

SoulVision®

M A G A Z I N E

A close-up portrait of Rob Chesnut, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair and a friendly smile. He is wearing a dark blue t-shirt. The background is a blurred cityscape, likely San Francisco, with the Transamerica Pyramid visible on the left.

**Airbnb's Chief Ethics
Officer Rob Chesnut:
Bringing Ethics and
Values to Silicon Valley**

June 2020

EDITORS NOTE

BK Fulton



Photo by Queon “Q” Martin

| “Where there is God, there is ALWAYS a way.”

Whether you are 19 or over 50, the biggest battle you will ever fight is the one you fight with yourself to become who you are supposed to be. My kids always wanted me to teach them to punch and kick. I told them first they had to learn to be still and silent. When you can't go outside, the strong know how to go inside. When you think there is no way, the wise know how to invoke the ultimate way maker. Where there is God, there is ALWAYS a way. None of us need to be a Super-Man to be great. However, it helps to have a Super-Plan if you want to become the best version of yourself. Stay strong. Embrace the flow of the Almighty. Your breakthrough is on the other side of your struggles. Have faith that this season shall pass with you standing.

BK Fulton - June 2020 (continued)



Photo by Timothy Stephenson

In this issue of SoulVision Magazine, we focus on creators and leaders who have broken through something to get where they are. Rob Chesnut, Chief Ethics Officer of Airbnb shares an amazing story of corporate enlightenment. Larry Palmer reminds us that perseverance is the key to a meaningful life. Dr. Joanne Veal Gabbin reveals her journey to poetic excellence. Her husband, Dr. Alexander Gabbin, crushed boundaries to create the first black MBA association. He is this month's *Living Legend*. We also are excited to announce the release of a new film – the award-winning *1 Angry Black Man* by first-time writer/director Menelek Lumumba. The producers and filmmakers have asked black men and others worldwide to share an image of themselves smiling with a “#1angryblackman” sign and a short story of how they break through stereotypes. The film releases this month on all digital platforms and DVD (June 5, 2020). Finally,

artist and illustrator phenom Salaam Muhammad showcases a new online store and his ability to do commissions and reproductions in volume. These breakthroughs are a direct result of doing the work. Enjoy our June issue. You get a new look when you have SoulVision.

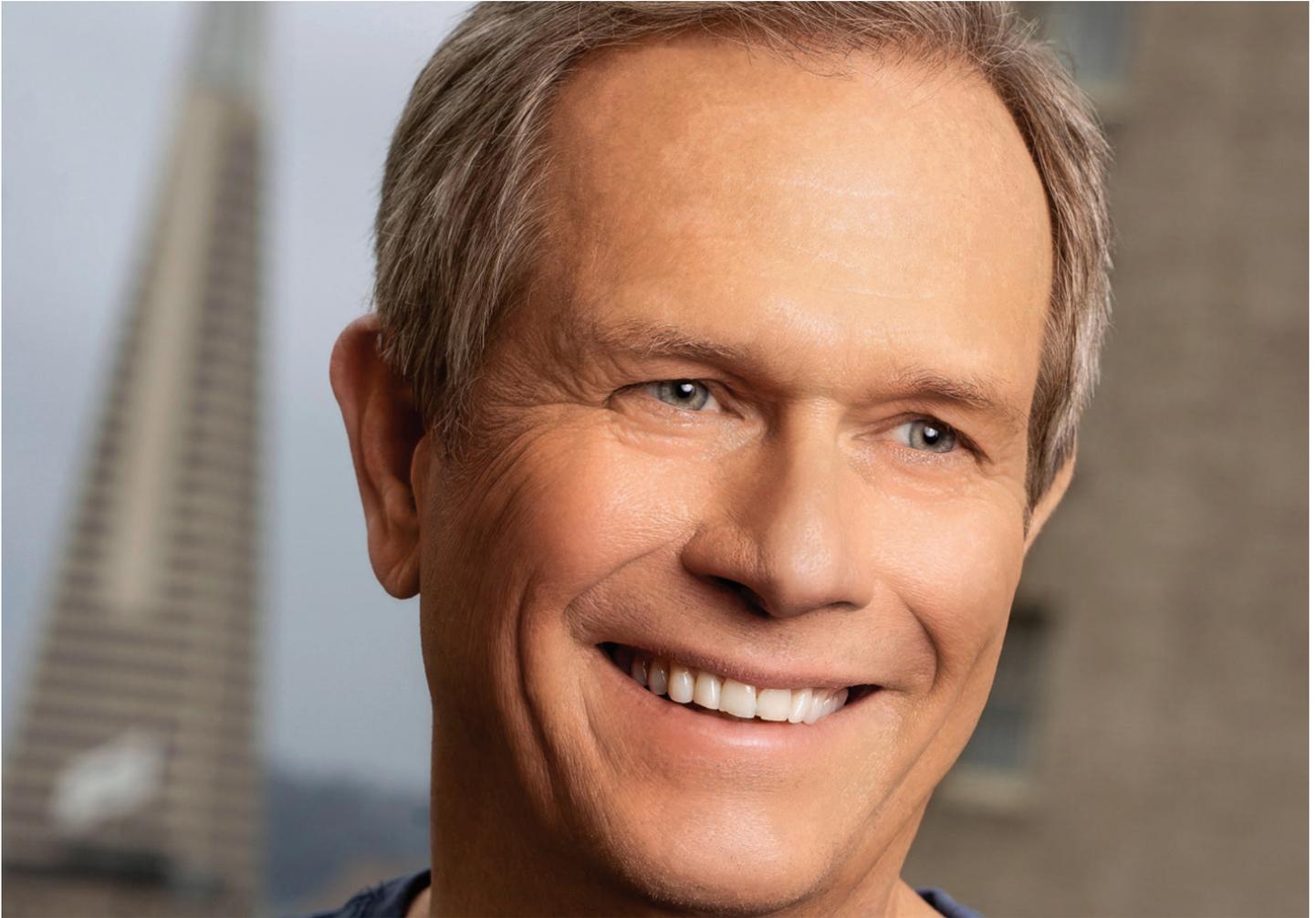
For some much-needed hope, watch our “What’s Going On (COVID Remix)?” [Click here.](#)

*Remember, wear your mask and wash your hands.
We will get through this together.*

“Your breakthrough is on the other side of your struggles. Have faith that this season shall pass with you standing.”

CELEBRITY

Rob Chesnut: Bringing Ethics and Values to Silicon Valley



Rob Chesnut, Chief Ethics Officer of Airbnb. Photo by Asa Mathat.

| “Lead by example.”

