

VOLUME SIX

# LITTLE BLACK PEARL

T H E B U S I N E S S O F A R T



## Art Of Humanity

LBP is embarking upon the continued journey of discovery, reflection of purpose and focused intention.

## In Conversation

Grace is an active commitment to demonstrate and embody **generosity, beauty and skill** without the condition of having these qualities reflected or supported by our surroundings or experiences.

## Technology + Humanity

Technology can be used to create opportunities for economic, social and racial justice.



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## ART OF HUMANITY

MONICA HASLIP

This issue of Little Black Pearl is filled with inspiring stories, images and a big dose of creative medicine for the soul. LBP is embarking upon the continued journey of discovery, reflection of purpose and focused intention. Our belief in "Humanity" serves as the platform for this Magazine issue and our new "I Am" Project. The "I Am" project is designed to reshape the narratives of violence, racism, and poverty. Our collective investment in human potential has the power to release the positive energy necessary to reform our society. Sharing stories of affirmation and resilience create opportunities to uplift the spirits of all of the true warriors who are seeking justice and equality in spite of the challenges.

We are extremely proud to celebrate the extraordinary work of Miguel Deberry, an Alum of Little Black Pearl Art and Design Academy. Most of the images featured in this issue are from Miguel's portfolio as well as photographs

recently taken for the magazine. The Little Black Pearl Magazine has a new look and style that is designed to highlight our creativity and share inspiring stories about our uniquely rich community. Volume Six features Lizz Wright's (LBP Board Member) article on "Grace", Nichole Rollins "love letter" to Akim and celebrates the graduating class of 2016 and much more. We hope you enjoy the magazine and appreciate your continued support.

I believe in the power of love and the beauty of collective humanity.

Peace and Blessings,

Monica

*"True community is based upon equality, mutuality, and reciprocity. It affirms the richness of individual diversity as well as the common human ties that bind us together."*

**PAULI MURRAY**

*"Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place."*  
- ZORA NEALE HURSTON





# HUMANITY

hu·man·i·ty  
(h)yoo' manədə/  
noun:

1. humanity; plural noun: humanities  
• the human race; human beings collectively.

*"appalling crimes against humanity"*

synonyms: humankind, mankind, man, people, human beings, humans, the human race, mortals;

Homo sapiens

*"Africa is home to one-sixth of humanity"*

• the fact or condition of being human; human nature.

*"music is the universal language with which we can express our common humanity"*

synonyms: human nature, humanness, mortality

*"the humanity of Christ"*

2. humaneness; benevolence.

*"he praised them for their standards of humanity, care, and dignity"*

synonyms: compassion, brotherly love, fraternity, fellow feeling, philanthropy, humaneness, kindness, consideration, understanding, sympathy, tolerance; More leniency, mercy, mercifulness, clemency, pity, tenderness; benevolence, charity, goodness, magnanimity, generosity

*"he praised them for their humanity"*

*I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.*

**- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

# ARTIST HIGHLIGHT

## MIGUEL DEBERRY

Miguel Daniel DeBerry is an Alum of Little Black Pearl Art and Design Academy (LBPA). Miguel is also an aspiring photographer/videographer and filmmaker. His towering presence at first glance can be a bit intimidating, but the moment you lay eyes on his gentle smile and big infectious grin you realize he is simply a sweet gentle giant. Miguel's raw and natural talent is a gift that invites us to think of some of our most celebrated African American photographers such as; Jules Lion, James Vanderzee and Gordon Parks. Jules Lion (1810-1866) is often described as the first African American photographer who ran a studio in New Orleans in 1840. Miguel was the first student photographer at LBPA who was given the awesome responsibility of documenting some the school's most important events and activities.

Many of the important moments in humanity have been documented by incredibly gifted African American photographers. Their work captured the complexity of the civil rights movement as well as the bold beauty of nature. In some ways, we all consider ourselves quasi photographers. In pop-culture, we rely on professional and the everyday iPhone photographer to capture the mood, spirit and consciousness of humanity as it unfolds in our Global community. It takes an artist like Miguel who has that special gift to capture the "essence" of the moment.

Miguel's broad and bold style of photography pays homage to another great black photographer, James Vanderzee (1886-1983). Like Vanderzee's romantic depiction of Harlem, Miguel captures the unique and positive spirit of his subjects. The playful and moody attitude captured in his fashion shots are reminiscent of the great Gordon Parks during his days as a freelance fashion photographer for Vogue. Just mentioning any artist in the same category as the aforementioned Master's places them barefoot in front of some very "big Shoes" to fill. Miguel will need plenty of years to develop his artistic practice to truly stand on the shoulders and fill the shoes of our great Masters. Through this platform, we celebrate his gift and will continue to watch as his keen eye for the beauty in humanity places him in the position to add his footprint and chart new territory extending this great legacy of great image capturers.







# RE-INTEGRATION:

LEON HASLIP

## *Little Black Pearl empowers excellence through "Second Chances"*

For many small business-owners, hiring ex-felons is a no-brainer: that is, most don't even consider it. As an exception to this view, Little Black Pearl embraces the opportunity to assist some of those who find themselves on the other side of the criminal justice system and struggle to re-integrate themselves back into the community and civic world.

In a similar manner that LBP serves youth and students, the organization and school consider that being effective, results from allowing people to fail and still be assured that somewhere there is an opportunity for a second chance. Preparing them to meet opportunity with skills, a professional mindset and competent understanding of team dynamics is the challenge for the Little Black Pearl organization. Yet, strangely enough it is one of the organization's best people investments and decisions.

With the implications of wrongful convictions and police misconduct on the rise, the perspective of "once a criminal, always a criminal" is changing. Yet many ex-felons still carry the stigma of criminalization, and – in many instances – are precluded from participating in services and conveniences afforded to the non-incarcerated public. Systems, institutions and communities still stigmatize ex-felons - even after serving their sentences - as not being worthy of recovering a normal life: fundamentally denying ex-felons paths to redeem any sense of dignity and self-respect. Little Black Pearl has taken a different approach to this dilemma understanding that by preventing ex-felons from realizing the smallest successes, many reoffend and are re-incarcerated.

In 2007, Little Black Pearl expanded its mission to encompass a broader connection to families and communities that include the ex-felon. LBP determined that it was worth the effort to provide an avenue for hireable ex-felons to start with low stress positions, training and leadership skills to build their confidence and have space to dream about how they can rebuild their lives and build a future.

