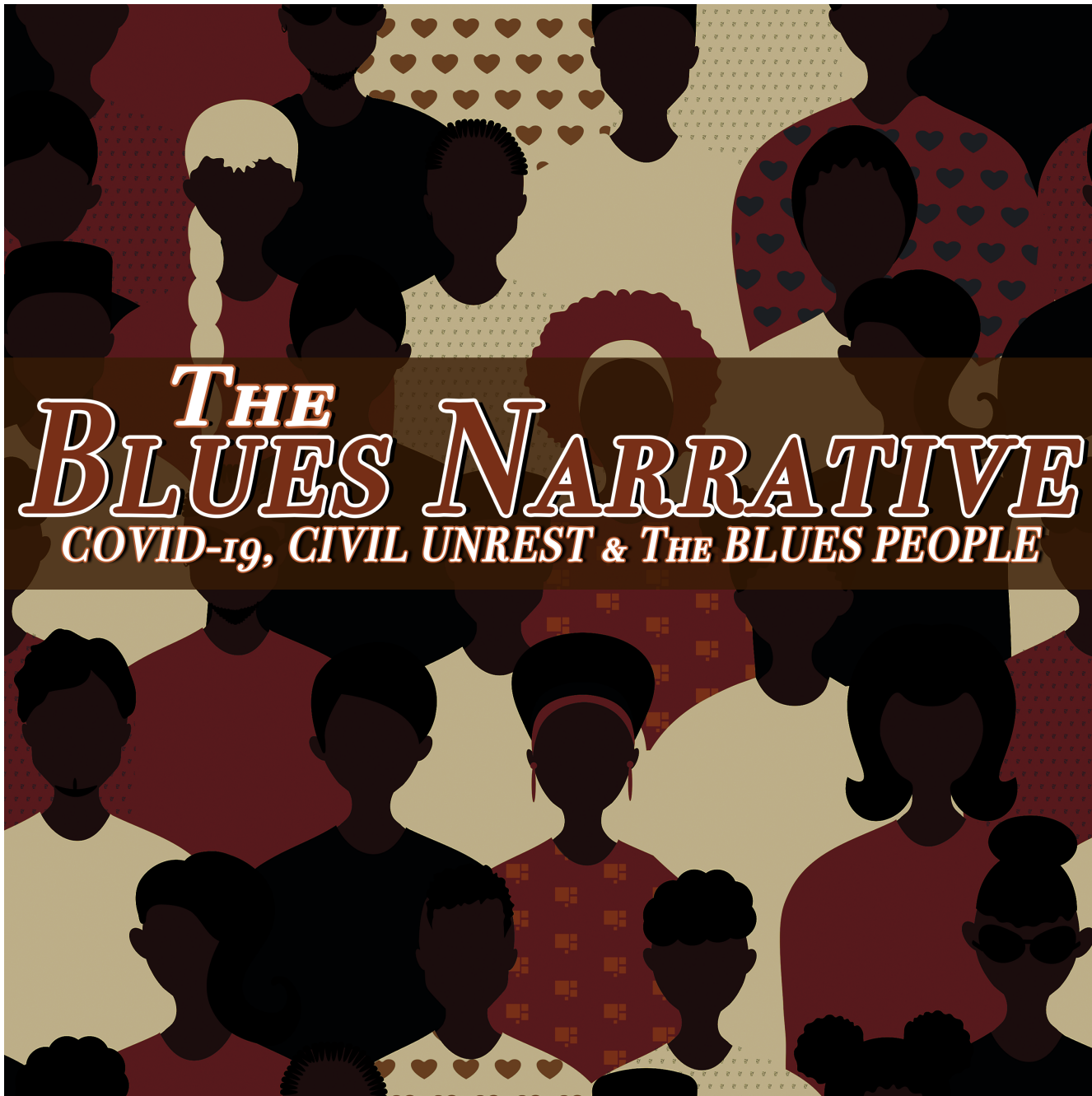
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We work to build a database of collections created by in house and community patrons through our African American Folklorist program, which trains participants to document the history and heritage of their family, culture and cultural musics.

The African American Folklorist Kids is a home school research program that teaches kids how to find a story, research the story, develop the story, write script for audio/video podcast and or written article with the purpose of documenting their family traditions, or others they have interest in.

