

**GUIDE TO
THE GOOD LIFE
CHICAGO**

THE South Side Drive

MARCH 2022

**Annual Women's
History Month
Issue**

**Black Girl Magic:
Meet Chicago's
Game Changers**

**Etta Moten Barnett:
Chicago's
Triple Threat
1901-2004**

**Jermikko's Beautiful
Fashion Journey**

**Diasporal Rhythms:
Art Beats**

**Community Builders:
Robinson & Latiker**



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MARCH 2022

THE South Side Drive

GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE CHICAGO



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Please join us in thanking the Chicago Community Trust and the Field Foundation of Illinois for grants that allow the South Side Drive Magazine: Guide to the Good Life Chicago to amplify Black voices, to build, grow and serve as a major Chicago publishing influence. In social media we are #SouthSideDrive.

Art, Business, Culture & Community, Dining, Events, Entertainment, Health & Heritage to Build and Thrive.

The South Side Drive magazine is published by Real Men Charities, Inc. The organization's mission is Building Healthy Families and Communities. The magazine is designed to be a catalyst for economic development, reflecting a truthful image and examples that demonstrate the art of living. We seek to share the Good News about Chicago's south side and Black culture and serve as the Guide to the Good Life in our city. We are placemakers and keepers of the culture.

Publisher's Message



By Yvette Moyo

March is **Woman's History Month**, and we can think of a long list of sisters who deserve to be celebrated. Just like last year was historical, with the swearing-in of Kamala Harris as the first and only Black woman ever to become Vice President of the United States of America. Today, we have another revolutionary first. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is the very first African American ever to be nominated to the United States Supreme Court.

Here at home, we have sisters at the forefront of change in Chicago, especially on Chicago's South Side, but first, while we did not write about the exiting Illinois Department of Public Health director, Ngozi Ezike, we must go on record with sincere thanks and accolades for her leadership through the height of Covid. We will never forget and will be forever grateful for the example of poise and scholarship and calm in the face of daily death and illness.

As you turn the pages of this issue, you'll want to check out community-building sisters from the south side who have made an amazing difference in the lives of the people and the landscape of Chicago.

Queen of Bronzeville for at least 4 decades, Paula Robinson, has spent 30 years overseeing the economic stability, community development, and preservation of the Bronzeville Community. Close by her side in the struggle was our beloved brother, Harold Lucas who is currently severely ill, but I know he appreciates this recognition of Paula and the vast contributions they both made to the Bronzeville Community.

Across town is the community of Roseland, where reports of violence are constant there is a Rose. Over 3,000 children have been kept safe, kept alive, kept out of gangs thanks to the love and courage of Diane Latiker and her Kids Off the Block project. What a pleasure it is to acknowledge the good works, the sacrifices, and the awesome contributions of both of these women.

I'm particularly inspired and am happy to introduce, or properly position young women who are making a difference. We call it Black Girl Magic and they are guiding us to the good life. We know you'll enjoy reading about the accomplishments of these 10 young women. Actresses, psychologists, producers, activists, community leaders. They are also survivors of everything from sexual and physical abuse to the ultimate horror of gunshot violence, and they use their gifts and talents to make a way for others.

Besides celebrating our current sheroes, and those who are making a way in the future, we also take a look back at history, to those whose contributions opened doors and changed lives. Their good works continue to resonate. This year we celebrate the life of Etta Moten Barnett, Chicago's Triple Threat. Etta Barnett was an actress, a vocalist, and a philanthropist who opened doors for Black actresses, and gave to Civil Rights causes that enriched the lives of thousands.

No celebration of Black women is complete without shining a bright light on a sister whose life journey and business success serve as a true inspiration for us all. Jermikko Shoshanna conquered some of life's most challenging obstacles to become a most successful fashion designer. Jermikko's awesome story is one in which her faith brought her through, her incredible talent brought her through, and her angels helped escort her to the pinnacle of success.

In this issue, we celebrate the culture of the Black diaspora. Although that culture has been heralded through music, through drama, and through dance – up until almost 20 years ago there was a void that needed to be filled. That void was the art of the Black diaspora. Founded by an organization of collectors and creators, Diasporal Rythms, has added value to Black art in ways yet to be quantified. After reading you'll want to join us on March 16, for the Inside Story: Curators Tell All.

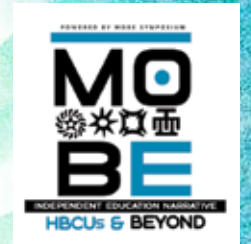


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Etta Moten Barnett:

Chicago's Triple Threat 1901 - 2004

By Emma Young

interview was published online by Stanford University's Martin Luther King, Jr. Research Education Institute.

Etta's career as an actress, vocalist, and dancer led her to Hollywood, where she appeared in films, such as, Busby Berkely's *Gold Diggers* of 1933, and the movie, *Flying Down to Rio*, which starred those famous dancers, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

In those days, many Black actresses were relegated to stereotypical roles, such as, the maid in *Gone With the Wind*, for which Butterfly McQueen won an Oscar. But Etta Moten Barnett bypassed those stereotypes with her breakthrough roles, as the "Colored Singer" in *Flying Down to Rio* and her outstanding vocal performance of "My Forgotten Man" in *Gold Diggers* of 1933. Her mesmerizing performance of "My Forgotten Man" so impressed President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt that Etta was invited to the White House to perform that song for FDR's birthday celebration.

Most notably, Barnett starred on Broadway in a revival of *Porgy and Bess*. In November 1942, the *Porgy and Bess* opera at the Studebaker Theatre in Chicago starred Barnett and Todd Duncan. Ida Gershwin had to rewrite the part of Bess, because Etta would not sing the n-word, and Gershwin removed it. Barnett also charmed audiences around the world singing in concerts with the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

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Although she was born in Weimar, Texas, Etta Moten Barnett was a long-time Chicago resident. In fact, she lived one-third of her life in Chicago – longer than she resided in any one city. Thus, we claim her as Chicago's own as we pay tribute to her during this Woman's History Month.

Etta Barnett was exceptionally talented as an actress and as a spectacularly gifted contralto vocalist. Like many great African American vocalists, Etta's outstanding vocal talent was first recognized when she began singing in the church choir at the age of ten years. The choir, by the way, belonged to the church of the Methodist minister, Rev. Freeman F. Moten, who was Etta's father. Her mother, Ida Moten, was a school teacher.