Rob Chesnut’s open-mindedness to the possibilities of the internet led him to be a part of some of the most influential companies of our times including eBay and Airbnb, among others. A graduate of Harvard Law School and the University of Virginia, he began his career as a federal prosecutor for the U.S. Justice Department. Unsatisfied with the negative nature of being a prosecutor, he left to go work for eBay in the late 90s. He cites AOL’s dial-up internet as a precursor for his early use of eBay. He knew there was a place for him in tech when he found out AOL had hired a person who had previously had a background in federal government. Seeing there were no jobs posted on the e-commerce company’s website, Rob sent his resume and cover letter to jobs@ebay.com. In his cover letter, he outlined their need for someone who could deal with fraud, the sale of illicit items on their platform, and regulations. The next day, he received a phone call (they had left a voicemail on his home phone) to come in for an interview. Almost immediately, he was on a flight to San Jose, California, to meet with the CEO at the time, Meg Whitman. He got the job. In two months he resigned from his role as a prosecutor and moved out West. His life was changed forever.

Rob Chesnut: Bringing Ethics and Values to Silicon Valley (continued)

Today, he is the chief ethics officer of Airbnb (after serving a long run as Airbnb's General Counsel). Rob laid the groundwork for more companies to have dedicated departments that thought about what is ethical and just. Now he has written a book titled *Intentional Integrity: How Smart Companies Can Lead an Ethical Revolution*, out July 28, 2020, to help companies become more ethical and fair to their employees, customers, and the world at large. In our interview with Rob Chesnut, he gave us a look into his upbringing, his time at eBay, Airbnb's culture of ethics, what intentional integrity means, and the issues that most concern him today.

“Intentional integrity is a recognition that leaders need to talk about integrity and they need to talk about what it means in a specific way so that everyone in the company can get aligned around it.”

Where are you from and what was it like growing up there?

I grew up in Southeastern Virginia in the Tidewater area. My dad was in the Marines and retired in that area. It was, in a number of ways, a typical suburban neighborhood. I had a good childhood although my father left when I was fairly young. I was an only child raised mostly by my mother.

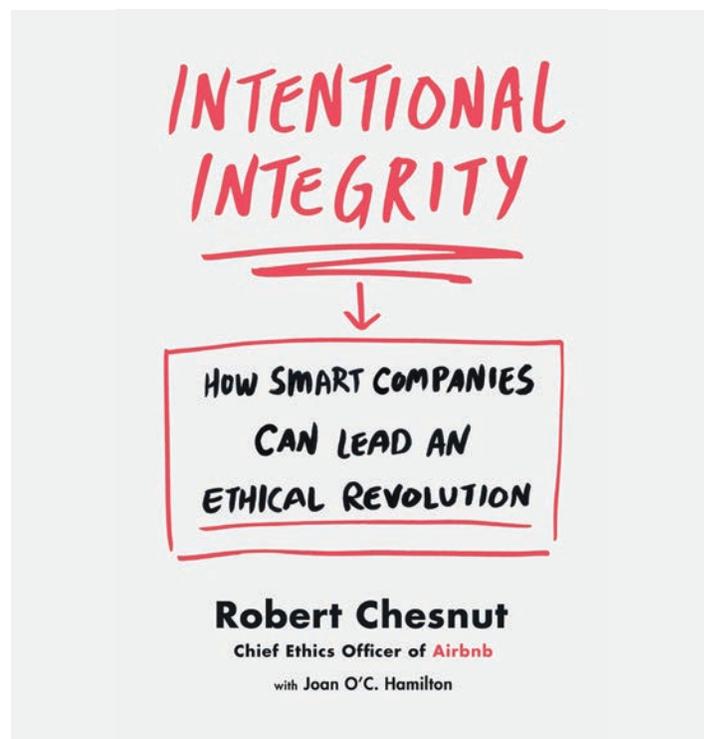
Who or what was your biggest inspiration growing up?

I was always inspired to make the world a better place, but I had no idea how to do it. I figured perhaps being a lawyer would give me the greatest number of options. There's a picture of me in the high school yearbook with one of my classmates, each of us holding a briefcase. I guess people thought we both would end up being lawyers and we did. I was influenced by the legacy of John F. Kennedy. I was very moved by public service and sports, too.

Dr. J was my role model growing up. He played for the local professional team. Back then Norfolk had a professional basketball team—the Virginia Squires. He was fantastic. I remember meeting him as a kid and shooting baskets with him. He had some relatives that lived in the area. I was so impressed with him as a human being. He has gone on to be such a well-regarded figure even well after his playing days, but he had a certain way about him back then that I had always admired.

Did your parents give you any valuable advice growing up?

Yes, I'd like to think so. There is one thing worth mentioning in particular though. My parents held a belief that you may not be the smartest person in the room, but if you have a smile on your face and you work hard, good things will happen to you. From a young age, that was something that was always instilled in me and I kept that with me throughout my life.



Intentional Integrity: How Smart Companies Can Lead an Ethical Revolution will be out July 28, 2020.

Rob Chesnut: Bringing Ethics and Values to Silicon Valley (continued)

What was it like working for eBay?

I was a senior hire for them and they didn't do much recruiting outside of Silicon Valley. I didn't know what I was doing. The CEO at the time, Meg Whitman, was going over these numbers with me and I saw these lines going up into the right. It struck me that they had the best business model I had ever seen. Even though I didn't understand much, I knew I wanted to be a part of it. I was so impressed by how the company could connect people from different parts of the world over a common interest and how trust was at the heart of it.

I remember the first time I was on eBay. Back then you couldn't buy an item with a credit card. You could only send a check or money order. I was thinking: Wait, I'm going to put this money order in an envelope and send it to somebody I don't know, just to get this item? What are the odds that this is going to work out? I trusted it would come and sure enough, it did. In a way, eBay restored my faith in mankind. To be able to make successful transactions over and over again on eBay and then to be a part of the company that was enabling it was pretty cool.

Do you feel like you have made it?

I don't think you ever feel like you've made it. I recently turned 60. I always think of it more as a journey that doesn't have a clear destination, but you kind of have an idea of the direction you want to go in. Every day is a new adventure. If your goal is to contribute in a positive way to the world, then the task is endless and in a sense, you never really get there. You evolve and learn to figure out new ways to do it.

“If I come into the meeting and everyone in the meeting looks like me or has the same background as me, then we're heading towards the wrong path.”

Greatest achievement?

I guess I don't reflect on that too much. I reflect on what my mom would be most proud of: me being open to the journey and not afraid to try new things.

You are now the chief ethics officer of Airbnb. How would you describe your role and why do you think this role is so important for companies?

It is a relatively new role in the business world. I spent the first five years of my corporate career at eBay as a lawyer and then Meg Whitman said to me, “We need to start a fraud department. We need to start something that will proactively detect fraud before it occurs and protect people from getting ripped off.” She knew I could figure it out and they gave me what I needed to get it done. We ended up creating the first trust and safety department in Silicon Valley. Now everyone has a trust and safety department—Facebook, Uber, Google, etc.

