BRIAN GREENE
THE DRIVE TO INNOVATE
STORIES FROM THE FRONTIERS OF DISCOVERY

GUEST OF HONOR
UNIVERSITY ARTIST/LECTURE SERIES

WEDNESDAY APRIL 12
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—WASHINGTON POST

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
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UHURU is an award-winning magazine that aims to promote innovation, creativity and culture through the voice of marginalized students on the Kent State University campus. Having a history of Pan-African teachings and values, UHURU magazine focuses on the plight of all students around the globe.

UHURU, which is Kiswahili for ‘freedom,’ serves as a platform for student creation and expression in art, writing, photography and graphic design, while discussing racial, social and/or political ignorance.

As a derivative of Black United Students, this publication is dedicated to disseminating knowledge of the African-American experience in the past, present and future.

Although we focus on the unification of the African-American population, we also serve as a safe haven for other people of color, as we reflect all people of color at Kent State University.

Thank you for taking time out of your day to check us out. We hope that you enjoy our spring 2017 issue and become a supporter if you aren’t already. Feel free to like us on Facebook and follow us on our social media accounts for updates.
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Our Mission:
The CCI Diversity Office advocates for and provides diversity support (EMBRACE), education (EDUCATE), and resources (EMPOWER) to the students, faculty and staff in the College of Communication and Information.

Students who can utilize our office include, but are not limited to:

- Students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Students who identify as marginalized genders and sexualities (LGBTQ+)
- Students with various religious and spiritual affiliations and beliefs
- Students with disAbility or accessibility related needs or concerns
- First-generation students
- Students from low-income backgrounds and/or in financial crisis
- International students
- Non-traditional and adult students
- Military and veteran students

Our office provides help with academic concerns, financial assistance, technology requirements, diversity scholarships, connections to university resources, and making sure that every student feels welcome and included!
Editor’s Note

It’s finally here, April, the month we release UHURU’s spring 2017 issue. After months of the team and I preparing for production, it is with great pleasure that I can finally say “we did it.” I can also finally say that “I did it,” and have successfully completed my first job as editor-in-chief. Not only is this my passion, it’s my career goal and dream job. I’ve emptied my heart and soul into this opportunity.

It took me years to truly understand the age-old phrase, “do what makes you happy,” when referring to a career. If everyone could do what made them happy, we’d all work from home while lounging in our favorite pajamas, binge watching our favorite series on Netflix and pretending to do work on the laptop that’s sitting on our laps. Trust me, I know I would. But being the editor of UHURU solidified my love for all things journalism, particularly magazines. I was filled with optimism when I first realized the potential of my staff. I was excited after receiving probable story ideas from my writers and visual drafts from my creative team. But I was the most jubilant when putting the pieces together near the end of production. After months of hard work, the team and I have finally brought our ideas to fruition. I’m sure I’m speaking nerdy journalist talk, but these were the small victories that made an impact on me.

I’m not sure if my team knows it or not, but they’ve impacted my life as well. My staff is an array of freshmen through seniors and each person has taught me a valuable lesson. I remembered to have fun from my freshmen staff, but not too much fun, according to my senior staff who have inspired me to keep pushing, even through 10 page papers and all-nighters.

This magazine was more than a college level outlet to me; it was a chance to apply all that I’ve learned during my collegiate career. It was a chance to create an outlet that was made for us, by us and most importantly, it was a chance to supply a platform for the voiceless.

I’d like to give a special thanks to

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Katie Barnes Evans Media Specialist
Tami Bongjorni Advertising Manager
Norma Young Business Manager
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The connection between the past and the future of music is applicable to the knowledge of self and black identity— to truly know yourself, you need to know your roots and where you’ve come from, even musically. Reclaim, Remaster, Remake.

As of late in mainstream media and music culture, there has been a reemergence of original sounds and a continuing reference to aesthetics of the past. Currently in music, artists like Kendrick Lamar, Solange and Childish Gambino have utilized many elements of black music, like rock, funk and jazz and implemented modern twists relevant to their lives today. Simply put, most genres of music are created from the bases of other genres.

Many originators of today’s music got inspiration from the creators before them. Jazz music originated with black musicians in the late 19th century who combined elements from black music traditions and pieces of music with roots in West African traditional cultural expression. Jazz music was a means of self-expression which was once considered criminal or deviant because of its association with black people, but once jazz became popular and thus more lucrative, it became whitewashed and then more capitalistic. Rock music was invented by a queer black woman named Sister Rosetta Tharpe, who according to Fusion.net was one of Elvis’ biggest influences and who was playing rock guitar before Elvis, Chuck Berry and many of the “founders” of rock and roll.

The monetizing of jazz music bred rock, funk and pop which then gave birth to hip hop and the music we are familiar with today. Innovators and creators of the past like Junie Morrison and George Clinton, along with bands like The Ohio Players, Funkadelic and Parliament, have paved the way for artists to think outside of the box and apply the old knowledge to the new environment of today in the same manner that earlier artists did in their day. I believe it is safe to say that the whitewashing of hip-hop and the skewing of the black narrative, formerly more intimate and personal but now focused on capital and possessions, have led to a necessary rebirth of black music.

Recently in hip-hop music, there has been a trend where trap music has become increasingly popular amongst the buyers of hip hop music (usually suburban white kids), and it is lucrative.
“To know the history of yourself will always be important both artistically and individually. The repetitive nature of history is often the biggest influencer of art, which influences culture.”

It has become the norm to create music that sells rather than music that tells. While all music is important and expression of self is always valid, other artists have recognized this pattern and switched up their styles.

In 2015, after being snubbed by the Grammys, Kendrick Lamar returned to the rap scene with a vengeance with a new album, “To Pimp a Butterfly.” This album encapsulates Kendrick’s transition into fame and continued self-discovery. Throughout the album, anecdotes of Kendrick’s internal and external personal experiences are tied together with rim shots, saxophone runs and other jazz instrumentation, which makes each song more personal and sincere.

During a Pigeon and Planes interview, funk legend George Clinton spoke of the connection between Kendrick Lamar and artists of prior generations: “He reminds me of Sly Stone in the way he’s poetic and political but also very inclusive of everybody in the mainstream...pointing out the faults of himself and greater society at the same time. When you can tell the truth like that and still appeal to the kids, still have street cred, you’re doing something really good. To me, that’s what younger artists are supposed to do, they’re supposed to simplify shit and take it back to the beginning.”

The use of analog and digital components combined perfectly shows what many members of this millennial era are all about: reclaiming what’s ours, learning from the experiences of the generations before us and applying the knowledge from those experiences to our daily lives.

The influence of artists of the past is not only pivotal in hip-hop music, but throughout all genres the use of the fundamentals of black music is quite present. For example, last fall, Solange Knowles released her third studio album, “A Seat at The Table,” in which she narrates a slew of topics like black femininity, micro aggressions, the passage of time, the state of today’s world, cultural appropriation and so much more. She discusses a span of things utilizing more organic tones and instruments while also using synths and more futuristic sounds as well.

The balance between rough, gritty old sounds and the layering of vocals similar to some retro, funkier artists of the past, combined with synthetic, digitized instrumentation can reflect the contrast of the present day’s achievements in history with the setbacks and struggles that people are still facing. Specifically, the track “Junie,” inspired by Junie Morrison of the Ohio Players, is laced heavily with bass guitar, cymbals, synthesizers and vocal layering calling out the appropriation of black culture. By creating a song with a specific artist and time period in mind, by channeling the “Super Spirit,” Solange remasters the art of self-expression through sound. When creating this particular song, according to Junie Morrison in a Fader magazine interview, Solange intended on paying homage and also conveying a message; he says, “She communicated to me that she wanted to tell me the story of how much my track ‘Super Spirit’ made an impression on her and inspired her to name her creation ‘Junie.’
She wanted me to hear her creation and speak to me about it. My initial reaction to hearing the song itself was the same as I had while listening to the rest of A Seat At The Table—Wow! This young person has a whole funk load of talent.” While paying her respects through a post on her Saint Heron website, Solange writes, “I wrote the song to honor the brilliant Junie Morrison and the impact his work and story had on me, while wanting to challenge my own relationship with ‘sharing your magic.’ The more I learned about Junie, the more I learned how much of his gift he shared through his musical contributions to others... the greatest lesson I learned about Junie Morrison is that the magic was endless... and the truest testament to real authentic magic... is that it can’t be made... it just is.” The album epitomizes the millennial renaissance because of Solange’s use of both musical aspects of today and yesterday. In contrast, Childish Gambino, also known as Donald Glover, took a completely different route in terms of taking back black music by creating a whole entire funk album, “Awaken My Love,” which is the story of Glover’s transition into fatherhood. He talks about meeting his son’s mother and throughout he pays tribute to his son in various ways. In a Billboard Magazine interview, Gambino recalls one of his earliest influences for his album. “I remember listening to songs my dad would play — albums by the Isleys or Funkadelic — and not understanding the feeling I was feeling,” he said. “I remember hearing a Funkadelic scream and being like ‘Wow, that’s sexual and it’s scary.’ Not having a name for that, though; just having a feeling. That’s what made it great.” The connections between then and now are also clearly expressed. In the same article he mentions the correlation between funk music and revolution: “It felt like people were trying to get out of their minds, with all the things that were happening — and that are happening right now (referring to the Black Lives Matter and Occupy Wall Street Movements)... How do you start a global revolution, really? Is that possible with the systems we’ve set up? There’s something about that ’70s black music that felt like they were trying to start a revolution.” On the fifth track, “Riot,” the use of a sample from the 1975 Funkadelic song “Good to Your Earhole,” a story from the perspective of a rioter is being told, but from this present era or the past? This rapid description of chaos surrounded by heavy guitar shredding, a retro-sounding choir and Gambino’s screams is telling of the present time which is so similar to the days gone by. The ambiguity of content throughout recreation of an era is Glover’s eccentric way of telling a personal story that many people can identify with. This album perfectly emulates the sound of the popular ’70s band Funkadelic with its prominent guitar, bass and vocal makeup. The album sounds straight out of the ’70s and the lyrical content truly resonates with the instrumental base, making it sound more genuine and raw. All of these albums have in common the usage of past music to elaborate on many very relevant narratives that relate to self-discovery in some aspect. To know the history of yourself will always be important both artistically and individually. The repetitive nature of history is often the biggest influence of art, which influences culture. A wise man once said, “Art is how we decorate space, and music is how we decorate time,” so the similarities and ongoing struggles of today and yesterday are shown through the music that replicates them.
Requiem for the Renaissance
by ALINA HOWARD • illustrations by ALEX THARNISH

