

# SoulVision<sup>®</sup>

M A G A Z I N E

**The Many  
Shades of  
Leroy Campbell**

**January 2021**

## BK Fulton



*Photo by Queon “Q” Martin*

| “2020 was tough, but we woke up this morning in 2021. That’s the GIFT.”

My family did not take an exotic trip last year and that’s OK. 2020 was tough, but we woke up this morning in 2021. That’s the GIFT. Our Nation is getting everyone ready for a promising COVID-19 vaccine, and we are preparing to receive a new president and the first-ever woman vice president. It’s a new day. Congratulations to President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. It’s official with inauguration festivities happening in the coming weeks. I had hoped that I would not lose any friends during this past election. Well, I did. I realized that some childhood acquaintances may never have been true friends? A friend has your back. They stay in touch. They clap when you win and help you through your struggles. They pray for you. They are honest with you, and together you strive to discover the blessings in life that you can both enjoy together. The people I lost after the 2020 Presidential election were none of those things. True, I knew them from elementary and high school and may have won some games with them as teammates, but they were never really my friends when it mattered. This realization puts the losses of 2020 in perspective for me. It actually lessened my burdens. Additionally, I was reminded that everyone you interact with will not be with you for all of your journey. Bigotry and hysteria are real and it’s

## *BK Fulton – January 2021 (continued)*

not my job (or yours) to fix that in everyone we meet. I decided to unsubscribe from toxic people. I wish everyone I've had to let go well, and I have resolved that my go-forward world is invite-only; reserved for my true family and friends.

So let's kickstart the energy in 2021. As one of my favorite motivational speakers – Lisa Nichols – reminds us, “put some extra on our ordinary . . . to get extraordinary!” This issue of SoulVision features the colorful, beautiful and healing art of Mr. Leroy Campbell. We also highlight the images of Lili Lathan and Heidi Abbott, two shutterbugs to watch. We close out the issue with a special story on the first African-American fountain designer in the US – Ms. Traer Price, an uplifting story on caring for our mental health, a first-time guest columnist story from Allyson Edge at Hampton University, and the presidential wisdom of none other than Barack Obama in our Legends section. You get a new look when you have SoulVision. Enjoy!

“I wish everyone I've had to let go well, and I have resolved that my go-forward world is invite-only; reserved for my true family and friends.”

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CELEBRITY

# The Many Shades of Leroy Campbell



*Photo courtesy of Leroy Campbell*

| “Talk about the story of what we are.”

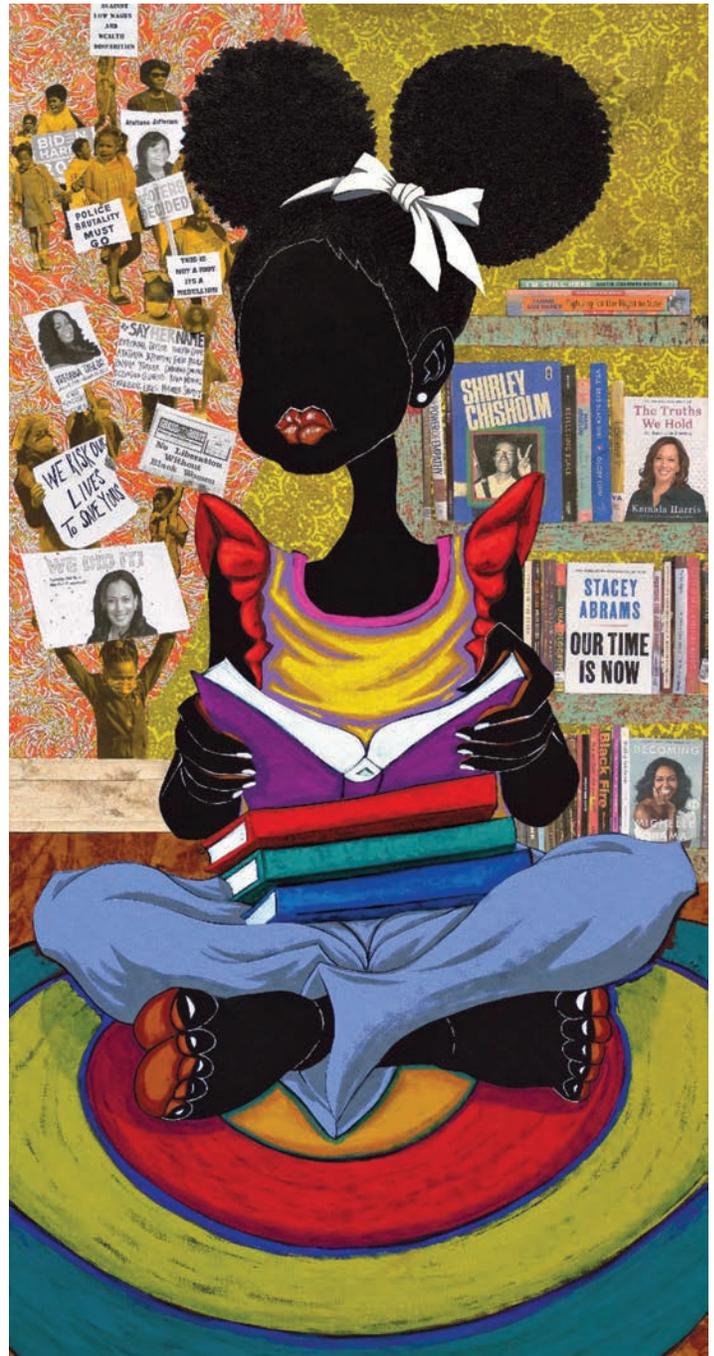
Self-taught artist Leroy Campbell was born in the Gadsden Green projects in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1956. He was raised in a culture that he describes as an “African village experience.” “I came out of a Gullah Geechee culture. A culture rich with African food, dishes, words, beliefs, ways and traditions,” he explains. “We were a close-knit community. Churches, schools, black-owned businesses, and grocery stores lined the perimeter of our village. A huge playground, swimming pool, and river were minutes nearby. Our food came from the farmers and fishermen. They

