

SoulVision[®]

M A G A Z I N E

**Brandi Harvey's
Mission for You to
Be Healthy**

April 2020

EDITORS NOTE

BK Fulton



Photo by Queon “Q” Martin

| “. . . do it from a place of love.”

When we started SoulVision Magazine in late 2018, there were many naysayers who questioned if the world was ready for another publication. We took that leap of faith and now our articles are read by over 100,000 people each month, and we are reprinted and distributed in over 261 cities around the globe. This issue is our way of saying thank you to all of our readers and supporters.

In this issue, we continue to bring light and love by showcasing a pioneering young leader who is vegan, a business leader, a fitness professional, and a motivational speaker. Yes, I’m talking about the sensational, albeit lesser-known, Brandi Harvey. Her cover story will amaze you. We also have the good fortune of featuring Ken Harvey, former NFL superstar turned creative writing phenomena. Filmmaker Lauren Meyer and artist Acori Honzo are in this month’s issue. Buckle up! We plan to keep pushing as we bring you a new look with SoulVision. Thank you, again, for supporting our work and check out SoulVision.TV – it’s FREE!

You can download the SoulVision.TV app on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

BK Fulton – April 2020 (continued)

Thoughts on Corona

When COVID-19 hit, we realized that we could not stop our work to lift others with positive and inspirational stories. Even with all the madness in the world, we should continue to smile. Why? Because you woke up. When we have the gift of life, we have the promise of hope and the lift of faith. Hope is our comfort in the storm. Faith is our guide in the night. The two combined allow us to make a way out of no way. Accordingly, no matter the circumstances, let's all choose to live each day rejoicing! The resources below may be helpful as you self-quarantine to project yourself, your family and the world:

Free Classes – Currently, all eight Ivy Leagues—Brown, Harvard, Cornell, Princeton, Dartmouth, Yale, Columbia, and the University of Pennsylvania—are offering 450 active, free courses across a range of topics digitally. All you have to do is visit Class Central – <https://www.classcentral.com/>, find the area of study you're most interested in and sign up through that university's website.

Free Audio Books – Audible, my favorite audiobook company, just announced that a large selection of audiobooks will be available to anyone for free for as long as the schools are closed. Enjoy! www.stories.audible.com.

Free Online Library, Art and Video Chat – **Caribu**, one of the best inventions of 2019 according to Time

Magazine, is allowing FREE and UNLIMITED access to their app for all families and any caring adults who would like to read live to children impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Caribu allows kids to read and draw in a real-time video-call with family and friends. Tap the link to download the app and read our “Mr. Business” series and over 1,000 other great children's books (<http://bit.ly/download-caribu>) for free as we fight COVID-19.

Souldify Productions, the parent company of Soul-Vision Magazine, keeps pushing the envelope. We launched SoulVision.TV on all major platforms (Apple TV, Roku, Amazon Fire) and all mobile devices in the first quarter of 2020 – on Valentine's Day. We released our first international film, *Joseph*, in Nigeria and Ghana, and partnered with AMC to release the film in select theaters in the US. The book series, *Mr. Business*, also made its debut on **Caribu.com**, the world's leading video read-along app. Finally, our romantic comedy feature film, *Love Dot Com: The Social Experiment*, continues to do well on Netflix. We thank everyone who supports the work. We do it from a place of love. Stay safe and remember a positive attitude is contagious too.

“Even with all the madness in the world, we should continue to smile.”

CELEBRITY

Brandi Harvey's Mission for You to Be Healthy



Photos by Will Sterling

| “You are in the driver’s seat of your life.”

Growing up in the Midwest town of Cleveland, Ohio, Brandi Harvey was taught that excellence was the standard she should live her life by. Brandi’s elementary school principal, Mrs. Stella Loeb-Munson was one of her earliest exposures to excellence. She had an entrepreneurial spirit in the way she made her own clothes and relied on her own intuition and smarts to navigate the world. Brandi wanted to emulate her style and swagger.