Through a collaboration with Heartland Alliance, Little Black Pearl initiated efforts to re-integrate three ex-felons who served prison time for a range of offenses. Starting with a rigorous interview process then training, each hiring step was intended to encourage confidence in their value as human beings and contributing citizens. The individuals hired through this program have taken this second chance to demonstrate their desire to contribute, flourish and grow in ways of trust and accountability.

Taking the risk to believe in people as employable assets has been a powerful decision for the organization. For the result is having a crew of workers that are consistent, trainable, capable, trustworthy, sociable, empowered, confident, dependable, loyal and aspiring.

Since LBP began its open recruitment of qualified ex-felons, the organization has employed over a dozen such workers. And currently retain three men who are from the initial group of hires, and one more from a more recent hire.

Being proud of their growth and successes, here is just a glimpse at the team that keeps the facility presentable, prepared and manageable:

Darrell - spent over 20 years incarcerated under a wrongful conviction until over-turned by a series of appeals, and the efforts of the People's Law Office and North Western's MacArthur Justice Center. Through their advocacy and support, the State's District Attorney dropped all charges and set aside his conviction. Following his release, Heartland Alliance Re-entry Program connected Darrell with Little Black Pearl that provided an opportunity to attain gainful employment. Darrell has become a spokesman for reparations to the wrongfully convicted. He has successfully advocated for the City of Chicago to honor its civil responsibility for compensation to those wrongfully convicted and spoke before the entire City Council on that behalf. Darrell has endured and recovered from the senseless and brutal murder (2015) of his last living sibling only months after being finally exonerated. He is a highly trusted and respected employee, who is now the Supervisor of the maintenance night crew. These accomplishments were "unknowns" before Darrell's hiring; however, LBP has witnessed the growth and healing of a person who only needed others to believe in his worthiness: and he has done the rest.

Michael – quiet but an intense worker, Mike came to LBP at the same time as Darrell. After working with LBP for a couple of years, Mike moved out of state, only to return and re-establish his employment. Based on his great performance and attitude during his first hire at Little Black Pearl, there was no question about having him return. Sturdy and dependable, he is always the "pickup-the-slack" person who fills in when others are unavailable. With a difficult past to overcome and a family to support, Mike demonstrates a steady, reliable and consistent way of going about improving his plight. He has been

a bedrock for the team in his consistency, focus and calm demeanor.

Alfonzo - Al pursues projects without the need to be assigned. His consistency allows Operations to expand its scope through his flexibility, attention to detail and desire to see himself do something to completion. After three stretches in prison for separate offenses, being released and spending several years attempting to find work, Alfonzo was asked by an LBP employee if he'd be interested in taking his place; and because of the confidence that Nikita had engendered at LBP, Al was given his first opportunity at working, since his release. Now he expresses self-confidence in knowing that having a stable life and stable employment is far better than feeding off the vulnerability of others. Today, Al carries a sense of pride for being able to do more with less, for getting honest with himself about his past, for being able to contribute to his family and others and for having something consistent to work at and complete. So, as projects are assigned, Al diligently approaches each task with a sense of challenge until they are finished and he is satisfied.

Nikita – Nikita determined that he could and would maintain a productive life and not return to previous ways or another prison term. Seeing the importance of family, he turned his attentions to what he could legitimately do and discovered the capacity to be productive, once he got the chance. Finding work with a print company and coming to LBP, fundamentally provided those avenues for change that he'd hoped for. Nikita used his new focus to find satisfaction and peace of mind. Even after leveraging his employment with LBP into a better paying position with a different print firm, he determined to find a way that he could still stay affiliated with LBP. So, he now works as the lead Coordinator for the Special Events Department. He manages events, schedules Staff and interacts with Clients from various interests and backgrounds. Nikita still works towards self-improvement both personally and professionally, which indicates that he has yet to reach his ultimate potential.

All-in-all, the experience of hiring and maintaining ex-felons in positions of employment has far exceeded the potential and expectations of anyone who may have conjectured the effort's success or failure. Little Black Pearl is proud that it courageously took the risk and followed its mission of embracing those worthy to be viewed as valuable and given a second chance.

For at some point in life, we have all been given and need a SECOND CHANCE!





# IN CONVERSATION:

LIZZ WRIGHT

## **EXONERATED.**

Last night I sat at a table of a gala for the Innocence Project, a foundation that has collected an immense force of legal talent, activists, professionals and volunteers who offer their gifts and time to the cause of providing DNA evidence and the reopening of cases for silenced and wrongly accused inmates all over the United States.

I shared the Grand Hyatt conference room of glistening tables with about 400 people: lawyers, writers, activists, politicians, actors and about 25 exonerated men who'd been falsely accused, all having lost an average of 14 years behind bars. A few of the "exonorees" had served over 20 years, one bearded painter with delicate blue eyes named Lewis was one of the 6 most recently released. He had been only a number of the State for 35 years.

Each of the newly freed men shared a few words about the experience of having their lives hastily dismantled and swept into dark corners by the faulty and illegal conduct of police, witnesses, judges and attorneys, people who needed to get on with things, to assign blame and rush into the pleasure of unearned resolve.

The men were beautiful. I listened to their measured and respectful words, some of them simply spoke their newly recovered names and shredded papers with their prison numbers printed on them. However, I was most moved by what they were NOT saying. I looked long at their gentle faces on the enormous projections on the walls that flanked the stage. I also listened carefully to the colors of their voices. The stories were remarkable, and we punctuated them with tears, sudden bursts of laughter, and soft gasping as we struggled to conceptualize the horrors. I begin to notice among them all a common air of tenderness, joy, and temperance and suddenly realized that everyone on that stage shared a common decision, a seasoned knowledge. They each understood the true cost of bitterness and had all clearly rejected it.

One of the final speakers was a Brooklyn man of glorious Jamaican swagger. He wore a linen suit with slung back shoulders, a clever smile and a singsong voice. In an instant his hands rushed out of his pockets fully extended and his voice abruptly rose in righteous ferocity. He spoke of the human spirit as a revelation, emphasizing its divine power over the reality received by our senses. He gave thanks for his experience because it gave him occasion to rise. When he had released these words he eased away from the microphone in relief and spoke as if he were singing a lullaby to close.