I think similarly when I got to Airbnb and I started as their general counsel, I noticed that the world was changing. Me Too became a movement. Leaders who were getting away with things for so long were getting called out for bad behavior publicly and it struck me that this is powerful stuff and a company needs to get ahead of this. In other words, how do you drive integrity into the culture of a company? This was new territory.

How did companies handle ethics in the past?

In the past, at least what I've seen, companies worked on something called compliance. Compliance might be a code of ethics. You may put a poster on the wall in the break room that's got that tiny font that nobody reads or a sexual harassment video that people just click through. We asked: How do you get people to pay attention? How do you get people to see that this is the way we want to operate as a company?

That is when I became really invested in the issue. I knew then that I wanted to write a book about it and

Rob Chesnut: Bringing Ethics and Values to Silicon Valley (continued)

really focus on the issue. Airbnb is one of the first companies, not the very first, but one of the early companies to actually devote a senior level person full-time to thinking about integrity and ethics and drive it as the culture of the company.



Rob Chesnut speaking to UC Berkeley Master of Engineering students about the importance of intentional integrity in the workplace. Photo courtesy of Rob Chesnut.

You have a book coming out titled *Intentional Integrity: How Smart Companies Can Lead an Ethical Revolution*. Can you explain to us what intentional integrity means?

Intentional integrity is a recognition that leaders need to talk about integrity and they need to talk about what it means in a specific way so that everyone in the company can get aligned around it. In fact, it's a powerful force in business but only if you make it a part of your culture by having a real human conversation about it.

I talk to all of the new hires at Airbnb. It can be anywhere from a dozen to a hundred people. I think folks are quite surprised that we have an open conversation in the group about things like alcohol and relationships in the office. The reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. We do reviews with blind surveys at the end of these classes. It is

the number one ranked class at orientation. People walk up to me and say, "You have no idea what it is like to work at a place that genuinely cares about this and actually talks about it and makes it a part of their culture."

In the old days they thought, "Oh, it is a dog eat dog world out there. Ethics will get in the way." I think the way the world is evolving now is that ethics and integrity are superpowers for businesses these days. It's something that actually resonates with employees, with customers, and the community at large. Companies that intentionally act to do the right thing will be rewarded and outperform companies that don't.

That message is similar to Harvard professor Lynn Sharp Paine's. In her book *Value Shift*, she makes the case for a more ethical perspective in business-decision making. Being ethical benefits your company in the long term.

The problem today is that so many companies are forced to do what is in the interest of today's stock price or this quarter's numbers. We talk about the long-term perspective at Airbnb. Brian Chesky, the CEO of Airbnb, calls it an "infinite time horizon." I think that phrase comes from Simon Sinek and having that long-term perspective makes it easier to do the right thing.

I love what you said about the Harvard Business School professor. So often people don't ask the right questions. Is it legal? Is it ethical? Instead, companies ask: Can we figure out how to budget? Can we find a way to skirt around the law? Nobody asks if it is the right thing to do. I think there are distinct questions, and both are important. Even if it is legal, how would it look? My mom would always say, "How would it look if it was on the front page of the paper? Always think about what you do."

In today's world, you have to assume it will end up on the front page cover. Back when I was growing up, a whistleblower was an anomaly. It was maybe one Edward Snowden. Today, everyone walking in your building is a potential whistleblower because the internet has given

Rob Chesnut: Bringing Ethics and Values to Silicon Valley (continued)

everyone a platform. One person has the power with one blog post to change the course of a brand or company. Look at what Susan Fowler's blog post did for Uber. I think companies have to recognize, and this is a good thing, that anything they do is going to be written about online and therefore, be proud of it and if not, reconsider.

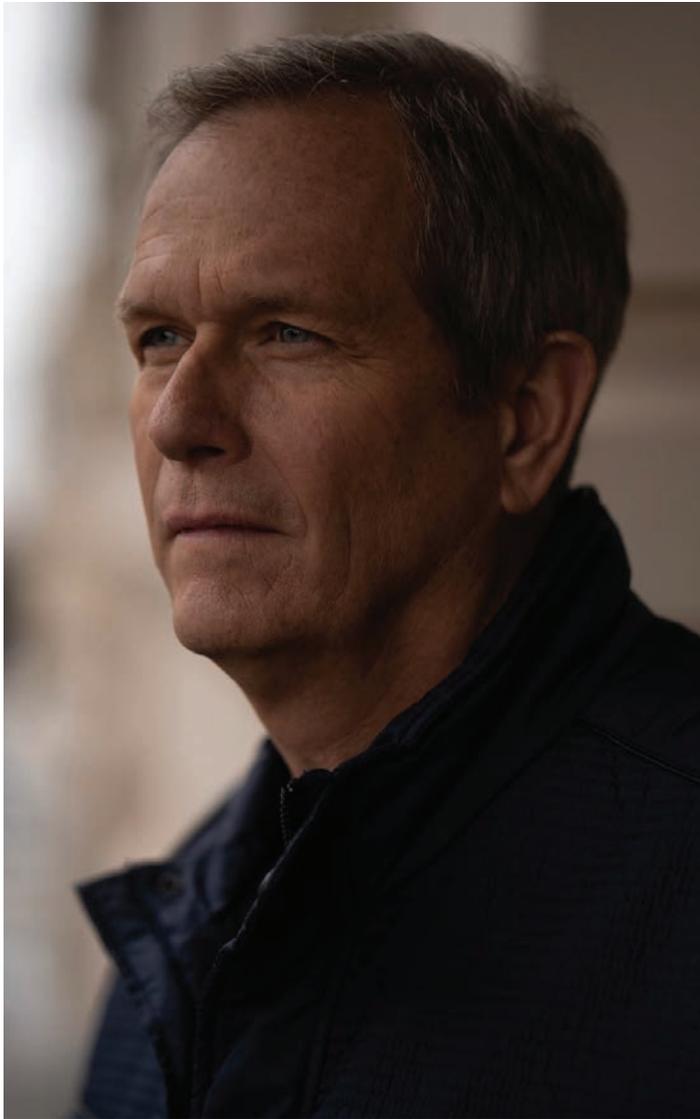


Photo courtesy of Rob Chesnut

What advice would you give to young people who would like to make their mark in the tech industry, but are not necessarily software engineers or computer programmers?

[Laughs] Learn to code. No, there are so many ways to bring value to the table. At Airbnb, we talk about diversity as another superpower and we talk about it in so many different ways—the color of your skin, your background, your religion, your political affiliation, your gender. I think what's dangerous is when companies start to think that engineers are king or we're just going to hire the best person that's defined by "us." When more backgrounds and perspectives are represented in the room, the better decisions you will be making. A room full of 10 engineers is not going to come up with the best idea in the room. A room full of 10 lawyers is not going to come up with the best decision or 10 white people or 10 women or 10 men, etc. If I come into the meeting and everyone in the meeting looks like me or has the same background as me, then we're heading towards the wrong path. I love rooms that have people that think in different ways and when that happens, we are a lot less likely to miss something important.