Brandi Harvey's Mission for You to Be Healthy (continued)

Outside of school, Brandi was inspired by the writings and grace of Susan Taylor, the former editor-in-chief of Essence Magazine. As a little girl, Brandi sat at the hair salon and would eagerly grab a copy of the latest issue of Essence Magazine to read her column “In the Spirit.” At eighteen years old, Brandi had the opportunity to meet Ms. Taylor. For the first time in her life, she was star struck. “She embodied grace, style, poise, and beauty,” she says. “She was this tall black woman with these braids and very striking features. She, to me, was the epitome of womanhood. I wanted to be that. She was one of the reasons why I fell in love with words and spirituality.”

“I needed to find the thing that was going to make me get up early in the morning and make me want to stay up late at night.”

After graduating from Ohio State University in 2005, Brandi became a high school history teacher. She recalls that while teaching high school history was rewarding, it wasn't her purpose. “I was young and fresh out of college,” she says. “I had just moved to Los Angeles and had these big dreams of being this young engaging teacher. I remember being in college and thinking, ‘I'm going to change the world!’ I realized all of those big ideas that I had didn't quite fit into the space of school bureaucracy. It just wasn't for me.” So she had to change course. She needed to find her passion. “I needed to find the thing that was going to make me get up early in the morning and make me want to stay up late at night,” she says.

Her parents instilled in her the importance of service to others. “When you are here, you are here to serve the needs of God's people,” they would say to Brandi. She realized teaching was not necessarily confident to the classroom. After she left teaching and moved to Atlanta, her mother said to her, “That wasn't your classroom to teach in. The world will become your classroom.” After leaving her teaching position, her mother's wise words rang true.



In 2018, she started Beyond Her, a wellness brand for women, specifically for those of color. Brandi has traveled the world as an advocate for women's health and wellness.

Brandi recalls the time she was executive director of the Steve & Marjorie Harvey Foundation, her family's non-profit that focuses on educating and mentoring underserved youth. After being executive director for seven years, her dad fired her. “People couldn't believe it,” she says. “They would say, ‘How could your dad have fired you?!?’ but I'm so thankful he did.” Brandi says her dad had to navigate his way to success and in seeing similarities in her that he saw in himself, he wanted to allow her to grow and create her own lane. “He said to me, ‘You got to go do the thing that's going to make you happy. The thing that's going to make you smile. The thing that's going to make you soar.’ And when he released me. I was

Brandi Harvey's Mission for You to Be Healthy (continued)



released into my destiny,” she says. “So many people wait around because we are so afraid to get out of the boat of mediocrity. There is no outside source that’s coming to save you. You put the “S” on your chest and save yourself.”

“You are 100 percent responsible for the life that you have. You can heal your life, but it’s going to have to start from the inside-out.”

When Brandi started to be intentional in her life, she saw a significant change in her happiness and well-being. “We must put intention and action behind our daily lives. I became intentional about how I get up in the morning,” she says. “I became intentional about how I practiced my

life during the day— e.g., my rituals for meditation, going to therapy, journaling, and praying. When you match intention and action, you are on the road to success.”

In her book, *Breakthrough Sold Separately: Get Out of the Boat of Mediocrity and Walk On Water*, she advocates for living the life you want to live. “I want readers to get that you are in the driver’s seat of your life,” she says. “You are 100 percent responsible for the life that you have. You can heal your life, but it’s going to have to start from the inside-out.” She understands everyone has self-doubts, but she says you have to remind yourself that you are valuable and loved. “I’m a spiritual person and that connection plays out in my life in many ways,” she explains. “When I get a little anxious or don’t know what’s going to happen next, I just focus on my breathing and I start to feel centered and in control again.”

Brandi started to consider therapy around the time her sister and brother-in-law were getting married. When they were dating, her brother-in-law told her sister that he wanted to marry her, but first, she had to work on some things. He encouraged her to go to therapy and so she did. Brandi could see a change in her sister. While she considered therapy, she did not take the action to go at that moment. This was also the time she was still executive director for her family’s foundation. As she would talk to the kids in the program and discuss the issues they were facing with counselors and their families, Brandi started to question what was going on psychologically with these young people of color. This turned into a bigger question for Brandi: “Why do people of color engage in certain behavior?”