Etta had three daughters by her first husband, Curtis Brooks, whom she married in 1918. But that marriage only lasted six years. She subsequently met the love of her life, Claude Barnett, in 1934, while living in New York City, and remained married to Barnett for 33 years. The only thing that separated them was his death in 1967.

Claude Barnett was the head of the Associated Negro Press, and it was through that organization that he and Etta had the opportunity to travel frequently – especially to the African continent. In fact, it was during this time she had the opportunity to meet and interview Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; it wasn't in his hometown of Birmingham, Alabama; nor in Texas or Chicago or New York – she interviewed this great preacher and civil rights icon in Accra, Ghana. That interview took place in 1957, before the Internet as we know it even existed. However, years later, when the Internet became the web of all national and international information, that



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After her performing career and after her husband, Claude, died in 1967, Etta lived in Chicago where she hosted a radio show in the Windy City called I Remember When. Dozens of recordings of I Remember When are available at the Library of Congress and at the Schomburg Library in New York City. During that time, the United States government appointed Etta to be a representative on cultural missions to ten African nations. Although she loved traveling to Africa, Chicago remained her home until her death from pancreatic cancer at the age of 102 in Chicago's Mercy Hospital.

Etta was deeply involved in civic affairs, women's issues, and causes, such as, African independence. She was a major philanthropist and civic activist, raising funds for and supporting cultural, social, and church institutions. She received citations and honorary degrees from Spelman College, Lincoln University, and the University of Illinois for her artistry and humanitarian work. In



1979, she was inducted into the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame and was named by the Texas Women's Chamber of Commerce one of the twentieth century's one hundred most influential Texas women. She also served as a board member of both The Links (a service organization for African-American women) and her sorority (Alpha Kappa Alpha). She received an award for her contributions to American Music by Atlanta University; and a scholarship

was established in her name for minority students at the Chicago Academy for the Performing Arts. A collection of her manuscripts, correspondence, programs, clippings, photographs, and memorabilia can be found at the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library in the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection.

We are proud to name Etta Moten Barnett as one more Chicago woman who made her city proud by her outstanding talent, her commitment to civil rights, and her wonderful spirit of giving.

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The story of Jermikko Shoshanna's journey, from Walter Scott's plantation in Tallulah Louisiana to amazing success in the fashion world, is as magical, unique and exciting as the beautiful fashions she designs.

Jermikko was blessed with an amazing talent, and as we know, blessings come with angels, and she has had her share along the way. Her angels consist of people who, impressed by her incredible talent, blessed her in the most amazing ways.

For instance, when seven-year-old Jermikko decided that she wanted her grandmother to be dressed in bright, vibrant colors, she took Granny's only white mother of the church uniform down to the river and dyed it with red mud, Granny didn't spank her or punish her. She wore the dress to church on Sunday morning, and when asked, told the other church mothers, "My grandbaby made this for me." Unfortunately, the bright, vibrant red mud didn't quite wash out of the dress, and when Granny slid from one end of the long church bench to the other end



(because that's how Granny shouted) she left a vibrant, red mud stain all along the bench. And so, she simply advised her grandbaby "Don't you touch another one of my uniforms."

Perhaps that was the beginning of Jermikko's fashion designing career – although she didn't know exactly what to call it back then. She only knew she wanted to make lots of clothes for lots of people – and after coming to Chicago at the age of 10, and attending school here, she learned the proper name from her high school counselor, who assured her that there were no Negro fashion designers – and her only options were nurse, social worker or teacher.

Jermikko had several jobs after graduating from DuSable

High School – but it was at her job at Illinois Bell Telephone Company that she met another angel. Her supervisor, who instead of firing her for plugging up a customer's phone for calling her the n-word, she instead ordered her to find a school where she could learn fashion designing, and bring her back a note from the school and she would allow Jermikko to work for the phone company part time for the duration of her education

Not knowing how to find such a school, Jermikko went to Saks Fifth Avenue and announced that she wanted to design the fashions for that upscale, Michigan Avenue store. Instead of laughing at the naivete' of this brash young Black girl, Ms. Nena Ivon was so taken with the

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Jermikko's Beautiful Fashion Journey



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designs Jermikko had drawn that she sent her to meet with Ms. Shirley Sherman at the School of The Art Institute.

Jermikko's amazing talent also impressed Ms. Sherman, who accepted her into the school on two conditions: that she qualify for a student loan, and also bring a portfolio.

Jermikko's mother's refusal to sign for the loan was only a momentary setback, and this young, Black girl went directly to Continental Bank, just knowing she could get a loan based on her job at Illinois Bell. Back then, and even now, it's hard enough for a Black person with a job and a credit history to get a loan at a bank – but she tried. Two days later, she

came home to a note stating someone from Continental Bank had called her. Back at the bank, she was handed an envelope in which a man who had seen her there two days previously, and had retired two days previously, had placed all her loan documents. This stranger signed for Jermikko's student loan, admonishing her not to let him down.

Now for the two years that Jermikko had been employed by Illinois Bell, each day she would sit at the board and sketch her designs on the back of a form that was used to keep an account of calls from hotels, and she would discard those drawings in the trash.

Fast forward – with her loan papers signed, the only thing left to do was to bring a portfolio to Mrs. Sherman. Jermikko had no idea what a portfolio was. When she asked her supervisor what was a portfolio, the supervisor opened her desk drawer and pulled out all of Jermikko's drawings that she had been saving for two years, and explained “I could have fired you for using company supplies –however, this is a portfolio, put these sketches in order and take them to the School of the Art Institute.”

After her first year at the School of the Art Institute, and the University of Chicago which she attended concurrently, Jermikko got enough awards and scholarships along



with three part time jobs to pay for the rest of her schooling, so she no longer needed student loans. One scholarship was the Stanley Korshak Award, and after Jermikko told Mr. Korshak that she wanted to have her own business, he allowed her to work at his exclusive 900 N. Michigan Avenue Boutique, which house only the top designers to learn the fashion business and meet customer she only read about in the Society News. There she learned how designer clothes were constructed when they came from Paris, Italy, New York and she met Mrs. McCormick of McCormick Place, and entertainers like Diane Carroll, and mobsters like Sam Giancana, Mr. and Ms. Ray (McDonald) Kroc and many more affluent customers.

Another call from another angel, musician Nan Mason of the Pump Room who introduced her to her friend, Ms. Terry Murphy, who worked as a News reporter for channel 7 television, who Jermikko designed a gown to wear for the first News Emmy award, then invited Jermikko to Faces Nightclub.