How has Airbnb thought about diversity?

Airbnb was really torn up about three years ago when it came out that users were discriminated against based on the color of their skin. Black users were having trouble being accepted by hosts on Airbnb and the first reaction in the company—I had only been with the company for a few months—was surprise. There were genuine people in the Airbnb leadership who were shocked because that was not Airbnb as we saw it. Airbnb is headquartered in San Francisco and the environment in San Francisco is very open and accepting of people of all races, nationalities, and sexual preferences.

Why would we think Airbnb is immune to that when there is so much discrimination in the world? Maybe because Airbnb itself was not diverse. If we had more employees of color, it would have helped us to see it earlier. We learned we needed to be more diverse so that we could have a better understanding of what our customers have to go through every day. There has been more of a conscious focus in the last couple of years to understand this.

Rob Chesnut: Bringing Ethics and Values to Silicon Valley (continued)

How do you relax when you are not working?

I love hanging out with my kids. My daughter is in college in New York studying to be an actress. Watching her perform gives me tremendous joy. Like me, my son loves basketball. He plays AAU basketball and he and I will spend time watching basketball on TV and playing basketball out in the yard together. He is only 13 and his feet are already bigger than mine and he is growing like crazy. Just getting out in the yard and hanging and playing one-on-one with my son is something I get a great deal of joy from.

What's up next?

My mom used to love to read. There was always a book on the coffee table right where my mom would sit on the sofa. My mom instilled in me at an early age a love for reading. I'm saddened that my mom is not around anymore to be able to see that her son actually wrote a book.

“I am deeply concerned about climate change. I am deeply concerned about the world I am handing off to my kids.”

I'm still not over the fact that I've written even one book. I think when I see it at the bookstore, it will become a little bit more real. I haven't given one second of thought to another book. We will see where this one goes. As I said, I love the idea of changing things up in life and I like the idea of changing it up again. At age 60, there is still a lot to give and a lot to do.

I am deeply concerned about climate change. I am deeply concerned about the world I am handing off to my kids. My mom always told me to leave the room better than you found it. My generation hasn't done that when it comes to the Earth. I think we failed. I'm doing a lot more reading and thinking about climate change. I think that is an issue that needs a lot of people thinking and contributing in many different ways.

Pre-order Rob Chesnut's book [here](#).

MOVIES

#1AngryBlackMan Challenge Takes Aim at Negative Stereotypes



| “Tell your story. Speak your truth.”

To coincide with the release of the film *1 Angry Black Man* (releasing this Friday, June 5, 2020, on video-on-demand and DVD), director Menelek Lumumba and cinematographer Hans Charles are encouraging men and women to share their experiences with being perceived as “angry” or negatively stereotyped. The purpose of the challenge is to start a national dialogue around the harm of negative perceptions surrounding black men. Anyone and everyone is encouraged to participate.

The Challenge:

Tell your truth. We encourage you to share your stories. What stereotype have you had to deal with? What were the consequences of this stereotype? When did you get angry? Why? Hold up a sign with the hashtag #1angryblackman and a picture of you smiling and post it to your Facebook and/or Instagram.

#1AngryBlackMan Challenge Takes Aim at Negative Stereotypes (continued)

Souldify Productions Founding Chairman & CEO, Executive Producer BK Fulton:



Photo by Queon "Q" Martin

“Take note . . . just because I wear a suit, it does not make me soft. Just because I love soft music, my Lady, and flowers, it does not make me odd. Just because my skin is brown, I’m not wrong, and you can’t shoot me down. You want to tell me what your stereotype thinks I should be. The truth is . . . , you take your notes from books, and images and words that have not been kind to me. You don’t look in my mirror; you don’t see what I see. I AM A MAN. Complexed maybe, but what is clear to me, is that my ancestors died so that I could be FREE!”

Director-Writer Menelek Lumumba:



Photo courtesy of Menelek Lumumba

“I was 6 feet tall by age 12. The world saw me as a threat from that day on. I’m cautious. I can be scared. I’m not angry but I do have moments of righteous indignation.”

#1AngryBlackMan Challenge Takes Aim at Negative Stereotypes (continued)

Cinematographer Hans Charles:

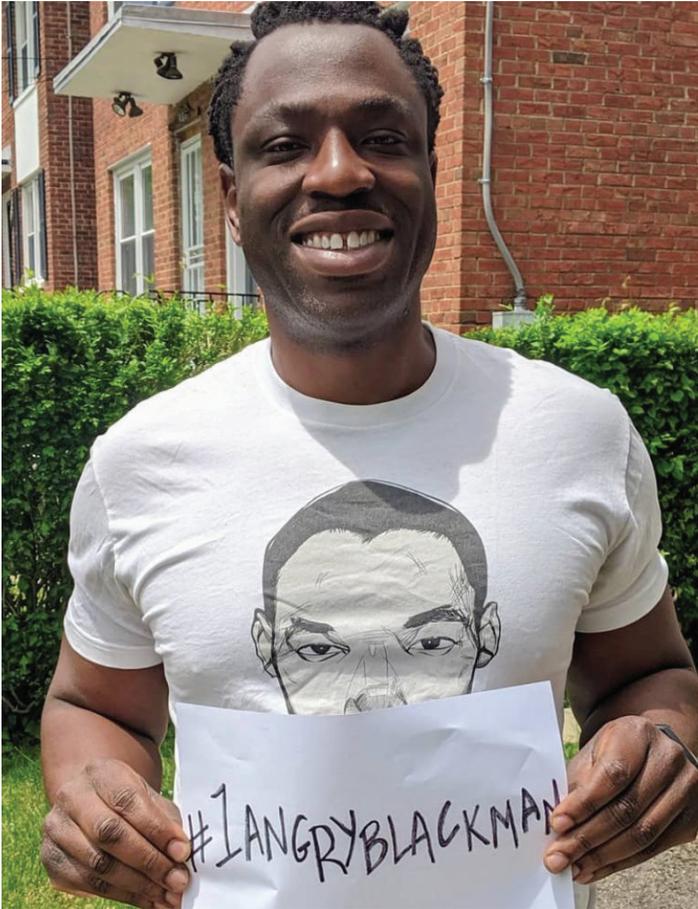


Photo courtesy of Hans Charles

“There are days on set when I’m deep in thought and I lose track of what my face is doing. On those days, I can cause alarm. People will ask me, ‘Are you ok? You seem upset.’ I could be contemplating anything from getting a light to wrap around a face to how many rare elements are caused by two neutron stars colliding. Just because I’m not smiling, doesn’t mean I’m angry. Most times I walk around feeling like Louie Armstrong, but sometimes I’m just in a Miles Davis kinda mood.”