She began her research and came across Dr. Joy DeGruy’s book, *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome*. Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome is the theory that centuries of chattel slavery and institutionalized racism have caused multigenerational trauma in people of color. The theory goes on to explain how this trauma causes harmful behavior like internalized racism, anger, violence, and low self-esteem. The wounds were never really healed. “After reading *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome* it kind of

Brandi Harvey's Mission for You to Be Healthy (continued)



gave me the green light to say I wanted to heal myself,” she says. “I never looked at my life as being traumatic because most of us view trauma as something big.” She goes on to explain how we look at “big traumas” like death, assaults, and so on, but ignore traumas like abandonment or verbal assaults. “I started examining my life and I saw myself exhibiting so many of the signs that Dr. DeGruy talks about in the book as a black woman and I was like, ‘I want to fix that,’” she says. In 2016, she began going to therapy. Therapy became, what she calls, her “non-negotiable.” She went every week and has continued to since then.

She advises people to find their non-negotiable, specifically something that can be part of their self-care ritual. “I tell people to find something that becomes your non-negotiable,” she says. She used the example of 5 am runs as an example of a non-negotiable. “That’s you in

the morning in the darkness on the pavement,” she says. “Whatever it is, find that non-negotiable that you are not willing to compromise for anything or anyone and that is when you will see real change in your life.”

“Wellness is a lifestyle. It doesn’t work if you don’t work it.”

Brandi is proud of herself for taking the steps to stay healthy. Today, she has a great sense of self-awareness and love for herself. “If I can continue to keep walking in that way, then God will continue to bless me,” she says. With more clarity and purpose comes self-mastery. For Brandi, this means understanding who she is as a person emotionally, physically, and mentally. “I think it’s an old adage that says, ‘your health is your wealth,’ and as cliché as it is, it is true for me,” she explains. “I have expanded my life in ways that I didn’t know were possible 10 years ago, let alone five years ago.”

Brandi feels like she’s still moving and pushing along. “Being the daughter of a megastar, you have a real blueprint of hard work and work ethic,” she says. She referenced watching her dad tape a show. She was looking at a 60 plus-year-old man who was still working. “He’s still teachable and he’s still coaching. I don’t think you ever make it. I don’t think you ever arrive. You just keep growing,” she explains. In a journal, she has written down all of what she wants to accomplish. She feels she is on her way to accomplishing big things. “I feel like I’m in a place where I just keep being available,” she continues, “And keep being open and keep allowing myself to surrender and trust the process.”

Brandi says young people who would like to become wellness entrepreneurs must learn to “walk it like they talk it.” It is important to be authentic. “I think so many people can easily fall into this idea of wellness careers being a gimmick,” she says. “I’m not going to tell you to eat plant-based and I don’t eat plant-based. No, I eat plant-based and vegan because that is the life that sus-

Brandi Harvey's Mission for You to Be Healthy (continued)

tains me and allows me to do the work that I do. That's how I live." She says, "I'm not going to tell you to go to therapy and heal yourself and I don't do that. I'm not going to tell you to journal and I don't do that. It is about practicing what you preach. Wellness is a lifestyle. It doesn't work if you don't work it."

This year, Brandi has rolled out new video content on social media and has started a Beyond Her branded podcast. She will also create an audiobook version of her book later this year. Readers will have the opportunity to document their self-care journey in a journal that will coincide with her book. She says she will also be on a nationally syndicated radio show that she has to be on the

hush about. Before we ended our talk, Brandi outlined the universal attention she would like Breakthrough Sold Separately to have. "I want to take this book around the world so that we have conversations, healing conversations with women, particularly women of color," she says. "I think this book is not just for women, I think this book has a lot that it can offer men as well." No matter your gender or race, self-awareness and care are important steps to living a long and fruitful life.

To learn more about Brandi Harvey and Beyond Her, you can subscribe to her newsletter on her website beyondher.co and follow [@iambrandiharvey](https://www.instagram.com/iambrandiharvey) and [@beyondherco](https://www.instagram.com/beyondherco) on Instagram.