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine; et lux perpetua luceat eis
Grant them eternal rest, O Lord: And may perpetual light shine upon them.

These rhythms were written by Giuseppe Verdi, an Italian poet and novelist, to commemorate the life of a friend in the late 1800s. What does his words have to do with art, poetry and remembrance? They allow us to remember that art should be commemorated and remembered, for it is eternal and shows the life of the artist.

Art is the reflection of the social issues that shape the artist and in likewise, the Renaissance, or rebirth. The Renaissance started as a cultural movement in Italy in the Late Medieval period, which later spread to the rest of Europe, marking the beginning of the Early Modern Age. Understanding the cause of the Renaissance is important to understanding its implications and the effects.

Art can not be created without a reactionary force behind it, which may be social, political or economic. All revolutionary art is a challenge to the norms of society. A Renaissance is not only a rebirth, but a defiance of what society expects of art. “Society affects how I create because it often censors the work of the artist,” said Chantrell Lewis, sophomore musical theater major. “This censorship creates a vulnerability within the art.”

Social norms play a big part in the creation of art and eventually the perception of art. During the early 1900s, art was radically changing from the art of the past. One of the most famous examples is the cubism era coined by Pablo Picasso. This art was seen as purely abstract compared to the clean cut aristocratic art that came before it and many people largely disliked his and other cubists’ work. Art that challenges the social norms of society is not deemed true art until long after that period in society has passed. This is due to the fact that it makes people uncomfortable.

The Italian Renaissance was not a success because the art looked pretty, but rather because it made people in positions of power, mainly the Roman Catholic Church, uncomfortable. The church hired people to paint cathedrals and huge altarpieces as reverence to God.
“Art that makes people uncomfortable marks the start of a Renaissance.”

So when the Primavera by Botticelli was seen in its glory, officials in power were upset and did not see it as a masterpiece or an awe-inspiring piece of art. Art that makes people uncomfortable marks the start of a Renaissance.

“The more people allow themselves to be affected by the art, the bigger the change it will have in society,” Lewis said. “And that’s slowly happening. It is affecting how people view art and in return, the world.” Just as society has affected art, art is also affecting society. It allows social and economic issues to be brought to the forefront of political conversations allowing those issues to change as the effect.
photos by PEJA

The Scream
by Edvard Munch

The Son of Man
by René Magritte

REcreations
Black Hollywood: The Evolution of Black Women on Television

by FAITH RIGGS • illustrations by AUSTIN COATS

The role of female black characters on television has immensely evolved over the course of the last few decades. Shows like “Insecure,” “Scandal” and “Being Mary Jane” are currently changing the narrative as to what it means to be a realistic black woman in America.

Prior to the 1950s, the first appearances of black women in entertainment were in minstrel shows that featured white male actors portraying stereotypical black female roles. George Christy was one of the first women impersonators who portrayed Lucy Long, a flirtatious mulatto woman. These shows, which began in the 19th century, depicted black women as either the “coal black mammy” or the “yellow gal.” By the 1930s, black women were surfacing as actresses, but only in stereotypical roles such as servants and housemaids.

Julia – Julia Baker
In 1968, NBC’s “Julia” was the first show to star a black woman in a non-stereotypical role on television. Diahann Carroll played Julia Baker, a widowed single mother who was a nurse at a large aerospace company. In the 1960s, this role was groundbreaking. During that period of social upheaval and rioting, the show was the first to shed a positive light on the black community, as she and her son lived in a suburban setting. But the show received some criticism as it did not accurately reflect the common African-American experience at the time of the civil rights movement. Despite the controversy, “Julia” shifted the common role of black women in a major way. Her character also broke barriers outside of television, as she was one of the first black actresses to be made into a Barbie.

The 1970s and 1980s showed an impactful shift in black television characters. During this time, family-oriented shows were flourishing. In many, such as “The Cosby Show,” women like Claire Huxtable were depicted as the matriarch of the family and played an important role.

During the 1990s, many popular shows highlighted black teenage and college girls. Shows such as “Sister, Sister,” “A Different World” and “Moesha” shined light on what it means to be a multidimensional black teen. To this day, their roles inspire our personal journeys to black Womanhood.

Girlfriends – Joan, Toni, Lynn, and Maya
UPN’s 2000 TV series portrays Joan Clayton (Tracee Ellis Ross), as a lawyer; Toni Childs (Jill Marie Jones), as a real estate agent; Lynn Searcy (Persia White), as a free spirit; and Maya (Golden Brooks), as an author/housewife. The show highlighted the various dimensions of the friendships that many black women share and each friend shined a light on the great variety of black women. The show resembled the structure of “Sex and the City,” but aimed to highlight the dynamic nature of black “girlfriends.”
Scandal – Olivia Pope
ABC's “Scandal” follows Olivia Pope who is played by Kerry Washington. Olivia is a multi-dimensional woman who is a former lawyer and White House communications director. She catches the attention of the President and the White House because of her ability to think quickly and effectively. Throughout the show, she has an ongoing romantic affair with the President of the United States. Olivia’s work ethic and knowledge are unmatched, as though she can handle any scandal that arises. Her character is said to be the most complex black woman in television history.

Insecure – Issa Dee
In HBO's dramedy “Insecure,” Issa Rae portrays Issa Dee, who is a woman in search of something more, as she feels that unhappiness is only a few steps away. The series navigates through her love and professional life, which are equally stagnant. On the opposite end, the series also follows Issa’s best friend Molly, who seems more put-together but also has similar struggles. Black women are usually viewed as strong, independent and one-dimensional, but Issa and Molly certainly are not that. They are still navigating what exactly they want out of life and the show captures their attempts at learning to take control of their personal journeys. This show in particular is very important in the involvement of black women in television because it’s written and based off of Issa Rae’s personal journey, which adds more "realness" to it. This show doesn’t shove the idea of being black in everyone’s faces, but instead, tells a unique story with a fresh perspective. This show, along with other new upcoming television series, gives a voice to black women who fall outside of the normal stereotypes.

Our overall evolution on the television screen has come a long way. It is so important to have the opportunity to tune in or binge watch shows that feature women who look like us, talk like us, and share the same struggles. When it comes to black women, there needs to be characters that all of us can identify with, so that we can feel inspired enough to achieve our dreams just like our favorite television role models.

“We are the sum of our upbringing”

“It is so important to have the opportunity to tune in or binge watch shows that feature women who look like us, talk like us, and share the same struggles.”

Being Mary Jane, Mary Jane Paul
In “Being Mary Jane,” Gabrielle Union portrays Mary Jane Paul, a successful news anchor who seems to have it all together. She has money, credibility and a killer closet but struggles to complete the big picture, as she has recurring relationship issues with her family and men. Mary Jane breaks the stereotypical past portrayals of black women, as she reaches a high level of success even in the absence of a man.

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How do you attain joy? How do you know what it is? Can you see it like an object? Or is it something that is radiated off of someone when they walk into a room? Is it the air that people carry about themselves? Maybe it’s all of these things combined. . . . That’s the thought-provoking thing about the topic of joy. It’s almost like the topic of love. You can have hundreds of different definitions for it, but when you’ve truly experienced it, it is hard to put into words. All people can really do is hope they never lose it, and if they do, somehow find their way back.

Black Joy /bla-K joi/ verb: The continuous action of remembering to be happy despite what society says makes you different, not good enough or lesser.

This topic, in some eyes, is not new. The slaves found ways to be happy with who they were and where they came from, even in despair. They found Black Joy in their families. Slaves could not be legally married, so the practice of jumping the broom was brought into black culture. Their marriages were not acknowledged by societal constructs, but they found a way to remember their past while celebrating their own happiness in the face of their horrific circumstances. They created Black Joy in prayer for the generations after them, praying they would see and experience the JOY of true freedom. They found joy in old Negro spirituals, in the big and the small and most importantly, in each other. They set the foundation for what it is to be the happiest we can possibly be, in the face of constant oppression.