Jermikko decided she would design herself a special outfit to attend this very special private night club similar to Studio 54 Disco Club located in New York. She designed herself a pair of Gold Lamé Jeans, but she needed a blouse, and she went to Oak Street to buy one. Of course, she couldn't afford the \$135 blouse that she took to the dressing room to try on anyway – and of course another Angel the store manager suspected she couldn't afford it, and followed her into the dressing room, only to fall in love with Jermikko's jeans. She called another woman to look at them, and they ordered five pairs of jeans. That was Jermikko's first official order. She took the jeans next door to My Sister's Circus, and they placed an order, and Jermikko is still doing business with them to this day.

Jermikko got a sales rep – Cookie Robinson, and told Cookie not to tell people who she was, because knowing a Black woman owned the business could keep prejudiced

white buyers and store owners from placing orders with her. Cookie didn't believe white people could be so biased, but she learned the hard way when she was so happy about a \$5,000 order that she proudly told the woman about this “very talented designer,” and the woman suddenly realized she had over-bought and had to cancel the order.

Even buying fabric was difficult, until she engaged her staff: Ashley, her accountant (her cat) and Murray Andretti who handled production (her hamster).

She had to pretend to be a sales rep and the sample hand, as opposed to the business owner.

But success has a way of overcoming racism and prejudice.

Jermikko Shoshana became the first Chicago designer to appear on the cover of Women's Wear Daily - the bible of the fashion industry.

She also became the first African American ever to be named Designer of the Year.

She has designed for movies such as Chi-Raq and series such as Empire, and celebrities such as Dionne Warwick, TV Series, Touched By An Angel, Merri Dee, Gladys Knight, Gayle Sayers, (Jermikko designed all of his leathers) to name a few.

Jermikko set up the first African American designer/Manufacturer which would become the largest female African American firm in Illinois and her collection would be sold in over 679 retailer nationally and internationally. She states, the Klan is probably wearing her designs and don't know it.

To date, Jermikko's collection was the first designer of color to sell in Marshall Fields and Nordstrom” and have a permanent design housed in the Chicago Historical Society. She is inducted in the history books as a HistoryMaker and the Library of Congress as a StyleMaker.



Every year her former high school teacher, Dr. Margaret Burroughs would bring material from Africa for Jermikko to design garments for her.

Jermikko added Inventor to her title with her patent pending invention Jermikko Unzip Face Mask designed to last forever. The City and the Mayor awarded her company a half million-piece mask contract in the beginning of the Pandemic.

Singer, Beyoncé' chose Jermikko's duel Patented SwapOut Athleisure Wear Hoodie for her Lemonade Video.

The SwapOut Athleisure, patents opened the door for her to become the first person of color in history to be awarded patents on a consumer wearable garment.

Jermikko loves telling the story of how she started her business with fifty dollars, two tree trunks, a home sewing machine, a metal card table, three yards of fabric and a six-pound dog, whose job it was to sit on the fabric while she cut.

She also tells the story of when she won the Designer of the Year award, and the celebration was at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, where one black flight attendant was mistakenly in attendance in the audience of 1000 plus and when they announced her name there was thunderous applause, which faded to less enthusiastic claps when she reached the stage. She tells us, “I asked God to give me the right words to say -- so, I'm standing at the podium and I look up and say, ‘Yep, I'm Black!’”

And finally, Jermikko says, “I am proud of the concrete I was born to lay and I pray it has been smoother for designers coming after me. I have prospered in this career I love since the late 60's and I am proud to still be current and as Dr. Dre humbly states. STILL RELEVANT AND IN DEMAND!”



Diasporal Rhythms: Art Beats

“Culture,” as defined by Wikipedia, is an umbrella term, encompassing the social behavior and norms found in human societies. “Culture” also envelops the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups. Our culture, as African Americans, descendants of the African Continent, has become more and more important over the decades, primarily since the 1960’s. During that time, we discovered “Black is beautiful.”

Our culture is depicted and expressed in many ways: through music, dance, food, fashion, poetry, prose, art, and more. The way we walk, the way we talk, the stories we tell are all depictions of our precious culture.

In 2003 a panel discussion was held in the South Side Community Art Center to discuss many things, among them the culture of the African Diaspora. D. E. Simmons tells us that, “As a result of that discussion, it was realized that there is a void in the art landscape where Black people who were into collecting art from the Black Diaspora from live artists were operating in isolation.”

That panel brought together four collectors: Carol Briggs, Dan Parker, Joan Crisler, and Patric McCoy. The four of them, all collectors of art, realized they had such commonality and symmetry, and there needed to be a not-for-profit organization where their passions, their

love of art, and the collection of art from the African Diaspora could grow and expand. D. E. Simmons explains, “The prevailing thought at the time, and still to this day, is that some sort of elitist rich person, and clearly not a person of color, personified the art collector.” That thought was obviously false, as there they were, everyday people, collecting original works of art locally, within the region, across the nation and across the world. Simmons emphasizes, “This was not static, but cultural activism as relates to preserving our culture.” So, to engage in that cultural activism, Diasporal Rhythms was founded. D. E. Simmons is the Executive Director and Acting Chair.

The mission of Diasporal Rhythms is to collect, promote, and preserve art from the African Diaspora by encouraging individuals and institutions to appreciate and acquire this art. Mr. Simmons stated, “Each time we, as an organization, prepare for our next event or exhibition, we always ask what is it that we are trying to say to the community.” At their 10-year celebration, Mr. Simmons said, “We made a very strong statement that our love affair with collecting art in the African Diaspora set the bar for us as an organization putting on exhibition.” And he added, “The love affair continues: The 15-year celebration raised the bar and exceeded expectations. From that position, we discovered the organization has a voice and, more importantly, a perspective on the art community at large.”

In 2023, Diasporal Rhythms will be celebrating their 20th anniversary – 20 years of working through that mission in the Chicagoland community. “As we approach our 20th year of operation,” Simmons reflects, “much has changed in the art community and Diasporal Rhythms is at the forefront of the activity. So, the question is ‘what do we have to say now as we approach 20 years?’” Simmons answers that question. “We are in the position to offer perspective on the position that’s being deployed in all activity leading up to our 2023 exhibition. And the exhibition itself is called ‘Perspective.’”