The night ended shortly after the speech as I mounted the stage to sing the oldest song I know. "Amazing Grace" suddenly was an anthem shared with these extraordinarily strong and broken souls, whose eyes sparkled with wisdom, who smiled like children.

Lizz Wright

## GRACE

### noun

1. simple elegance or refinement of movement
2. (in Christian belief) the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings
3. a period of time allowed (or extended) for payment of a sum due or for compliance with a law or condition

### verb

1. to honor or bestow credit (to someone or something) by one's presence

Here is my dance with Grace, what I know now and openly ponder:

Grace is an active commitment to demonstrate and embody **generosity, beauty and skill** without the condition of having these qualities reflected or supported by our surroundings or experiences.

**Grace is insight and vision.**

When we think of grace, it is unanimously easy to assign the word to a mother's enduring patience and generosity. I can see it within the subtle gesture of her hand extended to pull her child's head into her chest, offering warmth and affirmation. In silence, she gently communicates, "I see you. You belong. I'm committed to your journey."

Most times she can intuitively feel where her child is along the awkward path of becoming a full, functioning human. She anticipates the periods of participation with imaginary worlds and friends, random tantrums, restless nights, hunger and need, pimples, experimentation, deceit, the challenging of authority and every other healthy symptom that charts growth. At her best, she keeps watch but does not identify her child with any of these expressions of development and discovery. Of the millions of humans dotting the crowded Earth, this one will never forget how we burst into her reality as a trembling, screaming ball of love and possibility. We may grow tall and strange, but she forever holds the original picture.

**Grace generates peace.**

Without the chemical influence of maternal hormones, familial or romantic love, how do we arrive at compassion, curiosity and an honest desire for the wellness and prosperity of the world at large, for complete strangers, or worse—for strangers who've chosen to make themselves enemies? Naturally, we wonder, "Why would I do that? What's in it for me?!?" One notion worth considering is that living in grace is how we generate peace within ourselves. Mark Nepo beautifully states, "Each person is born with an unencumbered spot, free of expectation and regret, free of ambition and embarrassment, free of fear and worry, an umbilical spot of grace where we were first touched by God. It is the spot of grace that issues peace. To know this spot of inwardness is to know who we are, not by the surface markers of identity, not by where we work or how we are addressed but by feeling our place in relation to the infinite and inhabiting it. We each live in the midst of ongoing tension, growing tarnished or covered over only to be worn back to that incorruptible spot of grace at our core."

**Grace is active and progressive.**

If a state of grace is an active commitment live in and interact from my "unencumbered spot," my ambitionless and worry-free self may need regular reinforcement, especially when my basic impulses flow in the immediately gratifying directions of anger, retaliation and fear. How can I recover this "inwardness" in the moment, when life is happening and in my face? Sometimes a solution is more available within a question than an answer. Here are some examples of "pilot light" questions that can reignite our innate tenderness and concern for others as we recall our vision for who we intend to be in this world.

**What's really happening here? What kind of reaction do I choose? What is an ideal outcome for this experience and how can I contribute to that outcome whether or not I experience it?**

In environments where violence and discrimination are

deep rooted and ongoing these kinds of questions can be life changing, life saving.

**Grace is strength and clarity.**

Our compelling need to reflect our experiences back to others is like a primal reflex. We may wonder, "without reacting in kind, how do I show you what has happened to me, what your actions have caused me to feel?" Our retaliations or attempts to abruptly correct mistreatment — prove that we humans are a long hall of mirrors where there is no break in the action and reaction chain unless we possess the strength to see and act beyond the obvious. A life of peace may be a warrior's path in that it involves pulling the reins of the raw power of our wills back towards our deepest held intentions within the heat of the moment. To embody such grace is to "plant" the reality that you desire inside of the disappointing situation by becoming the ideal that you would rather experience. Several of the former inmates began studying law while locked away and now are involved in the practice as liberators.

Perhaps Mahatma Gandhi is referring of this kind of strength when he teaches, "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

**Grace closes the gap.**

We invent and enforce laws, codes and programs meant to direct human behavior, but what really reaches a person and changes them fundamentally?

My theory: We choose to be affected. We resist or comply with rules and systems based on our needs and wishes.

There are mothers, fathers, counselors, pastors and other "guides" whose work is tireless, often thankless. What are the odds? What makes a teacher effective?

I have been most affected by people who've made of themselves living and consistent examples of real love and intelligent effort. My growth was nurtured by the relationship and few words of instruction were actually spoken. This kind of exchange resembles the natural process that transforms rocks in the riverbed into stones. The jagged edges are wrapped and worn by the current's undisturbed flow until the obstacle resembles the pillow qualities of a stone and can no longer be called a rock.

We are most effective when we embody our ideals instead of projecting them. There is no greater gift to give besides your whole self.

**Grace is what will be remembered.**

"There is a quality of effort that resembles effortlessness, a level of skill that spins itself into poetry, a purity of poetry that yields moments of unspeakable life. The unspeakable moments are the most memorable." LW

We remember the essence left behind by both people and experiences more than what was said or done. Maya Angelou reflected, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

If grace is my opportunity to leave you with a piece of my life as a renewed sense of possibility, wonder, and quickened faith, I gladly give my whole person over to the countless of hours of practice and meditation that it will take to touch you within whatever moment we are granted for the encounter. In the meantime, I will live and work so that it does not matter how long our encounter lasts or whether I have a chance to repeat it.

The point is that the gift of my best is made and given for the sheer joy and relief of the giving. This is the freedom and power of grace.



# I AM A CULTIVATOR

NECOLE K. MUHAMMAD

When one is responsible for educating and developing the minds of our future leaders there is a never ending search for the right way. The ultimate question is: What is education? Once it is allegorically answered how does that look after all the structures and curriculums are perfectly built, books are ordered, teachers are in place, lesson plans are prepared and then.... the students arrive. Our schools are second homes to millions of youth and it is our responsibility to create a space that allows them to be raw and authentic enough that we can see the core of their human potential, meet them where they are and help them to develop the needed skills that will support their life purpose. Can you see this?

Rote, traditional educational practices have their place in a school environment, but only to establish systematic foundations that connect human conversations before individuality takes over. We must take the time to understand who we are educating which means that we ultimately become the student. This, my friend, is where the rubber meets the road. Our students come through the doors every morning carrying a variety of dynamics, emotions, experiences and variations of hunger. We made a conscious decision to play a major role in being responsible for their academic, social and emotional growth and development. This is not to be taken lightly and requires constant personal and professional development in order to show up and show out every day to bring the best out of the students we serve. They must know who they are and the never ending possibilities that are available to them if they move with purpose, have a plan, maneuver systems, build bridges, communicate effectively, and collaborate with others. Do they know that?