MUSIC

KiDé's Soulful Charm



Desiree Jordan (left) and Kia Bennett (right) form KiDé. Photo by Duke Gilmore.

| “Help us in dismantling the barriers to the classical forms of the arts.”

Kia Bennett (from Richmond, Virginia) and Desiree Jordan (from Silver Spring, Maryland) were releasing music on their own before they randomly met on the set of a YahZarah music video. They were Facebook friends and interacted with each other through likes. They appreciated each other’s music from afar. Kia recognized Desiree and they became friends and a musical partnership began. This musical partnership blossomed into the formation of KiDé. While they are currently in the studio working on their debut project, the duo has performed live and created compelling remixes of classic records. When their debut does drop, the world will fall in love with their soothing and tranquil soul/R&B.

KiDé's Soulful Charm (continued)



KiDé's Sofar live performance in Washington, DC. Photo by Mark Gorman.

“We are here to redefine an atmosphere of love and beauty through music and to keep good music alive.”

Last year, the duo released a cover/matchup of two classic songs from different eras: A Tribe Called Quest's *Bonita Applebum* and RAMP's *Daylight*. The aptly titled track “Bonita Applebum's Daylight” is a jazzy and boombap neo-soul cut. The duo's vocal harmonies sound like they are beaming down from the heavens. It is no wonder Kia Bennett describes their sound as “pure and angelic.” Kia and Desiree are creating something that's fresh while keeping the spirit of music from the latter half of the 20th century alive.

Never artists to box themselves in creatively, Kia Bennett and Desiree Jordan both play keys and sing lead vocals in the newly revamped Roy Ayers Music Production (RAMP). Along with their respective projects and the imminent debut album, KiDé is working on a

new project with RAMP in collaboration with The John Manuel Project (leader/drummer of RAMP). KiDé will continue touring as a duo throughout the year. “We plan to continue with our residencies at hotels, casinos, and hospitals,” Kia says. KiDé participates in the healing arts program in hospitals around the DC area. The program soothes and uplifts the spirits of their patients through music and the arts. “We use our voices to soothe and heal,” Kia says. “We're also working on voice-overs and jingles and getting our music licensed for use in television, film, and commercials. We are here to redefine an atmosphere of love and beauty through music and to keep good music alive.”

To learn more about KiDé, you can follow the duo on [Instagram](#). You can listen to their music on [SoundCloud](#).

MOVIES

Ken Harvey Is More Than Meets the Eye



Ken Harvey. Photos by Jenna D. Burke.

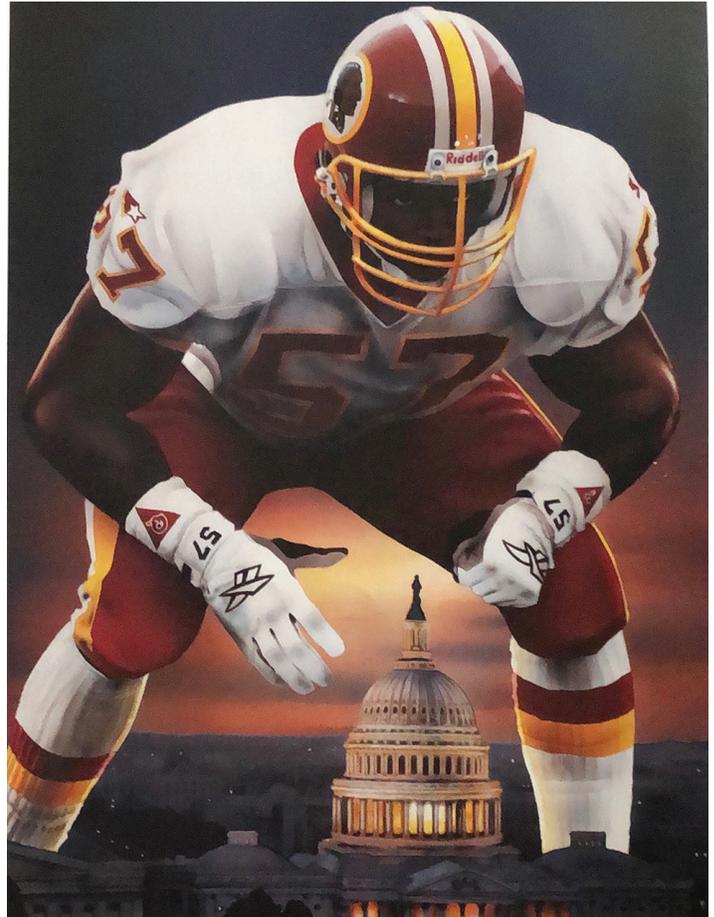
“God has given each of us certain talents, it is up to us to choose what we do with them.”