For 2023, the organization plans to feature the collectors’ perspective on figurative, landscape, abstract, sculpture, and mixed-media images. For this effort, a catalogue is being assembled, which will accompany the exhibition,

along with various programs. The programs will be announced later in the year, listing the sites and the dates of the presentations. Events will take place all the way up to the summer of next year, leading up to the exhibition. People can come and participate in what will be very educational and informational programs.

In terms of ongoing events, one of the key features of the organization is the Home Tour, where members open up their homes and the public is invited to participate. Shuttle busses or trolleys will transport participants to tour the homes on two or three different routes. Each route consists of five homes where participants view a unique curated collection of art through the various collector members of Diasporal Rhythms. “This unique tour,” as Simmons explains, “is a different immersion experience into our culture. It exposes participants to local artists who are living and producing museum-quality work right within our own community.”

“The prevailing thought at the time, and still to this day, is that some sort of elitist rich person, and clearly not a person of color, personified the art collector.”

The main place where the art is exhibited is in the homes of the founders. The Home Tour has been on hold, due to the pandemic, but Simmons states they are hoping to bring it all back in 2023.

“When you come and see our exhibitions,” he explains, “it’s just like going to the Art Institute. These are owned works that are on loan for the exhibition. A catalogue of the exhibition will be on sale.”

People will be able to purchase tickets for the Home Tour at the very reasonable price of \$50 (\$10 per home) for a

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unique, memorable, and engaging cultural weekend. The opening night would be on a Friday, the Home Tour would take place on Saturday, and there would be an auction on Sunday.

The design of the Home Tour is based on the different areas of the community. For example, Track A would be Bronzeville; Track B – South Shore, Track C -Suburban Homes. There are three optical tours and five homes on each route, and all of the founders live in each one of these communities.

A part of the mission to help the community become aware of the artists and the different media in which our people create different works of art is a virtual program called Art Smart. People can register for Art Smart on the Diasporal Rhythms website. Another program consists of studio visits with individual artists, exposing the membership

and the community to their work.

The organization also has a youth program, where artists are brought in to work with school art education curricula. Frames and art supplies are donated for the students. The goal of this program is to support the artists of the future, giving them the kind of exposure, they could not get through Chicago Public Schools, which lack the resources and the network.

Simmons urges those who have an interest in collecting art for their homes and do not know where to start to come to one of their events. They could even join Diasporal Rhythms to get some exposure. He adds, “It’s a wonderful place to learn and there’s a community of wonderful collectors who are more than happy to share what they have learned.”

and the community to their work.



There are three optical tours and five homes on each route, and all of the founders live in each one of these communities.



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<https://diasporalrhythms.org/>

Join Zoom Meeting at 1 pm

‘Gossip’ Dr. Hugo A. Gonzalez From the Alita Tucker Collection

This program is made possible through the support of Chicago Cultural Treasures Grant

Black Girl Magic:

Meet Chicago's South Side Game Changers

It's Women's History Month. And history - Black History and Women's History - is being made right here in Chicago by some of the most awesome young women in the nation.

They are making moves in media, while keeping the culture. These young women are not waiting around for jobs - although McDonald's or Wal-Mart's would be happy to have them in executive leadership positions. They are entrepreneurs and they are making things happen. Meet a few of Chicago's South Side Game Changers



Chantal Grant

Chantal Grant is a native from the South Side of Chicago. Since she was a high school student at Morgan Park High School, Chantal has advocated for her Roseland community against violence and poverty. She is a strong professional with a Bachelor's Degree in Applied Science and a concentration on Finance. She earned her degree from Central State University, an HBCU in Wilberforce, Ohio.

Chantal does not direct her attention to one career. She is a multi-tasked individual. She has excelled in the catering and beverage industry through her experience and training to be a licensed mixologist. Chantal is also the co-founder and co-owner of Sugar Rimz Bartending, which has expertise in elite Hospitality services, by which she positively engages Chicago communities and businesses, hosting parties with a purpose. Some of her clients include BMO Harris Bank (Capital Markets), State Representative Camille Lilly, Boxer Floyd Mayweather, Artist Lil Durk, Artist Lil Bibby, Black Ink Chicago, Black Chicago Eats, Bop Biz Center, and Chatham Business Association.

Chantal is also the co-owner and co-Founder of Grant

Stone LLC. Grant Stone is a real estate development and construction company dedicated to providing quality housing opportunities. In particular, Grant Stone provides well-designed energy-efficient homes for families of low or moderate income. Through Grant Stone she works toward her goal of maintaining neighborhood open spaces and community multi-use and service areas for existing populations. Grant Stone LLC recruits other minority contractors to join revitalization efforts, supports small businesses, and creates jobs within Chicago communities.



LaKeisha Gray-Sewell

LaKeisha Gray-Sewell is a digital storyteller by trade and a globally recognized girls advocate by life assignment. LaKeisha tells us, "My voice is my power, which is fueled by my connection to the stories of our ancestors. I am especially inspired by Ida B. Wells who stated, 'the people must know before they can act, and there is no educator to compare with the press.'"

LaKeisha firmly believes in the power of Sankofa, reaching back for our historical context to navigate and create a mighty future. She says, "Using media allows us to amplify our stories and righteous narrative. My vision for the future is that Black women move beyond our blocks to embrace healing opportunities, so we can collectively raise the vibration as a village to nurture and liberate Black Girl Magic of today."

She further states, "Currently, the 'Girls Like Me Project' is expanding our digital platforms. So, in addition to our podcast, we are launching a girl's talk show, GLMPI Talks, which will be produced and hosted by Black girls for Black girls."

LaKeisha's for-profit business, Move Beyond the Block, is also expanding services to offer online courses and digital branding.



Melanie L. Brown

Melanie L. Brown is a media expert. She has worked in all forms of media (Radio, TV, print and social). Her own media company works with clients to help with their social, print, public relations (PR), and visual needs. Melanie is an official photographer and videographer. A few of her photography/videography clients are politicians, artists, various organizations, food companies, clothing lines, and more. Her work has been featured in Rolling Out magazine, Groupon, Ebony Jet, BlackDoctors.org, Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Crusaders, Detroit Times, Gospel Tribune, African American Tribune, South Suburban News, Chicago Defender, Vibrant magazine, Truth B Told News, Precious Stones and UStyleU magazine. Melanie has worked in radio as an Executive Producer for Mark Wallace, Rhymefest, and Robin Robinson. Her TV experience has been in front of the camera. She has hosted WCIU U TOO. She has done production work for an upcoming Warner Bros./NBC TV show called Genius Junior. She has acted on TV shows, such as, The Chi, Empire, and American Greed. She was featured on a Franciscan Health commercial. She has also been in two movies. Melanie also worked behind the scenes for various organizations' video commercials and live streaming video work. She directed and video recorded two TV shows for Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. on the WORD Network and Impact.