Providing the proper education is an enlightening and reciprocal process. However, it is almost seamless when we are willing to build relationships, increase our flexibility and see our students as worthy. Worthy to access the best this world has to offer. Worthy of our curiosity to prepare them for a global and lightning speed society. Worthy enough that we see and hear them for who they are and what they want to be. The strongest statements from our students are usually the ones they don't say. Can you hear them?

Our work is cut out for us, we must remain steadfast in our efforts to educate our students. Our definition of education must match their human potential. Our presence must give them strength and hope. Our attention will give them permission to soar, with the understanding that our lack thereof creates mental and spiritual death. We must pass the baton to our future and scream to the top of our lungs for their success. We Must! Are you with me?

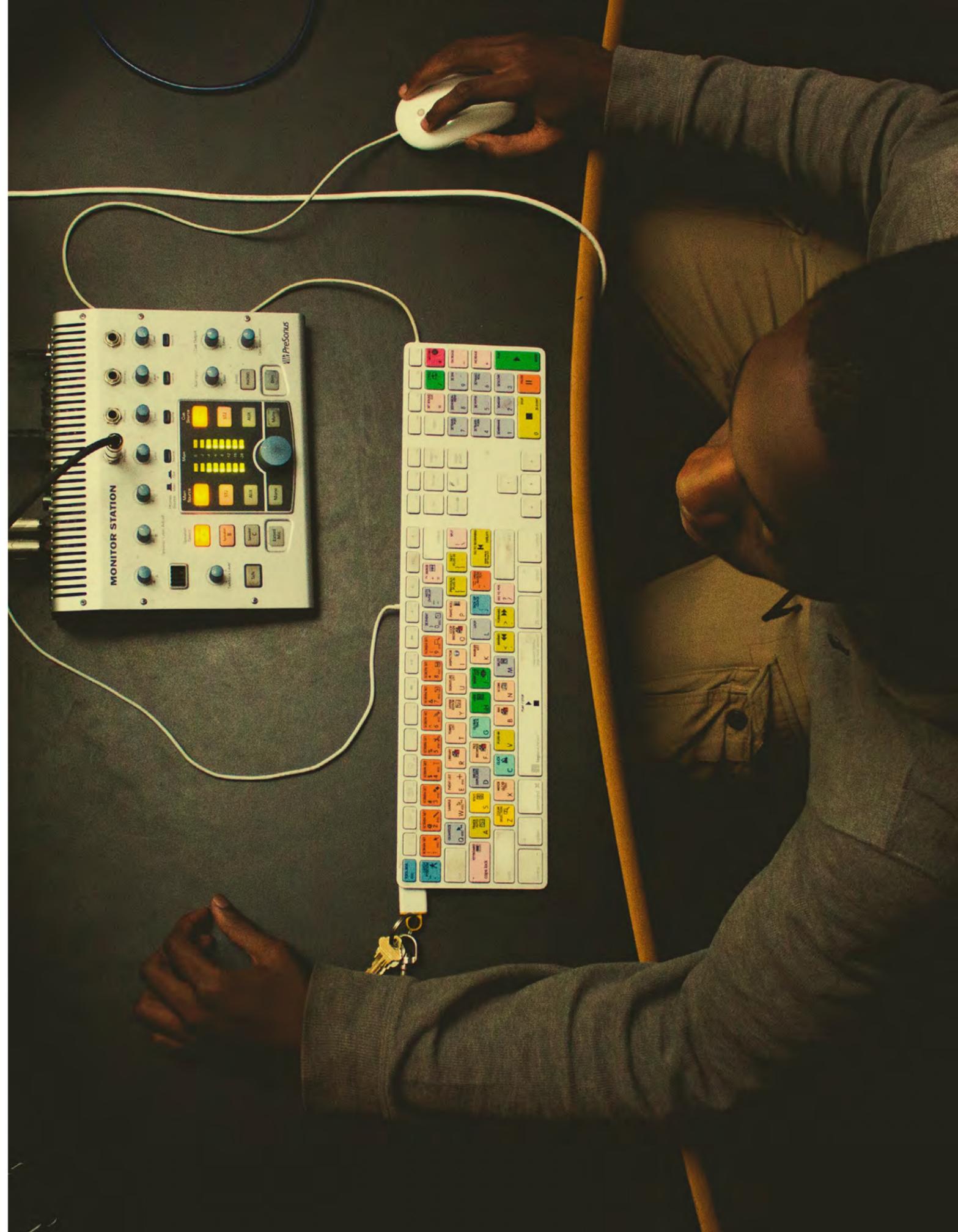
**I AM A CULTIVATOR!**



# I AM ASTONISHED

KAREEM RILEY-BEY

"I AM" Kareem Riley-Bey. I'm currently completing my junior year at Little Black Pearl Art & Design Academy. I transferred from Kenwood Academy in 2014. LBP has impacted my life in a very significant way. Before I came to LBPA, I wanted to study biomedical sciences, now I want to study media production. I've always been interested in how music is created. When I first got to LBPA, I was astonished to find out that I have access to many digital audio workstations and two sound labs. I immediately requested to have a music production class and my request was granted. I've been taking music production since I enrolled and I look forward to this class throughout the school day. I want to pursue a career in the music industry one day. I have very high expectations for myself. Without the help of my teachers Mr. Sellers and Mr. Medina, I wouldn't be as creative as I am in music today. They've taught me everything I know that deals with the production of music. Little Black Pearl offers amazing classes and their music course has had the biggest impact on my life. The music production class has helped me to decide on what I want to be in life. One day I'll be a music production specialist and a recording engineer. I also want to own a high end recording facility. I expect to get here with the help of my teacher Mr. Medina, who has a great background in music and media. Little Black Pearl has been a great experience for me and has taught me a lot about creative media production. I am only a junior and I will attend here next year as well. LBPA has opened my eyes to what I will be doing in my future and I see nothing but success.