Standing at 6-foot-2 and 225 pounds, you would not expect Ken Harvey to be a shy kid from Austin, Texas. In fact, when he was a teenager standing at the same height he is today, people stereotyped him to be an outgoing star athlete, but perception is not always fact. Ken dropped out of high school in the 11th grade, which at the time, ended any chance of a football career. After struggling to find himself, he found his strength in God which gave him a new belief: he could become anything he wanted to be. Ken went back to school and graduated but ended up flipping burgers at a local burger joint. Still, he believed in the possibility of going to college. He knew football would be a vehicle to get there but how? Speaking it into existence, a friend at the gym told him about Laney Junior College, a gateway to get into the University of California, Berkeley. He enrolled in Laney and later transferred to Berkeley, playing football there.

In 1988, he was drafted into the NFL. He played outside linebacker for the Arizona Cardinals (Phoenix Cardinals at the time) and the Washington Redskins. He went to the Pro Bowl four times. He retired in 1998. What people may not have known was that Ken was also writing. In fact, over the course of his NFL career, he had become a successful writer, businessman, and creative. Ken is a shining example for all shy kids that they can live a successful life. “I believe God has given each of us certain talents, it is up to us to choose what we do with them,” he says. He says to really be an expert at any craft, you need to “stretch out and try different things.” Growth will aid you in perfecting your craft, he explains.

From children’s books to adult thriller suspense novels, Ken creates vibrant and relatable stories. “I write because I enjoy taking a blank sheet of paper and creating something from it,” he says. His latest book is the suspense thriller *Alone*. *Alone* is the story of Sherry, a recent Howard University graduate, who becomes stranded on a deserted island after the cruise ship she was

Ken Harvey Is More Than Meets the Eye (continued)



Ken Harvey played outside linebacker for the Washington Redskins in the 90s. Artwork by Terry Crews. Courtesy of Ken Harvey

vacationing on is destroyed in a bad storm. Ken compares his writing style to the imagination of a child, the oddness of the *Twilight Zone*, and the vision and skill of a linebacker.

Ken wants to have a run of #1s in a variety of mediums: books, plays, movies, and music. Right now he's focused on writing a play about either his life or of a Christian superhero. He's up for the challenge. "It should be a fun adventure to see if I can do it," he says. Ken looks to his faith in God for inspiration. "I look at my life like Moses when God said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' and Moses replied, 'A staff.' I feel as though God has asked me the same question. It seems that each time I answer that question, amazing things happen." For Ken, faith is a necessity. He trusts God to lead him and God has not failed him. That is true freedom.

To learn more about Ken Harvey, you can follow him on Instagram. You can purchase "Alone" on Amazon.



MOVIES

Lauren Meyer's Ode to the American Dream



Lauren Meyer on location in Wyoming for The American Dream Project. Photo by Todd Williams.

| “No matter what, just go for it.”

Lauren Meyer grew up dreaming about being a director. In the '90s, she began her career as a production assistant for Roseanne Barr and Tom Arnold on their various projects. Today, she's an Emmy nominated director and filmmaker who has credits on dozens of networks, cable channels, and digital platforms. “I have always loved being part of a creative team,” she says. “It's inspiring to collaborate with people who are passionate about their craft. I focus on creating stories with beautiful imagery. I want to tap into your emotions and make you think and feel. Whether the project is scripted or unscripted, any project I work on needs to be authentic.”