Soulidify Productions President of Film & Production, Executive Producer Monty Ross:



Photo courtesy of Monty Ross

“#1angryblackman. Yes, I happen to be one too! What am I angry about? Raising money for more productions, limited distribution, and marketing budgets, writers and their extended page count, demanding actors, increasing investor value, do we really need 125 people standing around for two actors in a room? Of course we do...35 years of production experience and I love it.”

#1AngryBlackMan Challenge Takes Aim at Negative Stereotypes (continued)

Souldifly Productions COO & CCO Queon Martin:



Photo courtesy of Queon "Q" Martin

“I pledge to never forget those taken from their home and sold by their own... For those who traveled alone, didn’t make it and thrown.... For those who educated their own, because they were left to be unknown.... Your fight and struggle for my rights will never be forgotten.... Instead, it will be etched in stone. I pledge allegiance to my ancestors, as the flag is held high.... You will never be forgotten; your history will be told.... Followed with questions of WHY?”

SoulVision Magazine Co-founding Editor Nicholas Powell:



Photo courtesy of Monty Ross

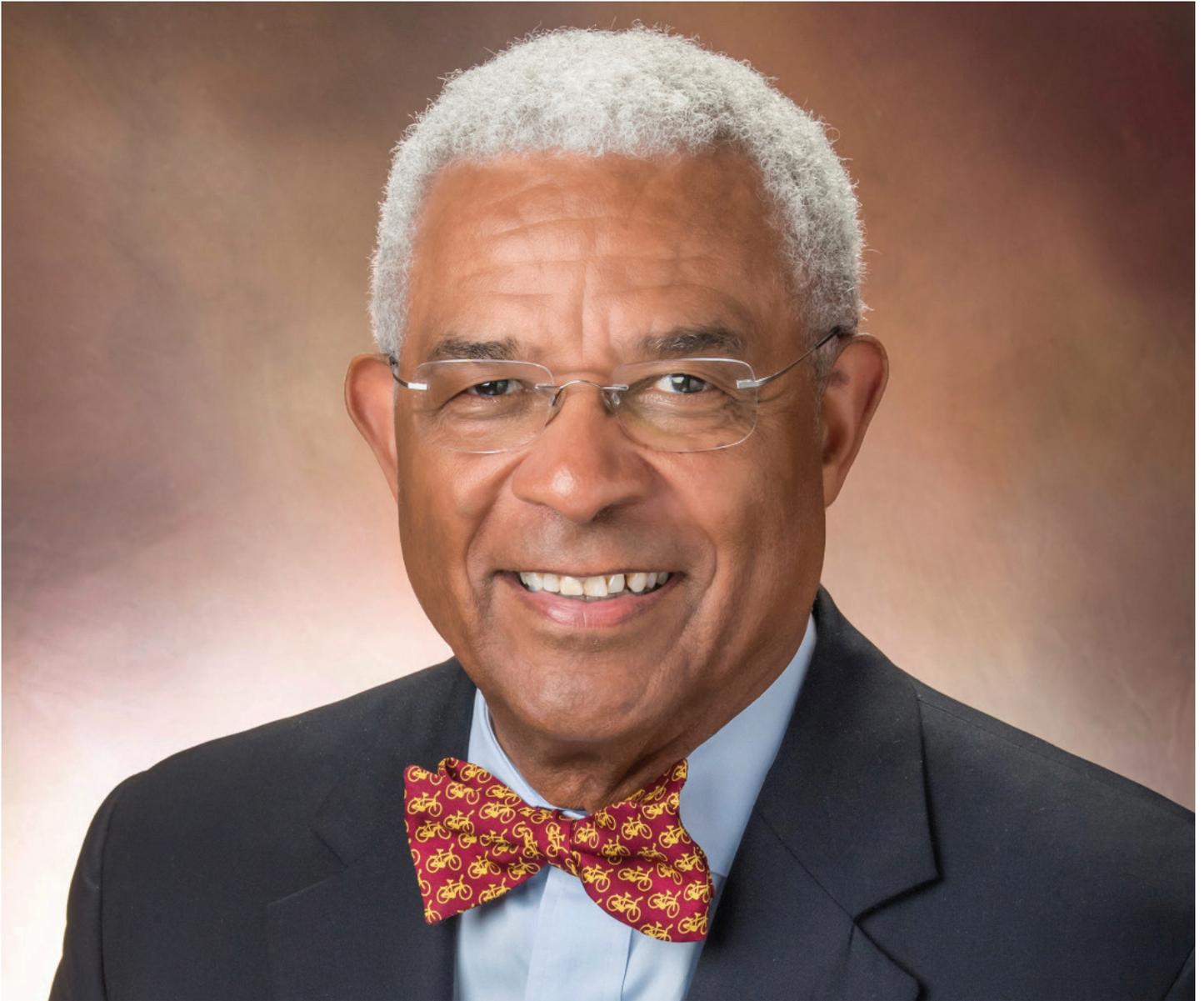
“I am worthy of empathy. I am worthy of love. No more humiliation. No more strife. Give me the benefit of doubt. I am human. I deserve to live.”

About the Film: *1 Angry Black Man* is the directorial debut by Menelek Lumumba. The film takes place at a fictional liberal arts college in New England. Mike Anderson, played by rising star Keith Stone, is feeling sad, isolated, and angry. As discussions in his African-American Literature class surrounding race, sexism and class reach a boiling point, Mike has to come to terms with what it means to be a black man in America. Available everywhere on-demand and DVD on June 5.

Learn more about *1 Angry Black Man* [here](#).

BOOKS

Larry Palmer Finds Himself

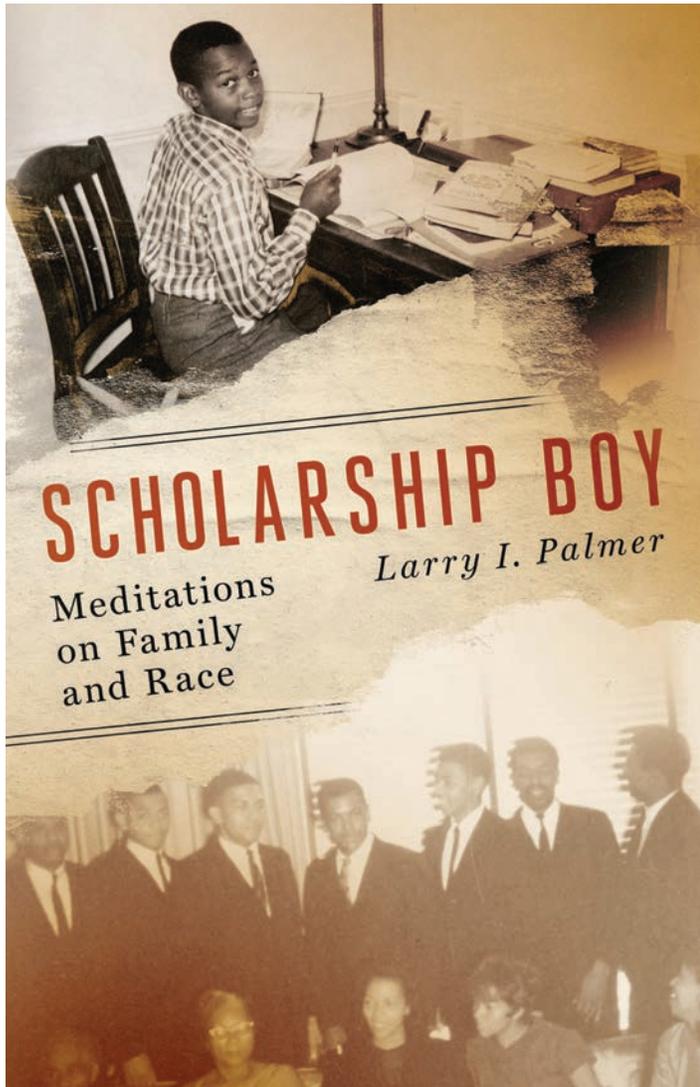


Author Larry Palmer. Photo by Crane Photography.