# MORTALITY

AKIM GADDIS  
(1996 - 2015)

## To my beloved Akim

We met when I was 21 years old and you 3 days old and from that moment I loved you beyond measure. You laid there on the bed looking like your family that had come before you! I asked to take you home with me and this was where our sibling kinship began! You were my first son. I would get you every weekend and raise you as my own. From the beginning your infectious smile won the hearts of everyone we encountered. I knew from the very beginning that I would work to give you an education, strong values, and an opportunity in this life. Despite being taken from us too early, you fulfilled our expectations. Despite your silly and playful demeanor, you took life seriously and wanted to achieve. You left this earth with tremendous values that you carried when you were kind, thoughtful, selfless, honest, and respectful. You left here an educated young man, after having completed your high school education. You left here with all the opportunity to achieve and become whatever you so desired. For these things, I remain thankful and proud of the young man you left here as!

You left this earth with friends and family who cared, loved, and thought highly of you. You left this earth, I pray, with a sense of peace in your heart. The sense of peace that we worked so hard to teach and instill in you, the value of peace that you absorbed and embraced was demonstrated in your demeanor. You sought peace, laughter, and play in your daily interactions and will forever be remembered with these attributes in mind.

I worried about you as you often walked without fear of

our Chicago streets. I feared that ignorance would impact you or one day harm you. I feared that the harsh realities of drugs, gangs, and violence would jade you, entrap you, or capture you. Despite my worries, I never dreamed these things would actually take you from this earth. The loss of you has simply been insurmountable and a loss that I know so many have tragically had to endure. Despite our missed opportunity to see you reach your 20th birthday, despite our taken chance to see you graduate college, pursue a career, and have a family of your own, despite the loss and immeasurable pain, I refuse to retreat to anger, rage, or hostility. While I continue to conceptualize how we got to this violent place in our country, city, and society as a whole, I will continue to seek and model peace for those I may impact. I will continue to put my energy, thoughts, and work into working for peace, social justice, and equality. I remain hopeful that those who have lost will seek and maintain peace and those who have hurt will access a greater sense of humanity that connects us in compassion, tolerance, empathy, kindness, and simple consideration.

While I still worry about you sometimes, as my uncertainties and doubts about you being loved and cared for wherever your spirit landed sometimes enter my mind...your voice and soft presence always reminds me that you are indeed at peace, as you seemingly always were.

Forever and ever your sister,  
Nikki

A poem for you...

*Peace is what we say, its what we mean, its what we stand for. Peace is kindness, peace is love, peace is not evil, its not spiteful, its peace! Those who are peaceful are virtues, gifts, and ones to behold. Peace is your ability to smile because you're okay inside. Peace is the joy you feel when you make others smile. Peace is equality and fairness. To have peace is to have silence that you're okay with. To have peace is to have piece of mind and happiness in what you've done. Peace is to allow others to hate you, knowing it has no effect on you. Peace isn't weakness, but yet confidence in knowing you're good. Peace has nothing to do with war or fighting. Peace is the absence of all confusion.*

*PEACE is the cessation and absence of war and violence.*

"Healing begins where the wound was made."  
-ALICE WALKER



# WHEN GREAT TREES FALL

by Maya Angelou

*When great trees fall,  
rocks on distant hills shudder,  
lions hunker down in tall grasses,  
and even elephants  
lumber after safety.*

*When great trees fall in forests,  
small things recoil into silence,  
their senses eroded beyond fear.*

*When great souls die,  
the air around us becomes light, rare, sterile.  
We breathe, briefly.  
Our eyes, briefly,  
see with a hurtful clarity.  
Our memory, suddenly sharpened, examines,  
gnaws on kind words unsaid,  
promised walks  
never taken.*

*Great souls die and  
our reality, bound to them, takes leave of us.  
Our souls,  
dependent upon their nurture,  
now shrink, wizened.  
Our minds, formed  
and informed by their radiance, fall away.  
We are not so much maddened  
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance of  
dark, cold caves.*

*And when great souls die,  
after a period peace blooms,  
slowly and always irregularly.  
Spaces fill with a kind of  
soothing electric vibration.  
Our senses, restored, never  
to be the same, whisper to us.  
They existed. They existed.*

*We can be. Be and be  
better. For they existed.*





# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

TOI WILLIAMS

The objective of Restorative Justice is to emphasize the values of empathy, respect, honesty, acceptance, responsibility and accountability. In doing so, we nurture our students into becoming productive members of society. The process begins as we provide opportunities to socialize the youth, and address the underlying factors that can often lead to delinquent behavior. We seek to build on the strengths of each young person.

We also collaborate with our teachers by involving them in groups that encourage and build positive culture and promote healthy relationships throughout the school environment. Queen Etiquette 101, Dessert with Denim Divas, Muffins and Makeovers, Young Men Empowered, and Real Talk, are a few examples of the groups that the teachers and administrative staff form in support of restorative practices.

The Restorative Peer Council is a newly implemented component that provides an alternative to suspension and

detention by allowing the youth to be represented by a peer as his or her council in a restorative hearing. The new practice has resulted in a decline in negative behavior and development of social skills.

During the restorative hearing, a peer council representative is assigned. They review the incident, decide who was affected and how the referred student will accept his or her consequences in order to repair the harm caused. This practice gives the student a voice, responsibility and accountability.

Although this process of restorative justice is new to many of the students, it has been very effective in creating a culture of patience, reason and temperance in the midst of complex social issues. Each student is born with inherent potential. The intention of Little Black Pearl and its Restorative Justice Program is to help them find it.

# I AM HONORED

TAMARA TAYLOR

"I AM" Tamara Taylor. I came to Little Black Pearl when it was just an after-school workshop. I attended summer camp and was instantly mesmerized. The interior design, atmosphere and staff captivated me. I was inspired by how everybody greeted me with open arms.

I wasn't used to being treated like this given the fact that I was bullied from 2nd to 8th grade. I remember twice being bullied physically so badly that I was hospitalized. The worst part of it all, was how emotionally damaging the bullying was for me. I felt like I wasn't going to be anything in life, that nobody loved me and I was just alone.

Being bullied for all those years helped me to gain a new perspective on life. All those days and years not having any friends taught me to watch my surroundings and that's exactly what I did. I would look at the clouds, trees and the different ways leaves fell to the ground. That's when I knew I found my calling. I picked up my digital camera and took pictures like my life depended on it. I've been hooked ever since.

Years later, I'm still taking pictures at Little Black Pearl like my life depends on it. Little Black Pearl has digital media classes and Photoshop applications on the computer which helps me expand my creativity even more. I've always been good with using a camera but editing pictures was kind of tricky. My teacher, Mr. Armand, came and saved the day by showing me how to crop pictures and layer them to change the effect.