We offer AAF workshops for schools, organizations, churches, children and adults



The Blues Narrative – “Blues People, COVID19 & Civil Unrest” is a first-person account of the life and experiences of African Americans, Black Indians, Pan-Africanists (individuals and families), aka The Blues People, during this moment in history where there’s a global pandemic, quarantines, protests, and riots happening ALL AT THE SAME TIME and in real-time. Through this recorded and transcribed series, we find how Black people across the states are dealing with, protecting, and processing the many things that are currently happening that seems to be a direct reflection of events our ancestors have experienced. Part of the documentation investigates how the experiences, teachings, and traditions passed down from earlier generations laid a foundation that prepared them to raise families and keep the heritage and culture that migrated with them alive during a very complicated time. Taking the baton from its predecessor “Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project”, The Blues Narrative – Blues People, COVID29 & Civil Unrest will focus on African Americans born in the years of 1945-2004, and delve into the act of establishing a home, lifestyles, and tradition on a concrete terrain with southern and country values, and share how those values not only weathered the storm of many generations but how it armed interviewees to defend what some call an all-out attack on the Blues People in modern-day.

This is an ongoing project that is not conducted in the form of traditional broadcasting, but more in the vein of a folklorist and ethnographer. The many interviews and transcribed documents that you will find here and in the print copy of our newspaper seeks to get the unfiltered truth, and it presents many uncomfortable conversations and shared experiences. As the project is recorded, different ‘episodes’ will be published. Check regularly.

Log on to the African American Folklorist Website to hear the podcasts!



ABOUT THE DISTRIBUTING ORGANIZATION

Jack Dappa Blues Heritage Preservation Foundation is a focal point for the research, archiving and raising awareness of African American Traditional Music and the Black Experience.

The 501c3 Private Operating Foundation founded in 2011 and officially became a private foundation with tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)3 of the United States Internal Revenue Code on December 14th, 2016. Jack Dappa Blues Heritage Preservation Foundation uses broadcast journalism, film, and multimedia production to produce exciting, meaningful, and historically accurate content that explores and highlights African American Traditional Music and the black experience.

African American history and Black music are rarely if ever, presented in the context of societal shifts, but highlighted more in the regard of a soundtrack to the African American struggle. We aim to enlighten those we serve to the proper historical context of African American Traditional Musics as a response to past events that shifted the community and environment of African Americans, as well as adjusted the relationships within the communities and with other ethnicities.

Our mission is to celebrate our heritage and preserve Blues music, as we highlight the many events in American History that cultivated our communities and musical expressions.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKLORIST

"I approach being a folklorist, not only by what's written about us but by the Five Ws and one H I lived. Who I've lived around. What went on in the homes I was raised in and visited. Then I cross-reference my personal and family history, to what has been documented." LJP

For those that are now being introduced to the terms Folklore, Folklorist, Ethnographer, and Ethnomusicologist, the basic definition is as followed:

The folklorist studies the traditional artifacts of a group. They study the groups, within which these customs, traditions and beliefs are transmitted. Transmission of these artifacts is a vital part of the folklore process.

Folklore is the traditional beliefs, legends, customs etc of a people. A folklorist studies, researches and presents the information found on a people and culture.

Ethnography/Ethnographer is the scientific description of the culture of a society by someone who has lived in it, or a book containing this: One of the aims of ethnography is to contribute to an understanding of the human race.

Ethnomusicologists are professionals who study music in particular cultural contexts. They are interested in looking into the role that music plays in the lives of people living in a particular geographic location. They look at the instruments that are being used and the process by which their music is made.

The African American Folklorist is a monthly Newspaper that contains articles about traditions, traditional beliefs, the cultural context, geographical locations, music, dance and vernaculars of African Americans and the role each plays in the lives of the people past and present.

The African American Folklorist newspaper is distributed by the Jack Dappa Blues Heritage Preservation Foundation. Our Foundation also provides a proactive charitable program that equips the African American community with the necessary tools of the folklorist - how and what to research, cross-referencing, producing, and publishing their story. This charitable program also recruits interested participants who show promise in the field of the Independent Ethnomusicologist and Folklorist to write and produce content for the African American Folklorist platform. There is also an African American Folklorist Kids section of the newspaper that publishes articles and research papers from ages 10-17. Our goal is to encourage the community to take an active role in independent research, documentation, archiving and publishing of their ethnic and cultural history creating a more diverse platform in the field of traditional study and preservation.

To Subscribe to our publication visit <http://theafricanamericanfolklorist.com/>

WE ARE PUBLIC MEDIA!

Listen to our podcast Jack Dappa Blues, The African American Folklorist and We The Blues People Featuring Marquise Knox on all Major streaming platforms.

Log on and subscribe to our YouTube Channel Jack Dappa Blues Radio and TV for original Documentaries.

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