Melanie has regulated for the social media of various people and organizations, including a university, an artist, business stakeholders, restaurants, judicial candidates, a movie, live events, and PR companies. Currently, Melanie teamed up with Afrika Porter to do Public Relations

with their company AMPR (Afrika & Melanie Public Relations).

Before Melanie opened her media company she taught for Chicago Public Schools, she worked in Communications for a public health organization doing press releases, photography, creating and executing events, writing newsletters and articles, updating websites, and other public relation duties. She also performed spoken words at various events. Melanie is also a Steve Harvey recognized abstinence speaker, currently being a virgin. She is also a two-time award-winning media activist and rising leader for the community.

Most notably, Melanie is known for her help in organizing, along with the Black Heroes Matter (BHM) Coalition, to get the founder of Chicago (Jean Pointe Baptiste DuSable) due honor by renaming Lake Shore Drive to Jean Pointe Baptiste DuSable Drive. Melanie also won a "40 under 40 Young Powerful Woman" Award (2018). She received recognition as a photographer by the National Association of Black Journalists in 2020. She received recognition on FOX 32 News, CBS 2 News, and NBC 5 News for her photography. And she was the winner of "Best Photography/Videography Business Award" in 2020 by The Black Mall.



Eva Maria Lewis

Eva Maria Lewis is a self-titled, socio-cultural architect; an award-winning human rights advocate; and an organizer, writer, and artist from the South Side of Chicago. Eva Maria founded the Free Root Operation (FRO) in 2015 when she was a high schooler. Through FRO, she works to intercept poverty-induced gun violence in her city through community-

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centered innovations.

Eva Maria uses her words to create avenues of liberation and justice. Her 2017 TEDx Teen Talk, explaining the origins of gun violence in Chicago, has garnered millions of views across various media platforms.

In 2020, she worked with the family and friends of Breonna Taylor to honor Breonna's life and legacy on what would have been her 27th birthday. Through this, she encouraged millions to not let Breonna's life be lost in vain.

In a quest to shapeshift adversity into liberation, Eva Maria's advocacy has been amplified through Adobe, Teen Vogue, Participant Media, Complex, and more. Her work has taken her from the United States to the United Nations, to Paris, allowing her to enact change on a global scale. She has received numerous honors, including the "Princeton Prize for Race Relations" and the "Reebok Human Rights Award." Eva Maria recently completed her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania.



DeAnna McLeary Sherman

DeAnna McLeary Sherman is the CEO and Co-Founder of True Star, a non-profit media company and digital agency led by youth. True Star's mission is to provide training and real-world work experience, which teaches youth to create, develop, and market digital content on platforms, empowering them to forge their own paths. DeAnna has provided life-changing professional development and employment opportunities through paid media and marketing job training programs to over 10,000 Chicago southside and westside youth.

Since 2004, True Star has served as the ultimate "For Us By Us" youth ran media brand. True Star was ingeniously designed to champion Chicago's most underserved youth demographic to become the next generation of journalists, broadcasters, podcasters, videographers, photographers, audio engineers, influencers, content creators, and entrepreneurs. True Star trains our youth to have the skills and social consciousness to capture the most authentic and inclusive narratives that best informs, engages, and empowers our most underserved communities. True Star is

currently working to purchase a building in South Shore to build a state-of-the-art training center and creative studio. This would allow True Star to make a greater impact, as they provide arts, education, and youth development job training programs, giving even more young people the high-demand skills needed in the digital content field that is growing and transforming exponentially.

Sherman is a 2019 Google Impact Grant Challenge Winner, a 2017 Social Venture Partners (SVP) pitch competition winner, and a 2016 Honoree recipient of the State of Illinois' Office of Comptroller's Vanguard Award. A native Chicagoan, Sherman holds a Bachelor of Science degree and Master of Science degree in Business Administration from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). She resides in South Shore with her husband and three daughters.



T.S. Douglas

Entrepreneur T.S. Douglas is a Chicago-based educator who teaches Life Sciences - Nutrition, Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, and Microbiology - at the Collegiate level. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology, Masters of Science in Molecular, Cellular, and Microbial Biology and Masters of Arts in Teaching Secondary Education. She is currently working on her Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Foundations. T.S. Douglas so enjoys studying nutrition and understanding how to feed cells that she literally wrote a couple of textbooks. Cellular Nutrition and the Science of Health (Kendall Hunt) center on the structure, function and purpose of food, digestion, and physical activity, along with their impact on our bodies. Her love for science and education allows her to make sense of nutrition for the betterment of who we are. T.S. says,

"We should feel great about the food choices we make, knowing that we're giving our cells what they need every single day. But, in order to do so, we have to change our mindsets so we can be more aware of what we need to eat, how we should eat, and why we eat in the first place."

As the innovator of Fresh, Raw & Natural LLC (FRN), T.S.

Douglas enjoys bringing her academic experiences to the public. In 2020 and 2021, T.S. worked through the City Colleges of Chicago to provide nutrition seminars for the Chicago Police Department. She was also featured on a segment for the National Coalition of 100 Black Women's STEAM series.

T.S. currently produces FRN products through the shared kitchen space at The Quarry Chicago. You can find some of her articles in issues of the South Side Drive magazine.

Douglas' love of creativity isn't just for scientific pursuits either. She earned a Bachelor's of Art degree in Fashion Design. Her other interests include knitting; puzzling, and physical fitness for mental health. Her goal is to master as much credible information as she can, reflecting her talents and expertise; then, pass it down along the way for the betterment of who we are as a species.

Contact T.S. Douglas at FreshRawNatural@gmail.com. Discover more about Fresh, Raw & Natural at www.FreshRawNatural.com



Sista Afrika

Affectionately known as Sista Afrika and The Queen of Hyde Park, Afrika Porter is the youngest of six children born to Rev. Dr. Kwame John R. Porter and June Porter. Her father, Dr. Porter, is a retired pastor, educator, and author of over six books. Her mom, June, retired from educating adults at Literacy Chicago, teaching them how to read and loving it.

Sista Afrika is a great example of the apple not falling too far from the tree. She is an educator and activist. She is also a five-time Emmy Award Winning executive producer and writer of Chicago at the Crossroad (www.chicagoatthecrossroad.com).