As decades pass, Black Joy can be seen everywhere if we look hard enough. In the 1950s, it was in Brown v. Board of Education, the beginning of the end of racially segregated America where black was lesser. It was in the clothes worn at the marches, often Sunday’s best and the firm but peaceful protests in the face of violent backlash. They carried themselves with class and no one could take that away without a fight. Black Joy was found in their moments of wanting to give up but knowing their brothers and sisters were their support. They found their Black Joy in knowing America was going to acknowledge them and their plight. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was in the Black Liberation Movement. Mindset changes and leaders like Assata Shakur, Herman Bell and Malcolm X, as well as groups like SNCC and the Black Panther Party were refusals to remain second-class citizens. Yes, Black Joy was being happy, but it was also fighting for what they deserved as humans, being stern and unmoved in public, but remembering to celebrate the small and large victories in private.
In the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, it was found in the messages left in music, the expressions of feeling in art, the recognition of blacks working in STEM fields and the graffiti left on the walls of old abandoned buildings. The fashion choices that, though questionable looking back now, were elaborate and colorful. It was found in valuing hard work and taking care of one’s family. It was found in black inventions and advancements in technology, even when those accomplishments changed the world, but the black minds behind them went without recognition. It was found in sitting on the stoop and talking about their week with their people while watching kids play around broken fire hydrants on a hot summer day. Now, in the earliest years of the 21st century, Black Joy is celebrated by being wholly and authentically us, whatever that means, sounds, looks and feels like. It means understanding our history is as much from Kings and Queens of African nations as it is from the atrocities of slavery, segregation and the Jim Crow Era. It’s loving ourselves as naturally as we can when dressed to the nines. It’s embracing our natural hair, skin tones and features. It’s crying #BlackLivesMatter, #SayHerName and #BlackPower. It’s understanding the strength in social media and using it to create things that bring attention to the beauty and excellence radiating from the black community.

Black Joy is creating spaces where we can be comfortable when we aren’t truly welcomed in the first place. It’s found in being Black and Bourgeoisie, embodying Black Excellence, and participating in Black Out Days on all social media outlets. It’s found in the uplifting, supporting and defending of all types of black people. It’s about being a Blerd (Black Nerd) or a member of the Afro-Punk Community. It’s about breaking the stereotypes that black people don’t swim, get their hair wet, travel or attain success. It’s found in comprehending the intersectionality of what it is to be black in America and around the world and not being apologetic for it.

Black Joy is found in being a generation of black people who are proud to be from strong, wise grandparents, but not complacent or accepting of what’s just handed to us, as our ancestors had to be. Black Joy is creating our own destiny by following our dreams and passing that mindset and self-love down to the next generation. It’s keeping and creating peace in times of frustration, confusion and pain. It’s found in knowing how our talents and skills help make the world a better place for black people.

Black Joy is black people knowing that being us isn’t easy, but never wanting to be anything but black. It’s choosing happiness more often than not, even when the weight of the world is on our shoulders and no one’s there to help. Black Joy is creating a world where we don’t just Exist to Survive, but Survive to Live and are celebrated by all, because of it.
It's important to take time out of your day and reflect on what makes you happy, what makes you feel good and what brings you joy. Brainstorming on self-improvements is also essential to evolve into your higher self. Fill in this mad lib and don't be shy. Answer truthfully, this is solely for your personal reflection.

My name is ____________ and what makes me unique is (my) ____________. Although there are some days that do not go as planned, I am joyful when________________________. This makes me joyful because _______________ _______________. I feel empowered when I _______________ because _______________. I can attain this sense of joy and empowerment more often if I _______________ _______________. One of the best attributes of myself is _______________ because ________ _______________. However, we all can stand some improvement and I need to work on ____ _______________. Working on this will be beneficial because __________________________. I believe I was granted with the gift of________________________ and I plan on using it to better the world by __________________________ __________. I believe in myself because __________________________ and I know I will succeed in life because __________________________ __________________.
The 21st Century *Jezebel*

by SAMEERA BOWLES • photos by VICTOR TRAVIS

*Through criticism as well as acceptance, women are more open to expressing themselves sexually today, than ever before. Ownership of sexuality within women is much more than a personal preference; it’s a part of this modern day feminist movement.*

*Sex is OK! Better yet, it’s great and I’ve noticed that I get crazy looks when I say things like this in public. For some, the idea of a woman speaking so candidly about sex is taboo, but times are changing and what is socially acceptable changes by the day. Over the past few years, I have noticed a surge in the women I see owning their sexuality. In my personal life and in the media, I’ve seen women show off their sexuality without a care in the world. The first time I recognized it was when Beyoncé dropped her self-titled album in the winter of 2013. With songs like “Drunk in Love,” “Partition,” and “Rocket,” Beyoncé set a tone for many women to follow. Then, with her 2014 MTV Video Music Awards performance, she proudly stood with the word “feminist” on the screen behind her, shining a light on the modern feminist movement, reaching people who had never been exposed to it before. This ownership of sexuality is a part of something bigger and by bigger, I mean the feminist movement. With the backing of many celebrities and leaders in black culture, more and more women are starting to see that they do and should have the right to do what they want with their bodies and still be respected and accepted by society.*

*Although there are many movements within feminism, it’s more than a movement. It’s a theory, a way of life and the core goal is to achieve equality for all marginalized and oppressed groups of people. There are many stereotypes of who feminists are and what their fight looks like.*
“Sex positivity is the idea that all people should be able to do whatever they want with their bodies, as long as they are not harming anyone or taking away someone else’s agency. It’s having an attitude that all consensual sexual activities are and should be healthy and pleasurable.”

This leaves very minimal space for black women to speak their story and to be heard from a feminist perspective. So, when we do engage in feminism, it’s often labeled otherwise because we don’t fit into the already existing idea of what feminism is. Once black women choose to engage in sex positivity, we are deemed hoes, instead of feminists. We aren’t given the privilege of that title in the same way that our white counterparts are.

Slut shaming is a real problem that so many black women face. Society tells us that women are supposed to be sexual only behind closed doors and only with our husbands. There are so many things wrong with this rhetoric. The first major problem is that not all women are heterosexual. This may be shocking news to some, but, yes, it’s true. Gay people, lesbian people, bisexual people, pansexual people, exist. People across the spectrum exist! The second problem is that this ideology is the assumption that we only engage in sex to please our partners and there is no gain for ourselves. So, when women deviate from this norm and choose to have sex simply because they like to, it disrupts society. Men (and some women) are literally shook to the core. Subsequently, these women are labeled as hoes, sluts, whores, etc. But what exactly is a hoe? I decided to ask a few students of their opinions.

Malcolm Crider, a sophomore, said that a hoe is “somebody that’s for everybody.” He went on to say that a hoe is “somebody who loves their outer self more than they love their inner self.” Tracie Pickett, a senior, stated that “hoes do not exist because the word was created as a way of othering women who take agency over their sexuality.”

Lastly, Geovontae Craig, a senior as well, stated that a hoe is “somebody that is bouncing from friend to friend.” What I found interesting was that the men I talked with did not gender the term, yet there was an underlying assumption that they were talking about women. Nevertheless, my point was proven that you’ll never find one universal definition for the word hoe, because it is a social construct. This construct was created to keep women from ascribing to their own agency. What we do know about the term hoe, is that it is a racially charged term. Black women are more likely to be called a hoe, than women of other races. Again, demonstrating how hard it is for black women to express themselves sexually.

But, hypersexualization of black women is a real thing! Although the goal of sex positivity is to create an environment in which women can express themselves sexually without any backlash, there is a flipside. Fighting for women’s bodies to stop being hypersexualized is also another movement. A woman showing her breasts should not be a crime, since breasts are not sexual organs and should not be viewed as such. Women aren’t even given the freedom to breastfeed their children without being criticized for showing too much of their bodies. Why sexualize a body in a non-sexual situation?

Historically, black women have never been allowed the agency to be the sexual beings we are. Since slavery times, women have been seen as overly sexual. This is where the stereotype of the “Jezebel” comes from. Many enslaved black women were raped by their slave owners or other white plantation workers. White women, then jealous of the white man desiring to be with black women, thus created this stereotype that black women are overly sexual.
Another example of this is seen through the life of Saartjie "Sara" Baartman, who was a black woman put into freak shows because of her very large butt. She was an outcast in society, seen as other than human and raped by everyone around her. She died in 1815 and her body was not buried until 2002 because she was put into a museum for people to gawk at, even in death. This is the type of stuff that needs to be talked about more if we ever want progress. Social media plays a huge role in how we discuss and review sexual cultures. Young, black, millennial women who are third-wave feminists are often discredited in the work they do online. I have personally been called a "Twitter feminist" when trying to explain feminist issues on Twitter. The whole concept of a "Twitter feminist" is that a woman only talks about these issues on Twitter simply to annoy men and never do so in real life, which literally makes no sense at all.