Along with directing, Lauren also works as a camera operator and director of photography (DP). “As a director and DP, I believe it's important to understand what it takes to put a project together technically, business-wise and creatively,” she explains. Working her way up from production assistant to director has been a journey that enabled Lauren to learn about what it takes to bring a project from concept to delivery. This training has allowed her to work with talented creative professionals in all areas of the business. The team at her production company, Tumbleweed Pictures, is comprised of these talented and passionate individuals. Together they have the experience and confidence to take on projects, big and small.

Lauren Meyer's Ode to the American Dream (continued)

In 2014, she directed the documentary series *The American Dream Project*. The American Dream Project was a grassroots indie-project that was shot without any guaranteed distribution. The series was picked up by Netflix (now available on Amazon Prime) and was nominated for an Emmy. The series follows two friends who journey across America to explore if the American Dream still exists and what it means to people around the country. Her interest in telling authentic American stories has greatly influenced her latest project, the documentary *The Other Boys of Summer*.



From left: Pedro Sierra, Lauren Meyer, Jim Robinson at the NYC premiere of *The Other Boys of Summer*. Photo Courtesy of The Cooper Union/Marget Long

“The Other Boys of Summer explores civil rights in America through the lives of former Negro League baseball players,” Lauren explains. “The film is narrated by the legendary Cicely Tyson and features never-before-seen interviews with the trailblazers who played alongside Jackie Robinson and changed baseball and America forever.”

The Other Boys of Summer program has been embraced by Major League Baseball (MLB). It was featured at the 2019 MLB All-Star game as part of their diversity and inclusion activation. “Many MLB Youth Academies have experienced the value it provides by connecting the history to current day issues,” Lauren says. Spartanburg, South Carolina and Rocky Mount, North Carolina have embraced *The Other Boys of Summer* in their communities

and schools to bring people together and have an open dialog. Companies like AT&T, P&G, TPG and GE Aviation have also found the program valuable to their organizations. She is working to create a digital/remote version of the program to reach a larger audience.

“I’m fortunate to be able to create content that provides people with an escape from their everyday lives, whether it’s for 5 minutes or 2 hours.”

Lauren is currently in talks to direct her next documentary and scripted projects. Lauren says her passion is storytelling. She is always looking to create compelling stories that will connect with people. “I’m fortunate to be able to create content that provides people with an escape from their everyday lives, whether it’s for 5 minutes or 2 hours,” she says. “Sharing people’s stories (fact or fiction) is critical for my personal happiness. Seeing people react and connect to the story you are sharing is fuel for the soul.”



Lauren Meyer on location in 2019. Photo by Alyssa Pinter.

To learn more about Lauren Meyer and *“The Other Boys of Summer,”* you can visit the website theotherboysofsummer.com and follow the documentary’s [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

ART

Acori Honzo's Afro-Pop Figurines Pique the Imagination



Acori Honzo creating *The Conversation*, a piece where Jean-Michel Basquiat meets James Baldwin.

Photos by James B. Abbott.

| “Don’t be afraid to look to the past for inspiration.”

Acori Honzo is an incredibly talented and meticulous artist who creates 1/6 scale “afro-pop” figurine art. “I get inspiration from anything so an idea can hit me at any moment,” he says. His influences include artists Andy Warhol, Norman Rockwell, Basquiat, and comic book artists Alex Ross and Jim Lee. His artwork is about perspective. His artwork evokes imagination and extends the narratives of popular and historical figures. In *The Conversation*, he imagines Basquiat and James Baldwin in conversation on a park bench. It is brilliant and touching to see two figures from different eras who shared the same philosophy: telling the truth through their art. By scaling down these larger than life figures, Acori is influencing a generation to rethink their relationship with the most celebrated figures in African-American culture.

Acori Honzo's Afro-Pop Figurines Pique the Imagination (continued)



Until you do right by me by Acori Honzo.
Figurine of Celie from *The Color Purple*.



James Baldwin by Acori Honzo

When audiences look at Acori's figurines, they get a sense of an artist who has a genuine appreciation and love for pop and mass culture. Who he decides to create a figurine of can come on a whim. "I get inspiration from anything so an idea can hit me at any time or any moment," he says. He starts with sculpting in clay, then casts the sculpture in silicone and creates resin replicas. "I then modify and hand paint the sculpture many times before deciding which one is the best to display," he explains. He then will create or modify clothing for the tiny figurines. "I want every piece to be one of a kind and made with love. Love of our people, our features, and our heroes," he says.