Sista Afrika started at The National Rainbow PUSH Coalition as a press associate. She registered over 50,000 new voters during that time. She is a community developer, public speaker, and has a marketing, promotions, and a music production background. Sista Afrika, being a PUSH committee member and the Black Heroes Matter public relations specialist, is also instrumental in the renaming of

Chicago's historic Lake Shore Drive to Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable Drive.

Sista Afrika is the CEO of Afrika Enterprises, a full-service public relations and consulting company with clients from various fields, who are entertainers, authors, artists, CEOs, directors, and owners of business startups and established businesses. She has worked with President Barack Obama, Kanye West, Common, Rhyme Fest and hip-hop Pioneer/Professor KRS 1, to name a few. She is currently a producer on various podcasts with topics which include education, politics, and entertainment.



Kaia Love

Rakaia Jackson, aka Kaia Love, is the Founder and CEO of CreateLife247. CreateLife247 is a spa, where Kaia Love and her staff perform non-invasive techniques to take away unwanted fat and inches off of any particular body part. The CreateLife247 training academy trains others in that field of non-invasive fat reduction. They

also sell products, such as, waist beads and bath, body, and beard oil.

Kaia Love is also the founder and CEO of Girl Be-U-tiful. Girl Be-U-tiful's mission is to inspire, encourage, motivate, and teach young ladies all across the world the importance of knowing they are beautiful. During their empowerment sessions, they dialogue with the young ladies to bring forth inner wholeness and encourage entrepreneurship. As the young people are taught entrepreneurship, they are also encouraged to create their own brands.

Kaia recently launched Project Create Life for people who have dealt with sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or are currently dealing with it, in order for them to receive healing, restoration, self-awareness, and peace. Kaia authored a book and workbook based on her own experience with childhood abuse. The book is The Shattered Innocence of YaYa, and the companion combination workbook and journal is The 12 Steps of Overcoming Sexual Abuse. Kaia is also an actress, having received her training and initial

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experience at the ETA Creative Arts Foundation in Chicago, under the tutelage of Runako Jahi. She has performed in a number of plays in the Chicago area and in other cities.



Dr. Dominica McBride

Dr. McBride founded BECOME in 2013 from a belief that communities should be at the center of creating the reality they want and need and that culturally responsive evaluation can be a tool for social justice and helping communities to thrive.

Dr. McBride previously conducted program development and evaluation projects in Arizona, the Chicago area and in Tanzania, Africa. She has worked as a consultant, program director, and adjunct faculty member in the field of community psychology. She has also provided adult, child, and family therapy as well as substance abuse counseling. Dr. McBride is a sought-after national speaker and trainer for communities, coalitions, and organizations. Her published articles and chapters discuss culturally responsive evaluation, cultural competence, prevention, and a variety of other topics.

Awards and honors Dr. McBride has received for her work include: "The Chicago School of Professional Psychology Supervisor of the Year Award," "Ed Marciniak Bright Star Award from the Bright Promises Foundation," American Evaluation Association Marcia Guttentag Promising New Evaluator Award," and ARK of St. Sabina Dream Maker Award." She also served on the Board of Directors of the American Evaluation Association. Dr. McBride has a PhD in Counseling Psychology with a specialization in Consultation from Arizona State University.

Her plans for her future work in the community include collective transformation and movement, building towards actualization, which would embody unity, love, and truth.



Chineze Mogbo

Chineze Mogbo is an Artist, Creative Professional, Safe Space Curator, Model, Kemetic Belly Dancer and teacher, Digital Marketing Strategist, Head Wrap Specialist, Health and Wellness Advocate, Housing Counselor and a proud Mother.

After obtaining her Bachelor's degree in Business Management and Marketing, she founded Mogbo Marketing, a Digital Marketing Agency. Its mission is to Stimulate organic consumer response through effective social media marketing strategies to increase brand awareness, sales, and customer retention.

Chineze is also the founder of Battle Wrapped, an African culture based fashion business. Its mission is to teach the art and history of global Head wrapping techniques.

In 2018, Chineze was shot in the head and sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). After her recovery, she co-Founded Weaving the Thread Healing Experience (WTT Healing) where she began sharing her traumatic experience with others and the practices that helped in her healing process. Weaving the Thread Healing Experience's (WTT Healing's) mission is to provide supportive safe spaces and healing events to the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) community, families, friends, and caretakers.

As an artist, Chineze uses the power of healing practices, art, and other creative avenues to curate Wellness events globally.