| “There is power in words.”

Before he thought of himself as a writer, Larry Palmer was the ninth child of ten and lived in a 1,500 square foot house on the West Side of St. Louis. As he recalls, his family was searching for greater educational and economic opportunities for their children. In 1958, at the age of 14, this “urban child of southern migrants,” received a full scholarship to attend the prestigious Phillips Exeter Academy. He decided to stay in New England to continue his education at Harvard and Yale Law School.

Larry Palmer Finds Himself (continued)



Scholarship Boy (Paul Dry Books)

The stories he grew up with referenced the ways of rural life that Palmer experienced. “Cotton, greens, okra, cornbread, ribs, and hunting and fishing references I could only imagine,” he says. These stories influenced his recently released coming-of-age memoir *Scholarship Boy: Meditations on Family and Race*. “I reflect on my experiences as a young black boy growing up far from home, learning to fit into a white world without forgetting my roots,” he explains. Palmer certainly has made a name for himself in academia—two scholarly books, numerous articles, and a few opinion pieces as a law professor and university administrator—but he hasn’t written anything quite as personal as his memoir. While writing a memoir

was new territory for Larry, his writing process did not change. “One thing is constant in my craft: I am a morning writer, and very disciplined in the time I set aside for writing,” he says. “I am also a meditative writer. To tell the distinction between ‘truth’ and ‘facts’ takes time. I will sit in silence with the pain or joy of a memory. In the silence, what I thought I could or couldn’t remember comes to me as scenes or reflections.”

Like many great writers, Palmer writes numerous drafts before he considers his work to be finished. Each morning before he writes in his journal or starts typing on his keyboard, Palmer will read a poem. “Since writing takes so much, dare I say, spiritual energy, I don’t try writing every day or too much in a single day,” he says. “Four hours a day, four days a week was my basic schedule while writing *Scholarship Boy*.” He doesn’t write in the evenings. When he’s in the throes of writing, he likes to do some form of physical activity. That means going to



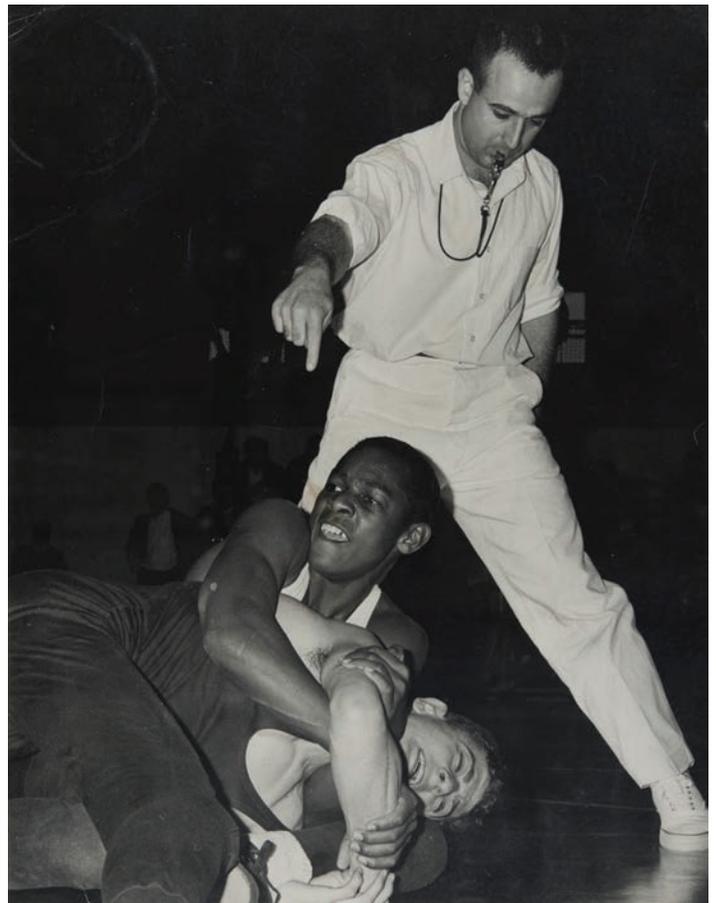
Larry and his brother Barry mixing cement with their father (1950/51). Photo courtesy of Larry Palmer.

Larry Palmer Finds Himself (continued)

the gym (pre-pandemic), walking, or cycling. These activities help him rest his mind and soul. “I have found if I ‘overdo it’ one day, the next writing day is not as productive as if I had paced myself emotionally and physically,” he says.

Palmer jokingly says people his age are no longer cool, but he does have progressive views on race. He recently published an essay on racial misidentification titled “Call Me by My Name.” The essay critiques the idea that white people who confuse black people from one another are harmless because their intentions were not to offend. He argues that this bias should not be taken lightly and it’s an example of subtle racism in our culture that needs to be addressed. Palmer also believes we should transform our cultural institutions—art, churches, and the way we teach history—if we want to make real racial progress in our communities. The project is called “White Innocence and Black Complicity.” “As I talk about my memoir, particularly to predominantly white audiences, I explore the themes of ‘White Innocence and Black Complicity,’” he says.

After he’s finished promoting his book, Palmer would like to explore his family history and write about them in essay form. “Scholarship Boy allowed me to explore my relationship with my older siblings, but it is a self-involved teenager’s view of my siblings and my parents,” he explains. He mentions his eldest brother who was sent to a boarding school for blacks in central Arkansas in the 1940s. The boarding school no longer exists. Palmer wonders out loud what that education might look like. He mentions taking a trip down to Arkansas. He says he has some family papers he needs to study. “I believe there



Larry and his brother Barry mixing cement with their father (1950/51). Photo courtesy of Larry Palmer.

might be stories in the pre-St. Louis period of my family’s life that will help me understand how I benefited educationally even though I often felt like I didn’t quite belong.” It never hurts to learn more about yourself and your history. Larry Palmer leaves no stone unturned.