It’s easy to get caught up in what we see online and forget that there are real people typing out these things. I’m always behind the computer or holding my phone and typing these things. I share these thoughts in everyday life, casual conversation, at rallies, at forums, in papers for classes and here in this magazine as well. Whenever black women choose to speak their truth, in some sort of way, we are discredited or our voices are minimized. The iconic bell hooks herself has said that feminism is not just for women or about women, but is for everyone. So the idea in the black community that feminism is the white woman’s fight, is old and tired and needs to be done away with. Despite this belief however, Black women have been and remain the driving force behind third-wave feminism. Sex positivity and changing the ways in which society views sexual cultures is a very hot topic for Black millennial women. Sex positivity is the idea that all people should be able to do whatever they want with their bodies, as long as they are not harming anyone or taking away someone else’s agency. It’s having an attitude that all consensual sexual activities are and should be healthy and pleasurable. This attitude encourages sexual pleasure, as well as experimentation. The fight to achieve this is aimed at women simply because socially, women receive more criticism for embracing sexuality than men do. But it should be noted that this criticism practically doubles for Black women.

A key part of any liberation movement is giving people personal agency. Essentially, giving agency is giving them the power to make choices for themselves without any social backlash, or legal backlash in some cases. These are things that one must understand when discussing topics such as sexuality, sex work and sex cultures. It’s human nature to crave sex. Your gender nor your race should never define how much you are supposed to like having sex. Your gender should also never define how much of your body can be shown. I’m glad to see that this is the direction we are moving into. Through all of the criticism, black women have been able to create a subculture where we can celebrate hoe culture and celebrate our bodies on our terms. This is a place where many black millennials and third-wavers have reclaimed the term hoe and made it our own. The work of endless hoes, and Twitter honeys and women like Nicole Milfie and Feminista Jones have paved the way and made it possible for many Black women to express themselves without fear of social ridicule or backlash from peers. I thank them for the work they have done and bringing me to the light. Every day, they inspire and free me because that’s what feminism is about. Feminism is freedom, it’s uhuru.
Back to our Roots: Understanding Our Past, Present & Future

by YULANI RODGERS • photos by TIERRA THOMAS

Since the reemergence of African fashion within Western culture, black millennials are more prideful of their roots by combining both worlds through self-expression.

Throughout history, black culture has been belittled while simultaneously used as a source of revenue by those who are not directly a part of the community. However, throughout the past decade, a revitalization of African culture has become an important factor in the black community. Young teens, millennials and celebrities alike are wearing fashions from or inspired by African countries. The club scene even includes more Afro beat sounds. As our generation grows and continues to discover our roots, we’ve gone back to the earliest parts of our history to discover that black is beautiful in all aspects.

In the past five years, the U.S. has been in turmoil because of recent police brutality against black men and women that have gone viral on social media. The unsatisfactory results of "justice" for those shootings have pushed black people to unify, which has allowed our true history to become more mainstream.
In turn, many people have begun to dig deeper into their roots to understand their past and explore the traditions of their ancestors. Thus, many white celebrities have copied the styles of African countries, not understanding their depth, but solely looking at the styles as trends.

People like Miley Cyrus and Khloe Kardashian have culturally appropriated such styles, while black girls are shamed for it. For example, former “E!” news anchor, Giuliana Rancic, praised Miley Cyrus for her faux locs on “Fashion Police,” but stated, “I feel like she smells like patchouli oil or weed,” when referring to Zendaya’s.

Out of every culture, African culture is the least respected, even though it’s one of the foundations of all cultures and trends today. Food, body jewelry, fashion, medicine and natural hairstyles such as cornrows and bantu knots are only some of the many aspects that originated from Africa.

The reemergence of African culture has reached every corner of ours. First was the fashion world. Dashikis and African print became the trendiest clothing items to wear to express interest in African culture. Egyptian-themed jewelry and African fabric head wraps took over the fashion industry. In 2016, Marc Jacobs featured locs on his runway at NYC Fashion Week, which was another example of appropriating styles while the black community is shamed for it. Some people with locs are discriminated against when applying for jobs, but the same hairstyle was complimented while on the runway.

“As our generation grows and continues to discover our roots, we’ve gone back to the earliest parts of our history to discover that black is beautiful in all aspects.”

Next up is the music industry. Artists such as Chris Brown, Nicki Minaj and Drake have worked with artists who produce mostly Caribbean or Afro beat music. Music giants like these acknowledging artists like Gyptian and Ayo Jay showcases the beauty that can come from combining African and black culture.

Although there’s a thin line, it’s important to understand the difference between culture appropriation and culture appreciation. Appropriation is copying a cultural style, not understanding its symbolism and
significance and most importantly, not respecting it. Appreciation is a respected mutual cultural exchange and most importantly, not a personal need for self-expression, which is ultimately exercising privilege.

Being Black is multifaceted. It’s not just growing up in a country that has oppressed us from birth, or being from a country whose story is never told by someone who looks like us. To be black means that we are a living combination of both stories and it’s up to us to ensure that both stories are told and respected.
The trend of naturalism has become the “new wave,” but has imposed an unwanted natural hair hierarchy. As natural hair becomes more widely accepted in the 21st century Black aesthetic, it is important to redefine the definition of nappy so we remember that all hair types, from 1A to 4C, are beautiful.

The past few years have been a transition from store shelves filled with containers of “creamy crack,” to shelves loaded with a variety of products mimicking smells of tropical paradise, coconuts and fruit salad. This transition has shown the journey of many African-Americans returning to their roots by embracing their natural hair. This has been a trending topic for a while, as the desire to embrace natural hair progresses and flood social media timelines. But, while it has been an amazing movement, the journey has still presented its own problems.

The word nappy is built around different definitions. As derived from the British, it means a baby’s diaper. Other definitions define it as liquor. Yet, as many people hear the word today, it stands for something completely different. The Online Etymology Dictionary defines nappy as “fuzzy, kinky and used in colloquial or derogatory reference to the hair of black people.” Some often use it interchangeably with words such as “coily” and “curly” but for many, nappy is tied to negative connotations and posed as a way of insulting another.

As history shows, many African-Americans have experienced the pressure to submit to Eurocentric beauty standards. These standards claimed dominance in the minds of many people, subjecting them to feeling as if appearing a certain way would be more acceptable and beautiful. Though this is not a problem that has targeted African-Americans alone, it has been a great burden to the community.

During slavery and even now, African-American hair is deemed ugly and unprofessional by Europeans. To them, the hair was and still is wooly, nappy and unidentifiable with the Eurocentric beauty standards. Therefore, the word nappy can be interpreted as insulting, which raises a problem in the attempt to divide natural hair types. While numerous women today are praised for embracing their natural hair, others face insults of their hair deemed “nappy” instead of simply natural. The reason there is a divide between natural and so-called nappy hair probably stems from the multiple types and textures of hair along with the “good hair” idea from slavery days.
"Hair is an essential part in a woman’s platform, so it is important to learn to accept and embrace all natural hair for exactly how it is."

A 3b hair type might be perceived as natural in comparison to 4c hair, that may be labeled as nappy due to the differences in textures and curl-patterns. Definable and loose curls catch more attention than the kinky, coiled, wool-like hair.

Darian Wilson, an Indiana University Graduate and Kent State Impact leader, highlighted some of the struggles that she faced growing up with kinkier, 4c hair.

"Growing up, I thought my hair was bad," she said. "It wasn’t as straight as some of my peers, particularly my white friends and it just didn’t look like everybody else’s."

When Darian decided to try the natural journey, she was very hesitant because she believed that it wasn’t considered cute. After a while, she finally joined the movement as it began to grow bigger, but it wasn’t something that she adapted to quickly. She felt as if it weren’t for her because her hair was too much to maintain and curls weren’t “popping” enough. After internal struggle and resistance, she decided that turning away from relaxers would be best for the health of her hair. She began to love her natural hair once she began to see it as “cute, healthy and manageable.”

Kent State University senior, Jeremey Galvez believes that the term nappy hair is a lie.

"That term ‘nappy hair’ was used on black women so they would be ashamed of their natural hair," he said. "I think all natural hair is beautiful. Especially when you think about the context of it and how women have outgrown the shame that comes with it and turned it into a statement of power, a statement of pride. Women shouldn’t have to constantly be compared to others. They should be able to stand independent on their own."

While the natural hair world consists of many diverse styles, textures, types and curl-patterns, it is still important to see and accept every one of those as simply natural with no buts or side notes. There is no correct standard of what natural hair is. Hair is an essential part in a woman’s platform, so it is important to learn to accept and embrace all natural hair for exactly how it is.
Prozac for Breakfast
by ILE-IFE OKANTAH • graphics by ALEX THARNISH

Mental health is a topic that’s often overlooked in the black community. We’re told to “be strong,” “get over it,” or pray about,” never questioning the need for emotional, physical and most importantly, medical help.

I was five years old when I first thought the world would be a better place without me. I was five years old when I decided that I did not want to be me anymore. I didn’t want the burden of being inside my own brain and I surely didn’t want anyone else to feel the burden of knowing me.

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, “As many as 2 to 3 percent of children ages 6 to 12, and 6 to 8 percent of teens may have serious depression, and an estimated 2.8 million adolescents (ages 12 to 17) in the United States had at least one major depressive episode in 2014. Furthermore, about 80 percent of kids with an anxiety disorder and 60 percent with depression are not getting treatment.”