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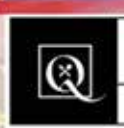
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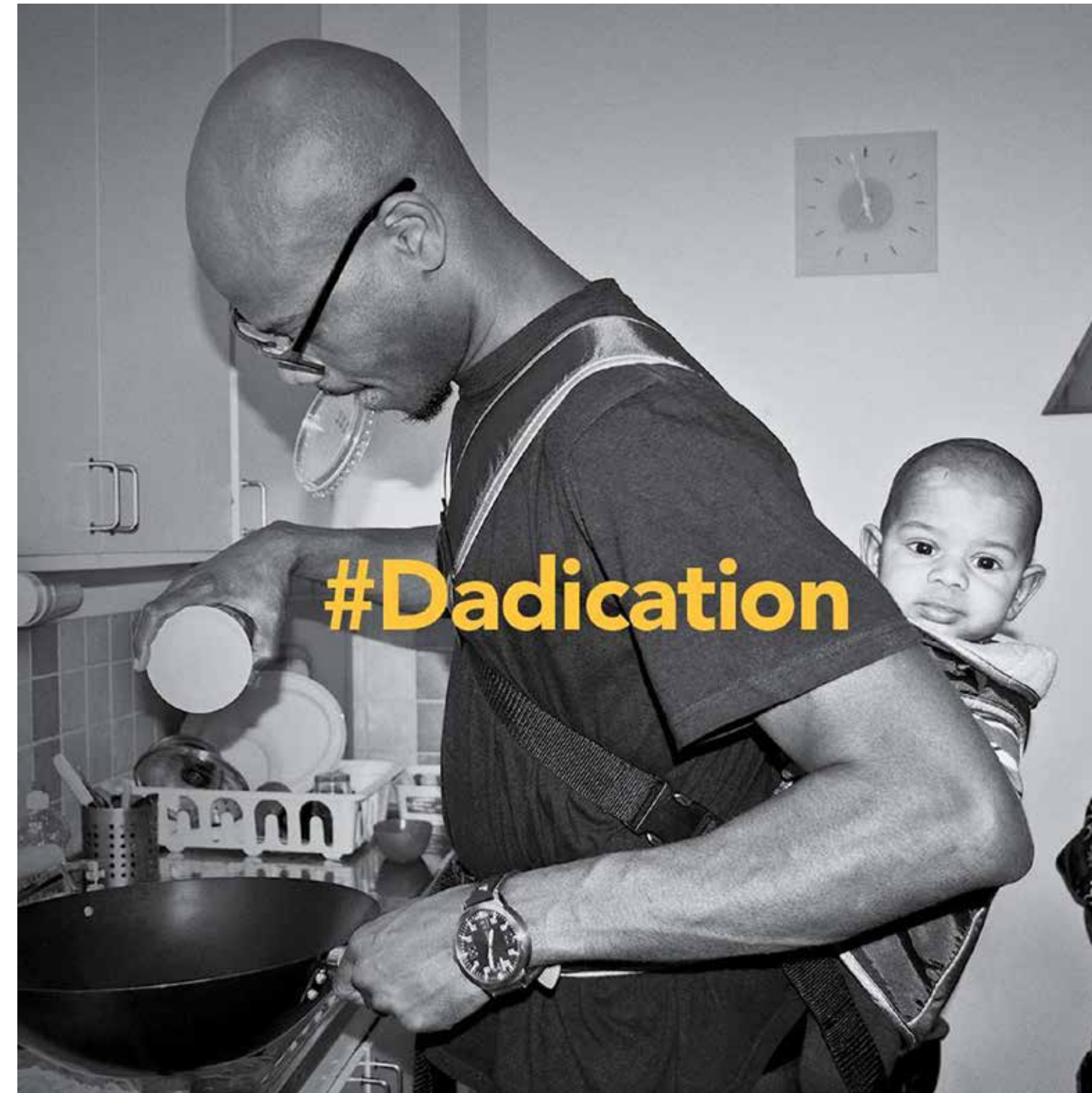
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Community Builders: Robinson and Latiker

During this Women's History Month, we put a special spotlight on women who lead.

In Chicago, many sisters are doing the historical heavy lifting, leading the economic community development and the preservation of our communities. However, there are two sisters who are outstanding as leaders of their communities.



Paula Robinson

Queen of Bronzeville: Paula Robinson

Many years ago, Bronzeville was considered one of the most unsightly, crime-ridden communities in the Chicago area. No one seemed to care about the numerous boarded up houses, the poor living conditions, and the poverty that made itself at home in a community. It was not long before developers, noting the close proximity between Bronzeville and Chicago's Loop, began taking a closer look at that community. Homes were built along Bronzeville's Oakwood Boulevard. However, the people

living in that area could not afford them. Gentrification seemed imminent.

Bronzeville needed a leader, an advocate, a queen. Thirty years ago, Paula Robinson became that leader, that advocate – and through her work and accomplishments of over thirty years, she has earned the title of “Queen of Bronzeville.” Robinson resides in historic Bronzeville and is an arts patron and antique collector.

Today, she serves as the Managing Member of Bronzeville Partners LLC and the President of its two civic organizations. She presides over the Bronzeville Community Development Partnership (BCDP), a 30-year private non-profit community development corporation (CDC) which she founded. The BCDP is a collaborative partner with the Chicago Park District and Chicago Field Museum for the Burnham Wildlife Corridor with initiatives for nature trails, outdoor gathering spaces, public art, and youth conservation. Robinson is also President of the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Commission. This Commission is a 501c3 organization, actively revitalizing Chicago's historic African American community as an international tourism destination. Through her leadership for over two decades, the Commission's advocacy has led to the completion of a formal feasibility study, as well as a legislative nomination to the Department of the Interior for congressional designation.

Robinson, a marketing and communications

veteran, operated her own full-service firm, BR&R Communications Inc. for more than ten years. BR&R directs consumer marketing and corporate communications and is recognized with numerous industry awards. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Arts from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. She has completed the required coursework at DePaul University for a Master of Science degree from the School of New Learning, focusing on Heritage Tourism as a Sustainable Development Strategy for Urban Markets. Robinson also completed the Minority Business Executive Program, with the Amos Tuck School of Business Administration at Dartmouth College. In 2012, Robinson became a co-founder of the Urban Innovation Center. This organization is an incubator supporting social enterprise and civic entrepreneurship in tourism, technology, and transportation. She is the principal of Profit From Rentals (PFR) Chicago Inc., which is a community economic development (CED) practice implementing measurable social and equity capital investments.

A Fellow of Leadership Greater Chicago, Robinson is also advisor emeritus to the board of advisors for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She is also on the Calumet Collaborative Steering Committee, transforming the southeast Chicago lakefront and the northern Indiana region. As a Community Economic Development specialist, Robinson holds professional certificates from NeighborWorks and other local agencies. She chairs the economic development committee for the Morgan Park Civic League and serves on the committee for trail-oriented development and community wellness around the Major Taylor Trail.

As we celebrate Women who Lead during Women's History Month, we pay special homage to Queen Paula Robinson.

A Rose in Roseland: Diane Latiker

Roseland is one of the deadliest neighborhoods in Chicago, despite stepped-up efforts by City Hall to curb gang violence. Within this deadly environment lives Diane

Latiker, working to keep the peace, always there for her kids.

Although all of Diane's biological children are grown, with Aisha, the youngest, in her early thirties, she still considers the kids of Roseland “her kids.” and Diane is there to protect them, to provide a safe haven for them, to create activities for them, to keep them out of harm's way, rescuing them from gang membership, and protecting them from gang recruitment. The latter comes with threats on her life.

This all began when Aisha was thirteen years old and, at the time, the only one of the Latiker's eight kids still in the



Diane Latiker

home. The neighborhood had become a whole lot worse than when they first moved there, and Diane and her husband were concerned about Aisha's safety. Keeping her home and inviting her friends into the home, as opposed to allowing her to go out with them, seemed to be the best solution. So, nine of Aisha's friends began coming to the home on a regular basis, not only to visit Aisha, but to talk with Diane about their problems and fears, and to get help with their homework.

The numbers grew and soon the Kids Off the Block

(Continued)

Paula Robinson



Diane Latiker



BRONZEVILLE LAKEFRONT

Congratulations Paula Robinson for being showcased as a woman who leads!