To learn more about Larry Palmer, visit his website larryipalmer.com.

Dr. Joanne V. Gabbin: Life Told Through Poetry



Dr. Joanne V. Gabbin. Photos courtesy of JMU Public Relations.

| “Great books can change lives.”

Before he thought of himself as a writer, Larry Palmer was the ninth child of ten and lived in a 1,500 square foot house on the West Side of St. Louis. As he recalls, his family was searching for greater educational and economic opportunities for their children. In 1958, at the age of 14, this “urban child of southern migrants,” received a full scholarship to attend the prestigious Phillips Exeter Academy. He decided to stay in New England to continue his education at Harvard and Yale Law School.

Dr. Gabbin became an avid reader at the age of seven. Her mother would bring home what she calls “cast-off books.” They were books her employers’ children grew tired of. This is when she found her love for the written word. “I wanted to be a writer so that I could touch others with my words,” she explains. As a young adult, she went off to Morgan State College to study English. She went on to get her Ph.D. in English and Literature from the University of Chicago. Throughout her career, she has worked in a variety of settings and occupations: journalist, literary scholar, critic, editor, poet, and educator.

Dr. Joanne V. Gabbin: Life Told Through Poetry (continued)



Dr. Gabbin with Nikki Giovanni and the late Maya Angelou.



Dr. Gabbin with the late Gwendolyn Brooks.

In fact, she's working on a poetic memoir. "I feel most comfortable in the medium of poetry, so I am trying to remember the important people and events in my life in a way that honors the spirited verve of Nikki Giovanni and the eloquent terseness of Lucille Clifton," Dr. Gabbin says. Dr. Gabbin cites Sterling Allen Brown, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, and Sonia Sanchez as literary mentors. Along with her literary mentors, she also appreciates the everyday women who helped her grow as a person: Georgia, Jessie (her mother), Nellie and Mae, the Smallwood sisters who made a great life for themselves in Baltimore after moving from Windsor, North Carolina, during the Great Depression. "They all will figure prominently in my memoir," she says.



Dr. Gabbin (far right) with six poets laureate: Askia Touré, the late Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, the late Dolores Kendrick, Eugene Redmond, and Rita Dove.

For Dr. Gabbin, music played an integral role in her story. When she's writing about a specific time, Dr. Gabbin will play the music from that time period. The music transports her back to that period and restores the feeling and memories of that moment in her life. She grew up listening to Mahalia Jackson, the Soul Stirrers, the Motown Pantheon, and Aretha Franklin. "This music got me through some of the most tragic times in my life and punctuated the resiliency that the human spirit has to overcome all kinds of adversity," she explains.

Dr. Gabbin's career has afforded her an opportunity to support, encourage, and promote the work of poets, artists, and her students. In her 50 years of teaching at colleges and universities around the country, Dr. Gabbin has built an award-winning honors program at JMU, curated a fine arts gallery, and established the Furious Flower Poetry Center, the first academic center devoted to Black poetry in the United States. She hopes she can take this time to reflect and show gratitude to those who have appreciated the work. "I hope a few good poems will come out of this exercise," she says.

To learn more about Dr. Joanne V. Gabbin and the Furious Flower Poetry Center, visit the website furiousflower.org.

Salaam Muhammad's Higher Purpose



Artist Salaam Muhammad. Photo by Jessica Knox Photography.

| “Be intentional with your gift.”

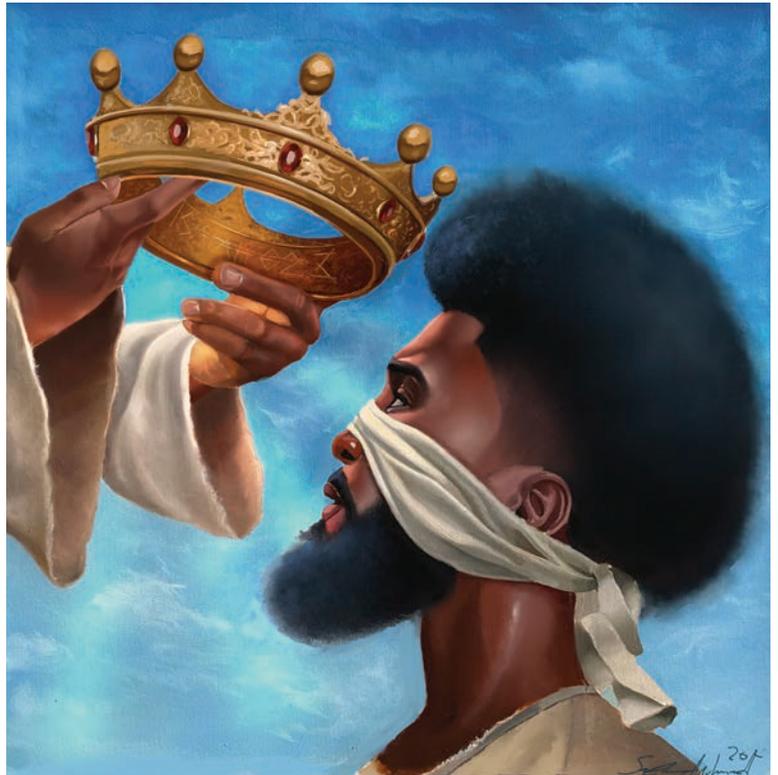
Salaam Muhammad's artwork is shaped by his upbringing in Elizabeth, New Jersey. “My pieces are an accumulation of life lessons and experiences, history, self-discovery, observations, and knowledge,” he explains. “What started out as a mere form of expression to pass the time grew into my life's work and a means of encouraging and inspiring the black community.” Over the years, Salaam has developed a newfound sense of spirituality. His art has a purpose that goes beyond humanity. “God doesn't just give us gifts for show or for vain purposes; with them comes great responsibility,” he says. As his wisdom and sense of purpose evolves, his art does too.

Right now, Salaam is working on commissioned and conceptual pieces. He has just launched a new website with an improved user experience to showcase his art. Fans of his artwork can now easily purchase their favorite pieces online. While he's always been a passionate artist, the pieces he's currently working on emote a feeling of connection and closeness. “I've decided to spend this year being more intentional about creating spiritual pieces, and the highest expression of spirituality is love,” he says. “So just to give you a hint, you will definitely see some lovers' pieces very soon.”

Salaam Muhammad's Higher Purpose (continued)



Amanti Allure by Salaam Muhammad



Crown Me Lord (Man) by Salaam Muhammad



Salaam Muhammad and his painting *Crown Me Lord (Woman)*. Photo courtesy of Salaam Muhammad.

Salaam says he's working on more children's books this year. In 2019, he illustrated all seven of the *Mr. Business: The Adventures of Little BK* books. "If you had asked me 5 years ago, I never would've told you I would be illustrating children's books," he says. Continuing to challenge himself and lend his talents to different mediums, he is motivated and ready for his work to reach a larger audience. "One thing I can say for the future is that I want my messages to reach the masses," he says. "So I will be spending some time formulating a more solid team for branding and more development on the business side of things as well." To summarize, this artist has a plan. With his work ethic and talent, there's a good chance that moment will be soon.