Since I've been a part of the Little Black Pearl Community, my life has come full circle. I'm no longer getting bullied by my peers, the staff is very supportive and they listen to me. I finally feel like I matter in my school. The students and I actually get along with no name calling involved.

The fact that I feel this way isn't even half of how much Little Black Pearl has changed me. I attend a school that can help me fulfill my dreams. I go to a school that actually provides me with classes that furthers my knowledge on photography. This school offers so many programs that can help me extend my career as a photographer and a journalist.

I feel like my life has made a prosperous change since I've come to Little Black Pearl. Although I took pictures when I was younger, it's something different now. Now I'm able to take as many pictures as I desire during classes and programs. This school has tremendously changed my life and I am so honored to have an opportunity like this in my life!



# UNION LEAGUE CLUB

DARIA AMERIK

Little Black Pearl Art & Design Academy has many partnerships with various organizations, one of which is a partnership with the Union League Club in Chicago. Ten Students are chosen to participate based on their interest and ability in the visual arts. The partnership includes two visits to the club to view the permanent collection of art, a lunch with two of the Luminarts artists, and one final visit focusing on curatorial practices. During the partnership the students are challenged to create their own work of art that later will be displayed at the Union League Club for their own exhibition that takes place in early June at the end of every school year. The Union League representative also visits LBP to see how the students are progressing with their pieces. The partnership is lead by the art teacher, Daria Amerik who also helps the teens develop their works for the exhibition.

Picture by Jesse Kitt



TEACHER HIGHLIGHT

# Branden Little

*"Pain is Temporary, Pride is Forever. You are only different if you are the only one. I was a pest to those who felt superior; the giant in the back with so much to prove."*

I was blessed to believe that everyone should have a storybook ending. I spend the first half of my life in Birmingham, AL followed by a move to Atlanta, GA when I entered into high school. My education continued through the mountains of West Virginia, attending West Virginia University Institution of Technology where I obtained my Bachelor of Arts in Sports Science /Athletic Coaching Education. Just like any other little boy growing up, I wanted to be a Fireman, but once I became active in sports (playing football and running track from Junior High through my College years on scholarship), I decided that I could possibly become a professional athlete; preferably a football player. Because of my height and size (coincidentally my height matches my name at a relaxing 5'4) I knew the odds were going to be against me so I had a back-up plan. I believe my exact word were, "If I don't make it to the 'League", I'm going to become a P.E. Teacher". It seemed simple enough after watching my coaches over the years that teaching Physical Education would be the easiest job in America. But when I was faced with the reality of teaching in a non-traditional environment with students that are facing many worldly challenges outside of school, it was a reality check for me. Not only am I a teacher, "I Am" a mentor, coach, and tutor to my students.

Now let me tell the REAL story behind my "I Am." Outside of being taught strong family values by my parents and family, I could go back to my old T-Ball days when my older cousin brought sports to my attention, teaching me the fundamentals of playing basketball. But in Middle School is where I learned about being an Athlete. I ran track which developed me as a runner, played soccer which contributed to my coordination, and basketball taught me finesse. All of these skills obtained I attribute to my athletic coaches. I did not find my

passion in sports until I started playing football and realized that I had a God-given talent. I've always believed that whatever I worked hard enough to accomplish I would get it done; never cocky -always confident.

I am controlled chaos and that is how I look at sports. You are allowed to release energy frantically and sporadically as you like under a controlled structure. Before there was play there was knowledge and understanding of how it was to be accomplished.

I used the critical thinking and problem solving aspects of my core courses as an advantage in athletics- "calculated and precise." Everything I needed to know about being a great running back I learned from my coach in high school, Coach Adams. He would always say, "patience to the hole not through hole". In football terms, "wait for your blockers to create a gap or space in the defense, an alley or running lane. Then you explode through." It stuck with me even in my everyday life. Sometimes you have to wait for you opportunity to arrive but be adamant once you have your chance. You have to tough it out through the good and bad times because ultimately, it's not that bad.

But success in athletics wasn't the storybook ending that I was hoping for. Although I broke records and received several awards, I was never on the championship team. I thanked my coaches for not just teaching me about winning but about sacrifice, leadership, and how to appreciate who you are as an athlete. I was taught life lessons that I am now able to teach to my students and athletes. I could have been a million other places doing a million other things but instead I am finishing what started before me. I am on a mission to save the world that is defiant and stubborn to change.



Right: Brandon Little sits on the church steps in the Kenwood neighborhood near Little Black Pearl

# TECHNOLOGY+ HUMANITY

NICHOLE PINKARD  
Founder  
Digital Youth Network (DYN)

**Technology has made our lives faster and more convenient. We have more accurate navigation, produce products and offer quality services with more consistency than before and we can communicate at nearly the speed of thought, but are we better human beings for it?**

**NP:** Technology, like any other tool, can be used for good or bad depending on in whose hands the tool is placed. The challenges that exist with technology ( i.e. bullying, stolen identity) have always existed. I think technology provides opportunities for us to collaborate and improve each other's lives (e.g. crowd funding), but only if we as individuals are seeking to do good.

**How was technology introduced into your life and when did you realize that you had a passion for it?**

**NP:** I remember spending time with my father when I was in 5-7 as he set up his music equipment. In those days, that meant 8-track record player and speakers. As I got older, I watched my brother tear apart radios and work with technology from Radioshack. I remember our household getting the first Atari game system in the neighborhood. In the 8th grade I took my first programming class and from that day forward I knew that creating programs was the vehicle for me to think through the problems I encountered in the world.

**You're an Associate Professor in the College of Computer and Digital Media at DePaul University and the Founder/ Executive Director of Digital Youth Network. What is DYN about?**

**NP:** We work in collaboration with the community to use our strengths in design of technology, curriculum, and social practices to develop learning opportunities across

all the spaces where youth spend their time like home, school, community organizations, and online. We seek to address the problems of practice like limited access to mentors, a lack of curriculum that reflects the lived experiences of the youth, and missed opportunities to see the work of peers, etc.

DYN and our partners meet youth where they're at. We want to help them build their knowledge of technology and digital skills, awaken a new sense of possibility, and give them a fighting chance in today's competitive world. In so doing, we intend to bring to life a more equitable approach to learning.