For the first 18 years of my life, I was suffering severely without any type of treatment. I lived under the control of an invisible illness that existed within the walls of my skull yet manifested itself in all areas of my life. I became an overachiever. One success was never adequate enough; I could always do better. I was constantly trying to validate my place on this planet to everyone around me because I never felt good enough.

Black women are often told that we aren’t allowed to feel. We aren’t told that explicitly but instead we are told to be quiet when we’re happy, so as not to take up too much space in a room. We are told not to get too angry, so we aren’t feared. We are told not to have an attitude, because that is ghetto and unattractive. We are told by our own community that we must be strong and unshakeable in all circumstances. We are told to dim our light to make others comfortable, while at the same time we are told to be a beacon of light to give others strength. We are constantly torn between the angry black female narrative and the black superwoman expectations. Our emotions are always paradoxical.

For a person like me, a person whose light often shines too bright for those who aren’t ready, being a black woman was hard initially. I never wanted to be that angry black female who made people click their teeth when I walked by because my blackness was too hard to take in. On the other hand, I never wanted to let anyone down because I felt the burden of continuing the legacy that my ancestors left before me. Being depressed was never an option so, of course, seeking treatment was out of the question.

On the outside it seemed as if I had my life together: high GPA, loving boyfriend, motivated dancer with numerous friends and a loving family. But that’s only what I wanted people to see. Eventually, the flimsy house of cards that I called my life fell apart. My depression led to an eating disorder that left me at 115 pounds. I was stuck in an abusive relationship and was struggling to remain afloat.

It was only a matter of time before my situation became a matter of life or death. After a nearly fatal breakdown, it was time for me to get help. I was diagnosed with clinical depression, general anxiety disorder and anorexia. It was time for me to face the demons that were trying to kill me from the inside out.

Kevin Bree, a Canadian writer and comedian, described his journey with depression in a 2013 TED Talk. Bree said, “Real depression isn’t being sad when something in your life goes wrong, real depression is being sad when everything in your life is going right.”

My treatment began with months of therapy and what felt like endless conversations about the inner workings of my brain. I replayed moments from when I was five, when I wished to fall asleep and never wake up.
I retold moments from when I was 17, and my boyfriend’s best friend took advantage of me. I let out everything; I let go of my albatross. After the confirmation that I indeed had ineffective serotonin receptors, I was prescribed Prozac. I was not going through a depressing time in my life; I was biologically depressed. Like many people, I believed this was a death sentence; I assumed I would be a drugged zombie just going through the motions of life. But then I realized you would never advise a diabetic not to take insulin.

On the other hand, I had to learn that there is no magic pill to cure any illness. Just as a diabetic can’t take insulin and eat chocolate cake all day, I had to take control of my mental wellbeing. I began to meditate heavily. I began practicing yoga and journaling. I let go of toxic relationships and habits. I began a journey within myself. My depression is a part of me, but I will never allow it to define me.

“Life is about duality. There is happiness, there is sadness. There’s light, there’s dark. There’s hope there’s hurt,” said Breel when discussing coping with depression. “And I think that for me, nothing in my whole life has ever helped me understand more about myself, more about others, more about life than dealing with depression.”

Every morning I wake up and thank the universe for another day. I check in with myself and take note of my mental health that day. There will never be a time in my life when every day I wake up happy, but every day I will make a cup of coffee and take Prozac with my breakfast.

“The world I believe in is one where embracing your light doesn’t mean ignoring your dark.”

— Kevin Breel
The joke of America has become our reality as the 45th President, Donald Trump, surpassed expectations and won the presidential campaign. The black community has survived previous administrations before, so how can black millennials do the same?

After a long day of news updates and refreshing my Facebook feed, I find myself asking, “How the heck did we get here?” We heckled for months the idea of “Celebrity Apprentice” star Donald Trump getting anywhere near the White House. I mean, there was absolutely no way, right? Meme after meme, laugh after laugh, we were convinced that nobody would really vote for him. Right? But they did, and at alarming rates. And before we could even cry out the words “Oh no,” Donald Trump became the 45th president of the United States. Though it was not the fate that many of us wanted, we’re here now and it is really happening.

Although everyone may not feel the same way about our new commander-in-chief, there’s a pretty unanimous feeling among one group — Black millennials. That feeling is fear mixed with a little nausea and a hint of Black power. Amid all the injustice toward Blacks in America, there seems to be a surge in pride amongst us and we are fired up with resistance and ready to face whatever the new administration throws our way.

Post-election, although the country as a whole was in utter disbelief, many passive Trump opposers took on the idea that, “Well, maybe he won’t be that bad.” But, fast forward only a few months and we’ve already realized that he will, indeed, be that bad. Since he has been in office, his changes from the Obama administration have been cringe-worthy for minorities, women and the lower class.

According to The Washington Times, President Trump signed an executive order in January barring federal funds from organizations that promote abortion around the world, including the International Planned Parenthood Federation. According to CNN, another trustworthy news outlet, but “fake news” according to the president himself, Trump said he is “pro-life,” but Planned Parenthood provides free and affordable birth control measures, such as the pill, condoms and IUDs. It also provides the morning-after pill and, in fact, provides so much more than just abortion services. Each year, the organization does 830,000 breast exams, close to one million cervical cancer screenings and nearly half a million HIV tests, according to CNN. Why would a president who values the human life so much oppose an organization like PP that is saving the lives of low-income women every day?
Aside from reproductive rights, since Trump has been in office, he has also vowed to repeal Obamacare, which would leave millions of people uninsured. Under his plan, poorer and older Americans will be the ones left without adequate health insurance. One surely cannot claim to be pro-life if he allows millions of low-income families to suffer and struggle to stay healthy every year.

It does not end with health care though — President Trump has incited fear in minorities across the U.S., specifically Muslim-Americans and immigrants. From the Muslim ban to plans for the infamous “wall,” it seems our new president is doing his best to reverse America’s melting pot history.

Where does that leave us? As Black millennials, what can we do to stay afloat in this new tide? For starters, I say we declare our worth. This administration may not seem to value minorities in America, so we must value and protect ourselves. We must become knowledgeable of the laws and rights and study our amendments. We must make our fight inclusive of the LGBTQ community and remember that we are not the only minority that needs protecting. We must show compassion for all people and extend a helping hand when we can. Believe it or not, it costs nothing to help someone.

If you want to help in a big way, there are many organizations that need support more than ever in this Trump era. Groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, Planned Parenthood, Southern Poverty Law Center, Lambda Legal, Council on American-Islamic Relations and the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) are in place to protect the civil liberties of all faced with adversity (race, religion, sex, income, reproductive rights and sexual orientation). Donating or volunteering for an organization is a great way to get involved and learn more about activism and the changing laws.

We are the future, so it’s time we start acting like it. We have to look out for each other and make sure we are doing our part in making America SAFE again.
The raised fist, or the clenched fist, is a symbol of solidarity and support. It is also used as a salute to express unity, strength, defiance and is a symbol of resistance in the face of violence.
Banding Together Against The Travel Ban

by ANDREW KEIPER
graphics by JOY

Whether it’s a wall or a travel ban, Donald Trump’s executive orders has separated the country now, more than ever. Although the division has generated hate and racism, it’s also created an awakening among many progressives.

With a few ill-advised strokes of his pen, Donald Trump has demonstrably changed the environment for millions of immigrants in America and hundreds of thousands hoping to gain entry to the States.

Trump’s executive orders on immigration — the first struck down in court, the second currently in legal limbo — sparked a wave of violence and vitriol against immigrants and people of color, while grassroots efforts rose up to fight for their lives and rights. Across the nation, protesters flocked to airports and intersections to demonstrate their displeasure with Trump’s actions.

It appears the effects of Trump’s travel ban are two-fold. On one hand, racists are attacking immigrants and minorities with increased frequency, emboldened by Trump’s implicitly supportive rhetoric. On the other, progressive America is undergoing an awakening, sparked completely by Trump’s ascension to the presidency.

The second iteration of Trump’s travel ban was rolled out with the hopes of minimal judicial challenges. The revised language removes a provision for religious discrimination, which was among the hardest hitting criticisms of the first executive order. Additionally, the act excludes Iraq from the original seven majority-Muslim countries. Immigrants from six countries — Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — would be banned from obtaining visas for 90 days in the new order. Refugee admissions from Syria would be banned for 120 days, shortened from an indefinite period of time in the first order. Currently, 10 mostly Republican-led states have filed legal briefs in support of Trump’s immigration ban.

Those impacted by his actions are not an abstraction but are real people who live in our communities. A Kent State University doctoral student, Iranian Mansoureh Shasti, was banned from returning home after visiting family in Iran and was unable to reunite with her husband for nearly two months due to Trump’s actions. The couple and their one-year-old daughter live in Stow and have been in the States since 2011. This is the impact of the travel ban: families are torn apart and the difficulties of immigration are exacerbated and compounded.