To learn more about Salaam Muhammad and purchase his artwork, visit his website artistsalaamart.com or follow Salaam on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

CHEF'S CORNER

Chef Marquis Murdock



Photo courtesy of Marquis Murdock

“Juicy and flavorful meal for your next weeknight dinner.”

Roasted Chicken Thighs w/ Cauliflower and Sweet Potato

Course: Dinner

Cuisine: American

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 40 minutes

Total Time: 45 minutes

Serving Size: 6 people

Ingredients

Roasted Chicken Thighs

- 6 chicken thighs (bone-in, skin-on) all the same size
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tsp Italian seasoning
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp onion powder

Roasted Cauliflower

- 1 lb cauliflower, about 1 medium-large head, trimmed and cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 3 tbsp butter
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp coarsely ground black pepper
- ½ tsp Italian seasoning

Sweet Potato

- 1 sweet potato
- kosher salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 small pat butter
- lemon zest, to taste



Photo by Rebekah Pierce

Recipe courtesy of Chef Marquis Murdock. You can watch Chef Marquis Murdock on *Beyond the Plate RVA's Season 1, Episode 1 & Episode 2*. *Beyond the Plate RVA* is also available to watch on SoulVision.TV.

Chef Marquis Murdock (continued)

Preparation

Roasted Chicken Thighs

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
2. Coat a 9×13 baking dish with butter, spray, or oil.
3. Rinse the chicken thighs and pat dry with paper towels. Rub seasonings into both sides of the chicken thighs.
4. Place in the dish, skin side down. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes.
5. Turn the chicken thighs over and bake another 20 minutes until the juices run clear when pierced with a knife (recommended temperature is 165 degrees internally when measured with an instant-read thermometer).

Roasted Cauliflower

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
2. Break the head of the cauliflower into small florets into a large mixing bowl. Add seasonings and toss gently until evenly coated.
3. Place seasoned florets onto a baking sheet and dot with cubed pieces of butter.
4. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, turning once until caramelized on edges and tender.
5. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Sweet Potato

1. Wash sweet potato thoroughly, pat dry, and pierce 3-4 times with a fork.
2. Place the potato on a microwave-safe plate and microwave for 5-10 minutes. Turn halfway through. Cooking time depends on your microwave's power.
3. If your potato isn't fork-tender, continue microwaving in 30-second increments.
4. Split the potato down the middle, season with salt, pepper, and lemon zest to your taste. Top with a pat of butter.

COMMUNITY

Media Mentors: Finding the Next Generation of Creatives



B.K. Fulton with Ebony Flake, Randall Hazard, Brian Smalls (Co-founders, Media Mentors, Inc.). Photos courtesy of Media Mentors.

| “Own your narrative.”

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.

Media Mentors was co-founded by Brian Smalls, Ebony Flake, and Randall Hazard to address the need for youth (ages 10 through college) to develop the skills needed to succeed in media while developing confidence in their creativity. The organization operates out of the Hampton Roads area (the “757”). “We strive to teach youth the tools of media arts,” Brian Smalls says. “This means film production, social media content creation, and other tech-related skills.” Media Mentors partners with the local Chamber of Commerce and small businesses in the community to teach and promote entrepreneurship to participating students.

Media Mentors: Finding the Next Generation of Creatives (continued)



Brayden Smalls, Brielle Smalls – students at Media Mentors.

Building on the phrase, “Own Your Narrative,” Media Mentors’ goal is to encourage students to use the talent they have developed and start their own businesses. “The soul of Media Mentors rests in our quest to show the endless possibilities that come from young people utilizing their creativity and mastering digital communication,” co-founder Randall Hazard says. Randall describes media production as a dialogue between a group of people. Media Mentors wants its students to be an essential part of that conversation. “Wherever their passions lie, be it in social justice endeavors or just telling good, relevant stories, Media Mentors provides them the know-how,” Randall says. Students will walk away with an understanding of how to create, monetize and distribute their narratives to the world.

Media Mentors plans to continue their partnership with companies and organizations that are passionate about sharing their knowledge and expertise with the next generation of media leaders and entrepreneurs. The Media Mentors team also is looking to work with local colleges and universities to create a pipeline for future creatives. Soulidify Productions plans to provide hands-on experience as well. The Media Mentors team believes the next generation of creatives have plenty of potential to do great things with their talents. “We have our eyes on the prize as we work towards the future,” Randall says. “We



Rashawn Smith, a student at Media Mentors, working the camera.

will mold and shape the next generation of media talent. They will learn to tell our stories and lift our communities with the powerful truths of our complete narrative.”

To view “I Can’t Breathe” click [here](#).

To find out how you can support Media Mentors, follow them on [Facebook](#) and check out their latest program — Sign Me Up Now! — a digital clearinghouse created to channel energy in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death (see [signmeupnow.org](#)).

LIVING LEGENDS

Dr. Alexander Gabbin



Dr. Alexander Gabbin. Photo courtesy of JMU Public Relations.

Dr. Alexander Gabbin is one of the founders of the National Black MBA Association. Today, he is a KPMG professor and director of the School of Accounting at James Madison University (JMU). He grew up in a working-class neighborhood in East Baltimore and went on to graduate from Howard University with a degree in economics and mathematics. After graduating in 1967, he married Joanne V. Gabbin, who is now an English professor at JMU. Dr. Gabbin was working a job he had no passion for when his fraternity brother, Milam Fitts, encouraged him to join him in business school at the University of Chicago. He applied and was accepted. The black MBA students would discuss the need for a conference that would address issues that concerned them. In 1969, Tony Jackson and George Bradshaw began to make plans for a conference for black MBAs and asked Dr. Gabbin to be the budget director. He took them up on their offer. With the help of Dean Harold Metcalf, they were able to spread the word to other MBA programs. The participating programs agreed to send two delegates from each program to attend. Dixie Moon of the Metropolitan Applied Research Center gave \$10,000 in support of their \$13,000 budget. The two-day conference was a success.

Dr. Alexander Gabbin (continued)

Dr. Gabbin's life experiences motivated him to organize with other MBA students. He was an avid reader, coming of age in an era where racism was blatant. While he respected Martin Luther King, Jr's perspective, he was more drawn to Malcolm X's radical teachings of self-resilience. "I knew I was just one of those black men who was fortunate...and I had the responsibility to leverage my good fortune into an effort that would ultimately help my people," he says. Dr. Gabbin has never shied away from working his corner. Our time is limited, so we must do what we can to inspire while we are alive and well.

“Life is something you don’t play with; you treat each day seriously because you don’t know when you will get another one.”

– Dr. Alexander Gabbin