Our experience has demonstrated that when black and brown youth get access to technology, top notch learning opportunities, mentors, peers, and are given showcase opportunities, they excel. DNY's efforts have also revealed that intervening in the lives of youth in the middle grades (6-8) can have sustained impact through high school and college.

**DYN was housed at Little Black Pearl when it started in 2008. Describe the partnership and experience.**

**NP:** LBP will always be our big sister. First and foremost, the existence of LBP created the possibility that DYN could exist in a physical location outside of The University of Chicago. Seeing the phenomenal space of LBP awoke a desire in me to ensure that similar types of spaces were created for students engaged in digital media. Talking with Monica Haslip helped me to create a blueprint for how we could get it done. The partnership opened up new avenues for DYN programming as we were no longer constrained by the typical hours of schools. We could also work with kids from different schools at the same time, which is impossible when programs are run out of a school building. The ability to work with kids from across schools

became the hallmark of DYN's programming and is still a cornerstone of our work. We think that by blurring the lines of school membership when working with kids in the same community we can build bridges through shared interests.

**A majority of our daily needs are just a click away from being met and most forms of manual labor and craftwork require less physical effort than before. What about mental work and creativity? Can technology help us to become more innovative, better critical thinkers and more resourceful?**

**NP:** Technology's ability to document and allow us to reflect on our actions is a tremendous tool in enhancing our ability to be critical thinkers. In addition, our ability to collaborate across space and time through technology allows for geography to be removed as a barrier to creative collaborations. Finally, the introduction of innovations like 3D printing and voice recording are changing how we think about the available formats of our creative output.

**Technology has often been associated with coolness and distance, and a reduction in human interaction. Are these unfair associations? Do you believe that technology can play a significant role in advancing our sense of connectedness as a society?**

**NP:** Technology has enabled us to create community across space and time, hence providing the possibilities for relationships that couldn't exist without it or only in letter form. At the same time, our ability to connect through increasingly more visual formats across geographic boundaries has strained our attention to our face-to-face interactions. So we are both more and less connected at the same time.

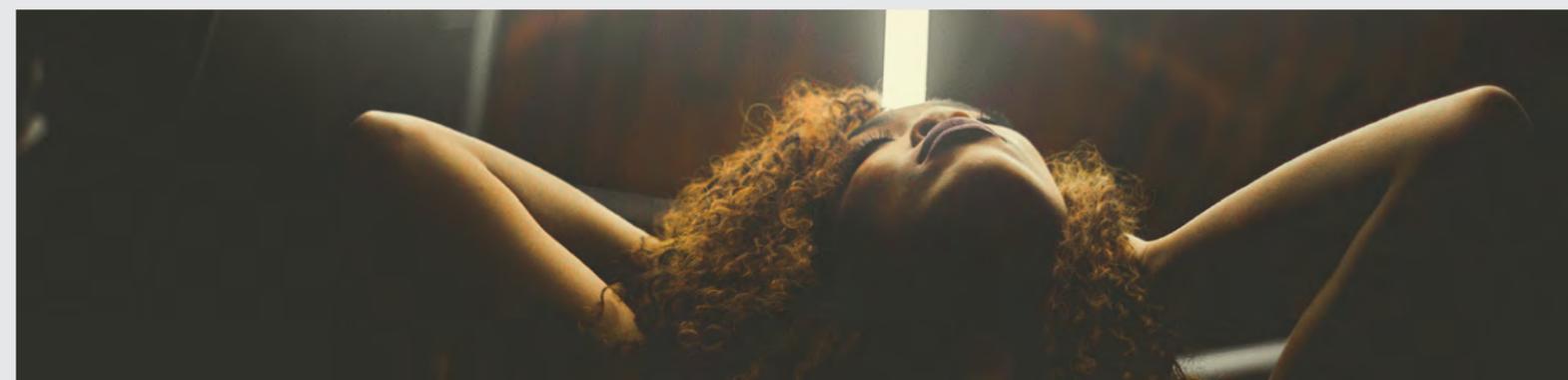
**Further, do you think that technology can actually contribute to healing? In other words, could it ever have a significant role to play in helping to resolve major social issues? What is your hope or sense of the possibilities here?**

**NP:** Technology can be used to create opportunities for economic, social and racial justice and it can also

be used to create further disparities along these same lines. It can make visible the opinions and experiences of underrepresented groups, magnifying and reflecting multiple perspectives across technical platforms (e.g. #blacklivesmattertwitter hashtag). These same platforms can be used to organize in support of a moment or against a movement. The challenge is that most apps are developed using a simplified understanding of our relationships to one other (e.g. our social graph is really a flat list of friends). The content we see is filtered for us by algorithms designed by people who often lack the sensibility of the realities of the communities that will use their products. Hence, my news feed is designed based upon assumptions about me drawn from where I live, who my friends are, what I search for and what I purchase. To address this issue designers need to develop systems of collaboration with the communities they aim to serve. They need to develop algorithms that invite us all to engage outside of our comfort zones in hopes that we can then begin to understand one another's experiences and allow that understanding to influence our choices and actions.

**Since the start of your career, what has been the most interesting change you've witnessed in how technology has affected society?**

**NP:** I used a typewriter to write my college essay. When I graduate from college I got my own desktop computer. A laptop wasn't even plausible. Today with the creation of the Raspberry Pi every child for \$35 can have a computer that they use to create with in their pocket. The size and ubiquity of computing devices (e.g. laptop, mobile, watches, internet of things) is allowing us to decide how deeply embedded technology will be in all aspects of our lives. This personalization of technology also raises the stakes on ensuring that all youth are given the opportunity to develop the skills and dispositions to be creators of the technologies that will mediate all aspects of their future lives. I'm excited to see where the integration of art and technology is leading and how innovative organizations such as Little Black Pearl will adapt.





# PRINCE

JOE HENRY

Walk into a dense wood –dive into the most shallow ocean pool— and all becomes unimaginably florid and strange; seductive by nature, and deeply erotic by implication: life believing in its own sticky and freaky sovereignty.

Finally, in these quiet, brilliant corners, there is nothing left to argue, for all distinctions –gender, animal; mineral and spirit— fall to the fluid and evolving. Nothing is out of place in creation nor unnatural in its sight, save the vain campaign for the static and immovable; the predictable. We are all in the process of being transfigured: dying where we stand, ever rising out of ashes.