Trump began his campaign in June of 2015. Coincidentally, the Southern Poverty Law Center notes a 197-percent rise in anti-Muslim hate acts since 2015. The rise in hate is among the most devastating, immediate and violent impacts of the president’s actions. The president, whose ascension was heralded by white supremacists like David Duke, has quietly acquiesced to the violence striking the nation and stouter-stepped in disavowing support from hate groups. This racism hasn’t been reserved for only Muslims and immigrants. A wave of anti-Semitism has swept Jewish communities across the nation, with reports of painted swastikas and vandalism spiking. Indeed, this racist violence knows no bounds outside of ignorance. Indian Americans, many immigrated from India or South Asia, have been harassed and killed by people emboldened by Trump’s nationalism as well.

The precipitous rise in anti-Muslim hate since Trump’s campaign kicked off has been documented by the Bridge Initiative at Georgetown University. The study recorded 174 incidents of anti-Muslim violence during 2015, including 12 murders, 8 arsons, 54 acts of vandalism and 9 shootings or bombings. In a harrowing trend, the study found that some children as young as 12 years old were perpetrators of threats and anti-Muslim violence.

The pendulum of invigoration brought on by Trump’s election swings both ways. Progressive America is awakening, with regular people — many with no prior organizing experience — diving headlong into the fray to resist the presidential madness. A day after the inauguration, some 3 million people marched in cities across the country to participate in the Women’s March. Worldwide, participation in the marches was estimated to be around 5 million.
“His presidency is not a death knell but rather a call to action for those ready to fight like hell to ensure the rights and safety of America’s most vulnerable.”

This massive display of dissent was only the beginning. In the months since the inauguration, countless organizations, initiatives and movements have launched. Established advocacy groups, like the ACLU, have received exponential support in the wake of the president’s actions. In particular, the ACLU raised more than $24 million in online donations after Trump signed the first travel ban. That amount and the speed with which it was raised demonstrate the wildfire of concern and empathy sweeping the nation.

Activism hasn’t been restricted to the national stage. In true grassroots fashion, organizers are pushing their local city governments to embrace immigrants and refugees, many demanding they adopt the “sanctuary city” title. One such city is Columbus, Ohio, where the mayor rolled out an executive order meant to keep law enforcement from helping with federal deportation activities and to ensure the city remains a safe place for the displaced. His order fell short of officially adopting the “sanctuary city” title. This progressive push in Columbus wouldn’t be possible if it weren’t for the organizers working throughout the city to build networks of support for immigrants and push the local politicians to enshrine protection in policy.

Trump is a president insulated from public outcry by his dangerous administration, gilded disconnect and near-constant consumption of Fox News television. He has never been a man of the people but merely a man who tapped into the darkest, most warped fears of some people. His presidency is not a death knell but rather a call to action for those ready to fight like hell to ensure the rights and safety of America’s most vulnerable.

No demographic is safe from his onslaught. He’ll continue attacking immigrants, women, people of color, the working class, students and the poor without compromise or pause. The onus is on us to band together, embrace our differences and fight with a renewed sense of solidarity. We have to manufacture community where he seeks to fracture it. We have each other in this fight, and with that power we can stymie and resist him at every step. If he’s hell-bent on destroying America, then we have to fight to make his life hell.
In solidarity with the Muslim population during the political climate, we understand that representation matters, so we wanted to depict unbreakable unity and strength within the community.
In solidarity with the Latinx population during the
demanding political climate, we understand that representation
matters, so we wanted to depict unbreakable unity
and strength within the community.
The Obama Era: 
Their Importance to the Black Community

by SIERRA ALLEN
illustration by AUSTIN COATS

As one of the most beloved former First Families, the Obamas are an example of an exceptional family, but most importantly, an example of hard work to the black community.

As an eighth grader, I didn’t quite understand the significance of former President Barack Obama in 2008. To me, he was just another president, but with a darker skin complexion. I didn’t understand why my history teacher at Perkins Middle School pressured us to take interest in the election, especially when we didn’t know what the hell they were talking about. I didn’t understand why my mother interrupted my sleep during election night, jumping up and down as if we’d won the lottery. With a blanket wrapped around my body, I wiped the sleep from my eyes, followed her downstairs and sat on the couch, pretending to know what I was watching. I mean, I knew I was watching the country’s first black president, but I didn’t comprehend the depth of this representation until I grew older. Now that I’m older and more aware of the hardships black people face, I can fully interpret just how monumental the Obamas are.

By winning a seat that was always reserved for white men, Barack Obama unknowingly set a standard for his black supporters, but specifically his young ones. He heightened the motivation of young black people within the political world as well as regular black people who just wanted to do better for themselves. He simply set a standard for being black. However, politics aside, the Obamas serve as an exceptional role-model family within the black community in general. From the South Side of Chicago, Illinois to The White House, the Obamas put their Ivy League degrees to use, all while remembering who they are and who they represent.

For me, seeing the Obamas as the pure essence of black family members is what made them so relatable. Although being black is multifaceted, the Obamas didn’t switch up and try to change themselves because of their position. Of course, professionalism was increased because of the nature of their titles, but no soul was lost. Barack Obama still maintained his untouchable Chicago swagger, winning the medal for the most suave president ever, and I’m sure he still talked as slick as he did when he finally won Michelle over. Also, no matter how stressed he was from various politicians’ antics, he kept his hairline crispy and in tip-top shape by flying out to his personal barber every two weeks—a laughable and relatable action, if I say so myself. Michelle Obama also holds the record for the most stylish former First Lady. Her smooth, chocolate skin glistened in her designer dresses, complementing her to-die-for curvy hips and toned arms. Just a mere sight of her poised posture and elegant look added a grin to our faces, as we watched her glide admirably across the TV screen. Raising their two beautiful daughters as black as they could and never forgetting where they came from, living in The White House sure didn’t put a damper on Michelle’s black mom ways.

“From the South Side of Chicago, Illinois to The White House, the Obamas put their Ivy League degrees to use, all while remembering who they are and who they represent.”
We could tell that Michelle “didn’t play,” which of course is the most identifiable concept that connects us all. There’s something about those sharp looks and pursed lips that take us back to childhood. Nevertheless, Malia and Sasha Obama are well behaved children, living a balanced life, focusing on school and fun, exemplifying the best of both worlds. One of my favorite characteristics of Michelle Obama, however, is her balance. She knows how to be a strong, black woman beside, behind and in front of her husband. She knows when to take the reins but also trusts her man when she should, which is one of the ultimate strengths of a woman. Michelle Obama is the epitome of a beauty and beast, while staying fabulous nonetheless.

As a 23-year-old black woman in a relationship with a black man, I can relate to the Obamas more so now than I did in eighth grade. They taught us what teamwork, focus, strength, black love and black excellence look like. I now understand why my middle school teacher tried to stress the importance of the 2008 election to the “hood kids” in the “bad demographic” school. I now understand why my mother jumped up and down as if we’d won the lottery, because in a sense, we did. Barack Obama, the black guy with the weird name, led by example and proved his worth to himself, America and, most importantly, to people who look like him.
The Black Dollar: No More 9 to 5
by CAMERON HOOKS
graphic by ISAIAH ALLUMS & JOYO

The African-American community has always been spiritually, mentally and financially separated from the rest of American society. By creating and supporting black owned businesses, we are creating economic stability and growth amongst ourselves.

John D. Rockefeller once said, “I don’t want a nation of thinkers, I want a nation of workers.” A nation of workers is the society we live in today. For 23 years of my life, I have seen the people surrounding me living paycheck to paycheck, unhappy and deprived of the joys life has to offer. Too often, regret comes in the form of “I wish,” “I should’ve,” and “I wanted to.” The inequality of wealth in this society is troubling and the only solution I can think of is the creation of our own business. I believe we need more people wanting to be entrepreneurs, earning and creating their own wealth in ways that they enjoy, thus becoming the financial leaders of our communities, giving back to our communities and making a prosperous environment. Once we do that, I believe life will be more than what is now perceived.

The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. The economic inequality in this country has become very unsettling; the average American citizen has many odds and obstacles set in place, ensuring the advancement of the wealthy. Former Secretary of Labor for President Clinton and a brave soul named Robert Reich exposes these troubling truths in his documentary, “Inequality for All,” laying out the blueprints for how we got here and where we are headed. The documentary gives you trembling facts: There has been no growth in the average workers’ wages nor a percentage increase of their wages since the 1970s, but there actually has been a drop in the percentage of wages. The earnings of the top 1 percent compared to the bottom 90 percent is a difference of 256 percent. In 2014, the annual average wage of the 90 percent was $33,297, while the top 1 percent’s annual income was $671,061. The list can go on and on. The pressing issues have yet to be dealt with and are often ignored. As a people, we must stand strong against this beast that has been created out of capitalistic ideals and beliefs.

“A community with small businesses is a community that thrives.”

A community with small businesses is a community that thrives. The benefits of small businesses in the community are substantial, from providing the community with jobs to increasing the tax base. The African-American community has always been on its own and as result, many African-Americans tend to spend their time and money outside of their own communities, which has left these areas deprived of any economic gain. Before the civil rights movement and the end of segregation, many African-Americans were small business owners, having their hands in banks, pharmacies and other businesses. These communities once thrived because of these owners, who gave African-Americans jobs that weren’t open to them in most large industries. Also, because of segregation, many African-Americans had to spend their money within their communities.