(Continued)

program was fully operational. A 2018 article reported that 3,100 kids had been helped through the program.

The world has taken notice of Diane Latiker’s many accomplishments. She was featured in a Comcast special broadcast and the Waymaker magazine in 2021. She was named as one of the most inspiring Chicagoans in 2020. Also in 2020, she was honored as Frontline Hero by Variety Magazine and Lifetime, featured on the front page of the Chicago Sun Times, and acknowledged by President Barack Obama. In 2019, she received the “Chicago Peace Fellows Award,” and she served as the Keynote speaker at the Illinois Treasurer’s Black History Month Celebration of that year. That same year, she received the “iHeart Media Community Partner Award.” In 2018 she appeared on the Steve Harvey Show and was featured in CNN’s Great Big Story in September of that year. The Gentlemen of Abraham Lodge presented Diane with the “Outstanding Urban Leadership Award” in 2018. She also received the “A.R.C.H. (Always Reaching Children’s Hearts) Award,” and in that same year was presented with both the Salem Baptist Church “Women of Influence” Award and the Cook County Juvenile Probation “Community Recognition Award.”

Back in 2017, Diane received the Global Girl’s “Community Leader Award” and was the featured speaker at RM72 .

She launched “Fierce Over 40” Women’s Empowerment Movement in April 2017. Also in 2017, she received the “Phenomenal Woman Award” at the Black Women’s Expo and the “MBIB Catalyst Award.”

Diane received the Governor of Illinois’ “Leadership Award” in 2017 and was featured in the Ambassadors Circle “ChiTown Warrior Series” in March of that year. The year 2017 was a busy year for Diane. She also received the “Gentle Warriors Award” from the National A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum and was a featured speaker at the Women’s March in Chicago.

In 2016, Diane was a “Women of Worth” Top 10 Honoree, “Points Of Life” Honoree, and she received the Bronzeville Children’s Museum “Dream Maker’s Award” at the Kwanzaa Celebration, as well as the “Homer Deakins Service Award” and the “Outstanding Community Leader Award” from the AFP (Association of Fundraising Professionals) Chicago Chapter.

There are many more awards, media appearances and mentions about this remarkable woman – too many to name here.

During this Woman’s History Month, we are proud to salute Diane Latiker, the Rose of Roseland, a woman who truly leads.



The GRIT Chicago team honors your legacy of leadership on Bronzeville Lakefront and beyond.



Bronzeville Lakefront is a 100+ acre transformative mixed-use destination that is innovative, sustainable, design-centered, and inclusive at its core. This world-class development has a total investment value of \$8.5B+, representing opportunity and possibility for all.

The regenerative 100+ acre Bronzeville Lakefront redevelopment is transforming the site of the former Michael Reese Hospital into a sustainably designed, walkable, and inclusive live-work-play destination; featuring a vibrant mixed-use community of residences, retail options, curated restaurant offerings, office space, and a groundbreaking life science innovation hub in the Bronzeville Innovation Center which will deliver mission-driven health innovation.

Grounded in legacy, shaped by community, and driven by innovation — welcome to the healthy community of the future.



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OF MAMA AND MARGARET

Two Women



Dr. Margaret Burroughs went on to found the DuSable Museum of African American History; Gwendolyn Brooks (left) became our Illinois Poet Laureate Photo: Vivian Harsh Collection

By Nora Blakely Brooks

Gwendolyn Brooks

Born in Topeka, Kansas on June 7, 1917 she was the first Black person to ever win the Pulitzer Prize for anything. She was the Poet Laureate of Illinois for over 30 years and a Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress.

Gwendolyn Brooks was the author and editor of more than 20 books, mostly poetry for children and adults. However, fiction, autobiographies and anthologies also played a part. She focused primarily on the urban Black experience but addressed social and global issues, as well.

Margaret Burroughs

Born in 1915, she was an American visual artist, writer, poet, educator, and arts organizer. She co-founded the DuSable Museum of African American History, the oldest museum of Black culture in the United States and, as a long-time educator, spent most of her career at DuSable High School. Her writing focused on Black experiences and the importance of Black people, particularly Black youth, appreciating their culture.

Mama and Margaret.

Of course they met long before she was Mama to me or my brother Henry. Before Gwendolyn was Blakely or Margaret was Burrroughs.

They met when my mother joined the NAACP Youth Council which at that point was thought to be a fairly militant organization. There my mother found young Black thinkers: educators, artists and writers, legal minds and budding entrepreneurs. Among them, John H. Johnson and Margaret Taylor Burroughs. The Youth Council was political and social. They marched in the streets in protest against lynching but they also held dances.

Her writing focused on Black experiences and the importance of Black people, particularly Black youth, appreciating their culture.

Gwendolyn and Margaret continued their friendship and their commitment to poetry years later at a poetry club at the South Side Community Arts Center which was conducted by Inez Cunningham Stark.

One of the members knew a young man named Henry Blakely. She told him if he came to a meeting he would find “a girl who wrote”. My future father, Henry L. Blakely II, was also interested in writing poetry so he went to see what there was to see.

Neither knew just how significant that meeting would be! Legend has it that when he walked in the door Mama looked up and said, “That’s the man I’m going to marry”. Margaret yelled out “Hey boy! This girl wants to meet you!” Who knows? Without my mother’s brave announcement and Margaret’s exclamation I might not even be here.

The friendship, the bond, continued over decades with the occasional dust-up here and there. In fact, it was Margaret who gave the eulogy for my grandfather, David Anderson Brooks, at his funeral in 1959.

In Report From Part One, the first half of my mother’s autobiography, she described her relationship with Margaret Burroughs. “Through all the oddities of the Changes, always my friend, not afraid to mix cold seriousness with warm humor.”

Gwendolyn Brooks and Margaret Burroughs. Two women. Two artists. Two change agents. Two icons. Two friends.



Gathering at the South Side Community Art Center, 1948: standing, left to right: Marion Perkins, Vernon Jarrett, Robert Lucas; seated, left to right: Margaret Brundage, Tom Conroy, Fern Gayden, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Burroughs.

Not pictured, but also associated with this group were Richard Wright, Arma Bontemps, Frank Marshall Davis, and Jack Conroy (brother of Tom Conroy, seen above)

Nora Brooks Blakely is the daughter of Gwendolyn Brooks. She is a literary arts administrator and President of Brooks Permissions. She is also an Authorpreneur at (Flying Colors Unlimited)

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