The audacity of Prince Rogers Nelson did not flower with fame and purchase –did not even begin with music, since by all accounts he strode with slight stature onto a junior high school basketball court, throwing shade with the same shy-but-Sly buoyancy we would all witness later in performance. He laid down the law like a landing strip in the rain forest, his flickering lights serving as our clearance from the tower, all of us touching down safely behind him. He was possessed of the ecstasy of Little Richard, the locomotion of James Brown; the fusing spark-shower of Jimi Hendrix. He understood the sublime and abstracted alchemy of Miles, the impatient genius of Ray; the giddy volatility of Sly Stone, the cat-and-mouse come-on of Marvin Gaye. He embodied the Saturday night/Sunday morning disparities of the Reverend Al –and his persona was as cunning and confounding as that of Salvador Dali.

I have ceased distinguishing between the religious and the secular, for everything is holy: our courage and humility, our senses both lost and found; our love and our lust...all that shall swoon and couple, leaving in their wake the real hope that, late as is the hour –with as much as we have been given and squandered; as little as we might deserve it, though we stomp and plead— there may yet be more on offer: God willing, just one more song sung into high rafters before we are finally called to quit and disperse.



# THE JORDAN BRAND

ZAKEYA CARTMAN

Jordan Brand has recently announced the launch of The **WINGS Design Program**. The **Wings Design Program** introduces high school students to introductory educational programming geared towards the footwear and apparel design industry. Following the global announcement of the WINGS initiative, Jordan Brand kicked off its North America efforts in Chicago with Little Black Pearl.

Jordan Brand has partnered with Little Black Pearl to provide a series of intensive 10-week training workshops in footwear and apparel design to students from Little Black Pearl Art and Design Academy. The program is facilitated by industry professionals at Station 23, a state-of-the-art training lab within the downtown Chicago flagship Jordan Store.

Student participants are divided into teams and work with various Jordan Brand and local designers to gain inspiration and mentorship as they create their own designs. The program culminates in a design competition and bragging rights as the winning designs are printed as a graphic tees that are available for purchase exclusively

at the 32 South State flagship store.

In celebration of the launch, the Jordan Brand WINGS initiative has issued a grant to Little Black Pearl in support of college scholarships to the winners of the design completion. Monica Haslip, LBP Executive Director says, "The partnership with the Jordan Brand continues to be an asset to our youth. The apparel design workshops mirror the type of arts and skills training offered in our high school and after school curriculums. I am excited that the Jordan Brand has provided much needed support for the Design Competition winners as they begin the next phase of their educational journey. It is this type of incentive that shows our students that hard work, dedication and creative thinking pays off."

The success of the WINGS initiative is directly tied to rewarding partnerships, like Little Black Pearl, that garner tangible outcomes for youth. The overarching objective is to unleash the Michael Jordan in everyone. It is a part of the Jordan Brand's commitment to inspiring underserved youth to dream, pursue and achieve greatness.



NOW AT THE MCA

POP ART  
POP ART  
POP ART  
ART

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART  
HEARTS AND ART  
AT THE MCA  
2-FOR-1  
ADMISSION!\*

NEWCITY

CHICAGO 2046





# FOR THE SOUL

## NEW ZEALAND LAMB RECIPE

CHEF DONNA TODD

### INGREDIENTS

4 large garlic cloves  
2 Tablespoons fresh rosemary  
4 Tablespoons fresh thyme  
1 Tablespoon of dried oregano  
1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard  
1 Tablespoon Lawry's seasoning salt  
1 Cup olive oil

### PREPARATION

1 rack New Zealand Lamb trimmed.

1. In a food processor fitted with a meter blade add all ingredient
2. Pulse until combined
3. Spread this mixture on to lamb and let marinate for at least 1 hour in the refrigerator, longer is better.
4. Then grill until desired temperature



# “I AM” INFINITY BRACELETS AND BOWLS

LITTLE BLACK PEARL

The “I Am” Little Black Pearl Project is designed to create an opportunity for each of us to invest in the healing power for our children. “I Am” is more than a venture of Little Black Pearl; it’s a positive narrative designed to extend out into the broader community, inspiring the healing potential in one another. The Infinity bracelets and bowls represent a community of individuals who are linked by their commitment to contribute to positive solutions.

To purchase products please visit  
[www.blackpearl.org](http://www.blackpearl.org)





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LITTLE BLACK PEARL

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## "I AM" LUNCHEON CHAIRS

MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL, CITY OF CHICAGO  
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MICHAEL SACKS, GROSVENOR CAPITAL  
THEASTER GATES, ARTIST/PROFESSOR  
STEVE KOCH, DEPUTY MAYOR, CITY OF CHICAGO

# WELL BEING

## THE URBAN SOCIAL WORKER

NECOLE K. MUHAMMAD, LCSW

Striving to live authentically, consciously and balanced is critical to achieving a positive result called well-being. The word "striving" should be duly noted as a verb, an action word that means one must fight for, struggle vigorously, or make great effort. Your life is worth fighting for to sustain a consistent or high level of happiness, peace and good health. Staying aligned to or discovering your authentic self is one of the greatest accomplishments one can achieve. To know who you are, be clear about your why and exist with purpose creates an opportunity for you to be intentional about your aura that ultimately determines your well-being.

Please understand that you are definitely a walking Webster giving definition and meaning to every person, place or thing that enters your space. The world is full of noise and throughout our journey we experience a variety of involuntary situations good and bad that keeps us distracted from our internal and spiritual stability. We must take 100% responsibility for our responses to these invasions that if left unchecked can shift us from happy to unhappy, comfortable to uncomfortable and good health to gravely ill without notice.

Auto-pilot living gives us permission to blame others and fall victim to haphazard outcomes. Turning off the cruise control, checking our own pulse and sitting still requiring nothing else but oxygen will definitely help us to center ourselves and reset. Take time every day to take deep breaths, find a quiet place to settle your mind, engage in exercises that decrease your stress, take a walk, express gratitude, eat balanced meals, laugh and love. Showing up in your full you increases your self-worth and your ability to live your life purpose touching those around you. There is no silver bullet for well-being, but the best part is you get to decide how much of your well-being you want to embrace.



Ryan B.  
27 years  
Father  
of two

"The greatest lesson that this work has taught me has been to believe in the healing potential of all human beings. I've learned to trust, love, forgive, value differences and grow. Change is possible."  
**-MONICA HASLIP**