His newest figurine is of activist and poet Maya Angelou. "This is one of my favorite pieces to date," he says. "I played around with the idea of designing my own version of a Barbie doll. I chose to model it after a younger Maya Angelou with a natural hairstyle and a posable figure. The piece is black excellence that speaks loud."

"I want every piece to be one of a kind and made with love. Love of our people, our features, and our heroes."

In addition to the Maya Angelou piece, he is in the final stages of his figurines of the four little girls from Birmingham who were killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in 1963. "I am working on figurines for Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley," he says. "All four young ladies are being sculpted and will have original tailored clothing. They will be smaller, around 8 to 9 inches tall; smaller, but very powerful pieces."

Acori Honzo's art reflects the influential figures of older and younger generations. Like the artists before him, he is not only paying homage to the past but reflecting the changing culture of a people.

To learn more about Acori Honzo and his art, you can follow him on Instagram.

CHEF'S CORNER

Chef J. Ponder



Chef J. Ponder. Photo credit: prince_akeem/Instagram

“A traditional southern meal that will remind you of back home.”



Photo credit, StockImageFactory/
Shutterstock.com

To learn more about Chef J. Ponder, you can visit his website chefjacobyponder.com and follow him on Facebook [@ChefJacobyPonder](https://www.facebook.com/ChefJacobyPonder) and Instagram [@chefjponder](https://www.instagram.com/chefjponder).

Southern Style Black-Eyed Peas

Course: Dinner

Cuisine: Cuisine: Southern

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour and 5 minutes

Serving Size: 68

Ingredients

- 2 cup dried black-eyed peas (4 cups cooked)
- 1 tbsp. oil
- 1 tsp. cumin powder
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- 1 tsp. cumin powder
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tbsp. coriander powder
- 1 can tomatoes, diced
- 1 cup of coconut milk
- 1 smoked Turkey wing
- 1 spring of cilantro

Preparation

1. Rinse and pick through the black-eyed peas. Soak overnight.
2. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer.
3. Cook smoked turkey wing until tender for 30-45 minutes.
4. Drain soaked beans and add to pot with turkey stock while the beans are cooking.
5. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat.
6. Add the cumin powder and fry. Stir for 5-10 seconds or until the seasoning blooms.
7. Reduce the heat to medium and add the yellow onion.
8. Fry until transparent then add the garlic and ginger. Fry until soft.
9. Add spice powders and fry.
10. Stir for a minute or until aroma is released.
11. Add the canned tomato (reserve juice) and raise heat to medium-high.
12. Simmer and stir occasionally. Crush the tomatoes with the back of your fork until you get a thick sauce.
13. Add coconut milk and salt to taste.
14. Simmer for a couple of minutes or until the sauce reaches the consistency that you like.
15. Add black-eyed peas.
16. Serve with fresh chopped cilantro sprinkled on top and saffron rice.

COMMUNITY

MoBBallet's Celebration of Black Ballet Dancers



Theresa Ruth Howard, founder and curator of Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet (MoBBallet). Photo by Saya Hishikawa

“Help us in dismantling the barriers to the classical forms of the arts.”

Each month we highlight a community program that aligns with the values of SoulVision Magazine. We believe engaging with one's community is critical to fostering positive change in the world.

Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet (MoBBallet) was founded by Theresa Ruth Howard in 2015. MoBBallet “preserves, presents, and promotes the contributions, and stories of black artists in the field of ballet, illustrating that they are an integral part of dance history at large.” The idea is to be a digital museum of the history of black ballet dancers. Through oral histories, mini-docs, and articles, their accomplishments and stories will continually be available to the public.

MoBBallet's Celebration of Black Ballet Dancers (continued)



Photo by Eva Harris.

MoBBallet serves as an extension of the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) work Howard does for ballet and the arts.