Greenwood, a neighborhood community in Tulsa, Oklahoma was a prime example of this phenomenon. Many referred to it as “Black Wall Street,” because by the 1920s it was considered one of the most successful African-American economies in American history. Greenwood was filled with banks, hotels, cafés, movie theaters and boutiques, all owned by African-American individuals. There have been countless examples of black communities that have generated a mass economic gain for themselves such as Harlem and Pittsburgh’s Hill District. Sadly, many of these communities collapsed due primarily to race riots, government-funded highways, and integration.

Starting your business can be terrifying, but without any great risk, there is no equal gain. As stated previously, generating your own wealth is the best way to oppose against the economic imbalance. For many African-Americans, there needs to be a shift in the interest of owning their own communities and culture. Don’t be the “worker” that this society wants. Rather, break out of the norm and create your own.
A Few Local Entrepreneurs

Photography
Jermaine Jackson
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Health and Beauty
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In collaboration with The Burr Magazine, Editor-in-Chief, Samantha Lekes discusses the possibility of other races experiencing the black perspective.

The sun was high overhead on a hot June afternoon. I stretched my legs out on my blue towel, breathing in the smell of chlorine and coconut tanning lotion. Kids were splashing in the shallow end of the pool, shrieking with delight and teenagers were throwing a water football back and forth. The pool was packed and the water was shockingly cold, despite the beaming sun overhead. I sat up and pulled my sunglasses down off the top of my head. My friend Joiy sat on a lime green towel next to me, eating a pretzel.

“Did you notice anything?” she asked. She slowly glanced around the perimeter of the pool.

“The water is freezing cold even though it’s a hundred degrees out?” I said in a questioning tone.

She laughed and motioned at the people lounging on their towels and splashing in the water. “Did you notice I’m the only black person here?” she asked me.

I looked around the pool. Besides a few Hispanic families, everyone around us was white. I was surprised at the lack of diversity, but, had she not said anything about it, I admit I would have never noticed. I grew up in a small town of 5,413 people. My hometown in Northeast Ohio was not known for its diversity with more than 77 percent of the residents white, according to 2015 U.S. Census Bureau statistics/figures.

I wasn’t sure how Joiy felt about being the only black person there. It didn’t seem to bother her as we stood up and walked over to the side of the pool to let our feet dangle in the cold water. But that moment sparked an interest in me: Can white individuals truly ever understand what it is like to be black?

Today’s society has improved immensely from when African-Americans were forced into slavery or from when our nation was divided by racial segregation. But racism still exists in our society today. Though blacks may have more opportunity in society, we cannot turn a blind eye toward acts of racism appearing across the country today.

The U.S. has 26 percent of the world’s prisoners despite only having 5 percent of the world’s population, according to a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) fact sheet. A total of 2.3 million people are incarcerated with 1 million of those individuals being black. Studies show African-Americans are six times more likely to be incarcerated than whites.

“(Racism) has always been there, and it’s played out in different ways” says Christina McVay, senior lecturer for Kent State’s Pan-African Studies. She also serves as Uhuru’s advisor. “While it might have looked like racism was on the decline and maybe even disappearing, we had what we can call institutionalized racism.”

McVay says mass incarceration is just one form of institutionalized racism. McVay, who grew up during the civil rights movement, says racism has become more subtle today than it was in the past during times of segregation. She referred to the racism she witnessed growing up as “in your face.”

“The kind of racism that most whites can see and recognize as racism like ‘whites only’ signs or KKK events and rallies — that’s easy to identify,” McVay says. “It became much harder. Racism is so much more subtle.”

While racism prior to the 1960s was very blatant with segregated schools and water fountains, racism today is harder to spot. She used a black couple who got turned down for a loan as an example. These individuals questioned the decision of the loan officer to refuse them.

“They could never quite be sure,” she says. “Is it because I don’t qualify? Or is it because I’m black.”

“Listening to black individuals and being sensitized to the obstacles and racism they endure is the first thing we can do to move toward a society centered in empathy and compassion.”
Though as a nation, the U.S. has worked past racism against blacks — even electing Barack Obama as the first African-American president — some individuals have kept their racial views but have kept quiet because of political correctness. McVay cites listening as a key component that will allow the nation to move past subtle forms of racism, such as institutionalized racism.

"Can a white person really understand?" McVay repeats my question aloud and lets out an exasperated sigh. "I really don’t know. When I leave here, I walk into Acme and I’m a white person. I’m not a black person. I don’t know what it feels like to be a black person and walk into Acme. It shouldn’t feel any different, but I don’t know that for a fact."

Mwatatu Okantah, a black associate professor for Pan-African Studies, believes knowing what it is like to be a black person is not the question white individuals should be asking. Instead, he believes in being sensitized to racial issues of the present and of the past.

"I know it’s possible for white students to become sensitized to these issues," Okantah says. "I think it’s … wrong-headed to attempt to as a white person to think, ‘Can I think like what a black person is thinking?’ or ‘Can I feel what a black person is feeling?’"

Okantah directs the study abroad program in Ghana and pulled up a video titled “The Real Africa Movie” on YouTube. A picture of a faded black wooden door appears on the screen. Okantah says this used to be called “the gate of no return” because these dungeons in the Cape Coast Castle were the last stopping point for Africans before being shipped off into slavery.

"Black, white — all kinds of people go through these castles,” Okantah says. "You can be sensitized to this. You don’t have to be a black person to feel something when you go in there."

Okantah doesn’t believe in the “you’ve got to walk in my shoes” idea when it comes to understanding the back perspective. He says, for example, he’s never broken his leg before, but that doesn’t mean he cannot be sensitive to what that person is going through.

McVay connects this idea of being sensitized and having empathy to a quote from the late Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel: "The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference."

"I think that is, generally speaking about white people, I think that’s what we’ve been guilty of for centuries: indifference," McVay says. "We don’t care what their lives are like or what they face in our society or the hurdles they have to jump over. Empathy and compassion, hopefully, would result in white people caring and not being indifferent."

This idea resonated with me as she continued to talk about the U.S.’s past history of racial prejudice and slavery and segregation and even racism today as immigrant families with no outstanding warrants or criminal histories are being deported.

It’s natural to only look at what is in front of you and to not worry about matters that don’t concern you, but as Americans we are part of a bigger picture. We must have empathy and compassion for our brothers and sisters — no matter what color their skin is. Listening to black individuals and being sensitized to the obstacles and racism they endure is the first thing we can do to move toward a society centered in empathy and compassion.
A Kiswahili term meaning creativity, Kuumba is a curated collection of visual and written artwork by local students and faculty.
I was walking through the park, practicing my poems stuck in cast of my own words when something broke my concentration. A seasoned old man who couldn't be younger then 90 was calling me over. He was something like a living time capsule; I mean, you could trace the lines of history in his wrinkles that stretched across his skin. Hunched over in a permanent bow to time, yet there was a strength in the curl of his smile that held a mischievous joy that could strike unease in the heart of others.

Naturally I walked over, I said, "How are doing sir?" He didn't speak, just gestured me to sit next to him. Now a normal person would know that something isn't right and walk away, but something about him intrigued my spirit so I stayed. I sat down keeping him in arm's length, hoping I wouldn't have to blow one of my elders away, "What can I do for you, sir?"

Through crooked teeth, he spoke with a rasp like this was the first time his voice broke through the dust in years. "What is it that you find yourself doing child?"

"Poetry," I responded.

"Poetry?!!...Is that your art to the world?" he said

"I mean, it's just something I do. I'm nothing spe-," I began.

He cut me off with a wave of his hand and said, "Let me tell you a story, child. Close your eyes and listen."

"I come from a time of art that washed over the streets and soaked into the souls of the people! Notice that I said soul...so it couldn't distinguish between the darkness of our skin or a man white as the chalk on the concrete. For as far I'm concerned, we were all Raisins in the Sun. Feeding off the fruitful radiation of our own genius. That was the shine of the Renaissance Movement. I guess I should backtrack for you child and start at the root, Harlem. Culture leaked from its heart from 5th street to 110th. Whether juicing in the walls of the Cotton Club, or random powwows amongst friends under an oak tree. They spoke peace and love! Black talent expressed through pounded chests, voices sung, trumpets rang and pens scratched across the paper. They made magic from the tiniest individuals to the greatest names known from Langston Hughes to Zora Neale Hurston, Louis Armstrong, and W.E.B.!

Artists are trees, they were the roots, and you are the leaves, Its time to breathe your Legacy...

Eyes still closed, I felt him place his hand across on my chest, and he asked me again, "Is poetry your art to the world?"

I paused and then answered, "...Yes!"

He removed his hand from my chest, but when I looked he was gone!