Traditionally, the discussion of DEI focuses on numbers. Howard's focus is on how a space feels. "It is not solely about numbers," she explains. "Inclusion is a feeling, not an action." Her motto is "Organizations are not constructs, they are people," and in her conversations with clients, she challenges them to rethink

not just their organizational core values, but their own. "Organizations don't change, people do. This is why empathy is vital," she says. "In the end, I would describe what we do as connecting people by erasing boundaries and amplifying the commonalities that bring us together. We just want to make the world a better place."

Through her engagement with DEI work, Howard has come to appreciate its complexity. This insight has greatly influenced her overall approach. "It's like baklava. There are so many layers and as you get deeper in, you realize it's not simply about a lack of diversity; it is about the culture itself, the system that holds everything in place," she explains. "I'm happy to be a part of deconstructing the hierarchical structures that have historically supported the exclusion of people of color. Elitism, classism, sexism, and racism have been socially and culturally acceptable barriers to these classical forms. I am excited, honored and amazed to be a part of this incredible shift in consciousness."

Howard's work to advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion reaches beyond MoBBallet. She has been called upon by Opera America for consultation and was invited to join their ALAANA Action Group. In February, Seattle Opera invited her to address the classical arts community (Symphony and Ballet) on ways to better integrate their DEI efforts and discuss black representation in the arts. Howard launched the pilot program of its MoBBallet Symposium last October in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "It's a multi-generational, personal development and educational intensive convening of elite and diverse faculty of black ballet professionals, pre-professional ballet students, and dance educators," she says. She explains the symposium as a "comprehensive community" for black people in ballet. "We support, nourish, and 'raise' black ballet artists," she explains.

MoBBallet's Celebration of Black Ballet Dancers (continued)



Photo by Eva Mueller

Howard reminisces about the success of the first symposium. “It was successful beyond my wildest imaginations,” she says. “It was a giving, sharing, and healing experience for both the students and their mentors.” She plans to expand the symposium to an entire week instead of three days. “This means we are in the process of fundraising, so we can offer scholarships and travel stipends for our participants,” she says. “We believe economics should not be a barrier to such a singular experience.” Ballet is for everyone. The arts are for everyone. With Howard’s help, we will see a culture that looks more like the world we live in. Dance, like love, is universal.

To learn more about MoBBallet, you can visit mob-ballet.org and follow the organization on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

Masazumi Chaya



Photo by Andrew Eccles

In his early 20s, Masazumi Chaya arrived in New York with just \$1,000 in his pocket. It was 1970 and he wanted to prove himself as a dancer. In Japan, he had been dancing for a few companies there, but wondered if he was only getting work due to his male privilege. He wanted to go somewhere he could start fresh and test the merits of his ability.

Growing up in Fukuoka, Japan, it was assumed he would be headed to medical school. His parents worked as a nurse and doctor. But when he was 17 he found his passion for dance. He started to take jazz-dance classes and perform on TV shows in Japan. Two years after he landed in New York with \$1,000 in his pocket, he joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Chaya, what Masazumi is known by, ascended from an Alvin Alley dancer to the associate artistic director of the company in 1991. After 47 years in the business and at the young age of 72, Chaya retired from the company this past January.

Throughout his years at the company, Chaya trained generations of dancers and kept the company's repertoire true to the vision of Alvin Ailey. He wasn't afraid to wear multiple hats. He was the man who worked behind the scenes to make sure everything went as planned. Chaya is known for his passionate, positive, and uplifting spirit that inspires anyone who works with him to push themselves to the best of their ability.

Masazumi Chaya (continued)

As Chaya leaves his position, Chaya begins another: continuing Alvin Ailey's legacy and vision. Chaya will organize archives of recorded performances, create official resource guides for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater repertory, and lead a new initiative called the Alvin Ailey Choreographic Legacy Project. This project will give

other dance companies a license to perform Alvin Ailey's work in the United States and around the world. This program will allow more people to see and appreciate Alvin Ailey's work. Masazumi Chaya is the quintessential example of what a person can accomplish when they are passionate, hard-working, and great at what they do.

“Don't give up your dream and find what keeps your energy flowing. It's the secret to happiness.” — Masazumi Chaya