Something tells me he was the spirit of poetry telling me to carry on.
I use to know white as being just a color; like the color of milk or fresh snow during winter. Like white cotton, rice and sugar; picked by brown hands that formed blisters and splinters. Like white paper used in printers. Now, I see white clowns painted the bronze glowing like feet pale white so we can forever bow to their feet. While they paint their face brown, juggle our life around, laugh at the fact that we are inferior to them and still haven’t been found. I use to think white symbolized peace like, heaven and clouds, white gowns, you know the kind worn at weddings? Now I see white clowns dressed in white gowns, imitating white Jesus in the sanctuary and on mosque grounds. White evil spirits shaped in the form of man, brainwashing the minds of the masses, telling you to put all your faith in man, the white-man, white Jesus. Cesare Borgia to be exact; a pale white roman who has a satanic connection, and that’s a fact. It’s okay if you are dumbfound, I didn’t know either. The truth has been revealed, no need to celebrate Easter. I use to like white, until it was no longer just a color, until it was joined with man to create an evil empire, “oppression,” to keep my people under. Now, I can’t even use white and man together in the same sentence, you know “white-man” without thinking back 400 years and ahead of Cruel & Unusual Punishment in this White Prison System. But isn’t that against the Eighth Amendment? There’s no justice for the 50 shades of brown in this Criminal Injustice System. I use to love the season of winter until I found out it’s the white man’s favorite season. The month of December or is it fall, November? Either way, they rob melanin souls of their wages. Let’s not forget the taken of America, that dates back ages; Natives and Blacks captured and harvest in cages. Black names staining white paper, I’m talking pages upon pages at the New York Stock Exchange. We celebrate Columbus day, like he founded America. Feast on thanksgiving without paying homage to the Native Indians. And I’m not talking about the Cleveland Indians, but they wear Red, White and Blue. So, when I see the American Flag, I see gallons of Our Red Blood Spilled by the White-men in Blue. I will never attend Progressive Field. Christopher Columbus was an Indian-Giver, an Indian-Killer. Him and his white friends created smallpox, wrapped them in blankets and told them it would keep them warm during winter. But then they died by the river. I represent all 50 shades of brown, from milk chocolate to Caramel or is it Caramell? Whatever it is, it’s still brown. My brothers and sisters with the lightest shades of color, whose skin in the darkest of light is brighter than white will never grow duller. White isn’t light anymore. Brown is light and brown glow and as we grow, let’s not forget. Let’s not forget, that White ruined us. White ruined us with dehumanization, degradation, miseducation, stealing, injustice, and economic-castration. And white call us racists. “White-boy”, Black people don’t have the power to be racists. I repeat, “Blacks don’t have the power to be racists.” Do you remember the castration? Let me remind you of the Brutalization. The butchering of our testes, that prevented ejaculation during the penetration, in the womb of our queens that would have given birth to nations. So, the next time you call us racist, look up the definition and remember what your white man have done to the African Nation.
UNTITLED

Black couples fall in love in the middle of war
Kiss while dodging bullets
Every bed made love on
A battlefield
Every round
A riot
A fuck you
To every system of oppression
Interlocking to stop our intercourse
Black love is matter
Black love is heavy
Black love is the heaviest matter
Black love is plutonium
Black love is dangerous because Black love is the bomb
And the bacteria that survive it
Black love is immortal is infinite is orchestral
Will murder you to music and make babies right after
Black couples walk through disaster holding hands and giggling at
each other about stupid shit
To be Black and in love
Is to face an army with no armor and an open heart
enough ammunition in my peace
To end a war or start an orgy
To be Black and in love is to have to be magic
Is to know at any time your lover might disappear
Fall through a trap door chalk outline transform into a telephone
pole tombstone
Don’t you know this city is a graveyard
Black babies born here already buried
People only come to mourn
Perhaps we are made of mourning
Maybe we only know the day when it is breaking
So we burst into a billion pieces every time we make love we burn
the atmosphere around us
Blow everything the fuck up until there is
Nothing left to burn
Exhausts all the heat in the universe
Freeze time
At least we’ll know each other is still alive
Black love
Cannot say goodbye
Without I love you

And the most important part
Be safe
I love you
Be safe
I love you
Be safe
No matter how many times we say it it still feels like we need to
say it
Try to speak something into being that does not yet exist
Every time our lover comes back through the door it’s a victory
A battle won
A breath we can stop holding hostage
Our partners presence is ransom
Black love be a spy for the resistance
Gets swallowed on purpose
Knows the best way to heart of this beast is through his belly
can cook up a melting pot of revenge so good
make him forget he eaten his own men
Cold pistols baked into the cornbread
Pigs feet served on a fresh badge of honor
What a dish
Black love be
What a miracle
be the way he fixes her satin bonnet so it don’t fall off while she
sleep
Be the way she lets him pour his bottled up brown boy tears all over
her satin pillow
Be the night we watched Diamond
Reynolds witness her Black love
Get sucked into seven black holes
Amazed that she
still had the courage to push play
To fight for his justice
made sure his voice became a river
His Blood streamed around the world
She reminded all of us who watched him slip through our
fingers that
We have a hand in this fight.
Black love be like that
Black love be the way we want each other to be free
more than we want each other
Black love be like no other
Once, I had the pleasure of watching you look for me in a crowded room,
your gaze passing over person after person until it settled upon me
and held me like a newborn child
not wanting to let go.
It was something about the way that you caused me to melt under the warmth of your passionate stare
I imagined your hands gripping my sides
as your eyes spoke for you
and in that moment neither of us moved as the seconds dissolved into the formation of your smile
Three, two, and in one instant you had me wrapped up in your arms.
AFRAID OF THE DARK

afraid of the dark,
you proclaimed
we were not human;
called us savages,
broke us in as slaves;
turned us into Black Sambo Zip Coon Mammy
Jim Crow Aunt Jemima Uncle Ben
Sandra Bland Michael Brown Tamir Rice Malissa Williams and
Timothy Russell niggers—
turned us
into those people.
afraid of the dark.
what is really happening
when a police-white-man ‘cuffs
a five year old little black school girl?
who did another police-white man think he saw
when he forced
an eight month pregnant black woman
onto the ground to arrest her?
afraid of the dark,
you turned
us
into that dreaded criminal element to be feared;
the menace they see
in the haunting eyes staring back at them
reflected in the mirror of their own
hearts ...

VILLAGE LIFE

each day
village life begins at cock crow
when the sounds of the birds fill
the morning air.
a chicken scratches about the courtyard,
while a goat nibbles at leaves
a long a row of bushes.
people begin to stir.
a market woman, her wares
balanced on her head,
begin the long walk to the road.
a small boy sits
just outside my window repairing sandals.
a mother bathes a small child—reminding me of my own small
small days in my
grandmother’s care deep in Maryland woods—while children pass
with buckets on their way
to fetch water.
an Elder strolls a pathway
in slow rhythm
to the sounds of hammering in the distance.
nature is still sacred here,
the Earth is our Greater Mother
and the clock moves with the sun ...
MEMORIES

OMOLOLU UWADINMA

Slow dancing,
It's been a long time
since
I've done that.
Sitting down and
listing to
Songs that flood my
mind
With memories,
It's been a while
since iv
Done that to.

At some point
My mum was
Teaching me
How to tie my shoe-lace,
The next thing I
knew
I'm kissing a girl
for the
First time and telling
her
I'll still talk to her
after she
Moves away.

Before I know it I'm
Drinking my days
away,
While dancing the
whole night
Long.
Changes, they seem to
happen so fast
Sometimes you don't

kahzar powell - symmetric souls

You have a good thing, while
You have it.

And I guess there's
some Beauty
in that,
Like the changes in
the season.
Things come and go
You love thinking of
summer in
The winter.
While in summer
you think of the
beauty of the snow.
DONTE DOUGLAS

PART 1
So far removed from the campus life.
Not even close to a married life.
So I’m stuck here,
like a middle child.
And my mother lost her middle child.
I haven’t smiled,
it’s been awhile.
Well, I have smiled.
I just didn’t mean it.
And I still have dreams,
but I ain’t really scheming.
I encourage you to follow your dreams. and face those nightmares.
Life ain’t fair.
I spent a lot of time,
writing rhymes in geology class.
There’s not a star in the sky,
that can heal my pain.
Let the time fly by.
But even time doesn’t heal all,
time lets you know its real,
so I rap and my work is so raw

ELIJAH AUSTIN

SONG OF THE FALLEN KING
I always thought death would free me
Thought it would detach masters whip from my spine
As my body lays dormant in the earth
My soul sings songs of freedom while climbing to the promised land
Now I sit in stagnant soil
Watch cotton plants sprout from my eye sockets
My once vibrant smile now crushed into gravel
That’s the cost of this skin
In this land
I could smell his breath through her cheeks
His sulfur soaked teeth flashed me in ignorance
People like him don’t deserve to smile
still he hovers over her at night
His piercing stench wallowing in the crevice of her clavicles
The shadow of her innocence
Cast into a shack to store his lust
Nothing says rapes like bruises
on your little girl’s thighs
And nothing says hate like the beauty of violence
We trade punches at sun down
But it is My body found suspended in air

PART 2
As an artist,
release yourself.
Let the world hear your cry.
Look at me,
they labeled me shy,
now I write poems on my way to the Chi. A bunch of bull is all I feel.
Why God?
is the question the world feels.
Can the preacher really heal?
How much does his time cost?
I thought if I prayed everyday after college, I would become a boss.
Instead I did anything for a living,
wishing that my family was still living.
I wrote poems in history class,
because it wasn’t my passion.
Write down your sketches for fashion. Use that paint,
POWER in UNITY and FREEDOM

UHURU
SAVE THE DATE!

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