## *The Many Shades of Leroy Campbell (continued)*

drove throughout our village during the week selling their produce to us. The lawns were manicured and the entire community remained clean. We were a God-fearing people who loved spending time with each other. We kept our spirits up by dancing, playing games, telling jokes, and speaking positively to each other.” He was surrounded by intergenerational storytellers who would become the inspiration for his art. Growing up in the backdrop of the civil rights movement, Leroy knew his worth and potential. “There were many teachers and members in the community who were determined that we would go into the world and share the best of who we were. Educationally sound, spiritually strong, respectful to our elders, and ready to work hard, and together,” he says.

His father taught him hard work. He was a butcher with a passion for electronics. He would see his father bring home old thrown out radios and toasters to repair. While he wasn’t much of a talker, he made sure his family had what they needed to survive. “I saw my father as a larger than life figure,” he says. “He was dedicated to his church. On weekends, we would go and clean the shrubs outside of the church. That was when we spent most of our time together.” In the neighborhood, Leroy looked to local athletes for inspiration as well. “I still embody their drive and winning spirit,” he says.

In the early years of his career, Leroy learned that there were many people who were willing to help him with his art. “When people want to help you, you should let them,” he advises. “They often see things in you that you don’t see, not just in yourself, but see things in your career that you need and want.” After high school, he moved to New York City and worked as a nurse’s aide at a hospital. The workers there encouraged him to pursue his art. As he became acquainted with the art scene in New York City, other artists saw his potential. He recalls Alvin Ailey dancer Donna Wood supporting him and his work early on. “Throughout your career, there is always someone there at the turning point of your career who is willing to move you to the next level,” he says.



*It's Our Time* by Leroy Campbell

There have been many “I made it” moments throughout Leroy Campbell’s career: Max Roach invited Leroy to dinner at his Central Park apartment to discuss designing his next album cover. Cicely Tyson visiting his studio to look at some artwork for a fundraiser comes

## *The Many Shades of Leroy Campbell (continued)*

to mind. Leroy also remembers the time he was interviewed by acclaimed sports journalist Bryant Gumbel with pop and psychedelic artist Peter Max at the Javits Center. “That was big, but that wasn’t it,” he admits. One of the most humbling moments in his career was when he went back home after his career was in “full bloom.” He was talking to the pastor after church when an older woman grabbed the pastor’s shirt and shouted out, “This is Leroy Campbell! He is our artist!” “After all of these years that still stays with me,” he says. “I still feel that right now. When I was recognized by someone who knew from whence I came, that’s when I knew I had made it.”

“I have a house. I’m living well, but there is nothing more important than having a young person connect to their own sense of worth and self.”

Leroy’s greatest achievement is making an impact on the youth. He loves to work with middle school children in Atlanta, Georgia, and the New York City education system. He believes at that age, it is easier to touch their spirits and minds. “People got to me when I was in my middle school years, and that’s why I am the person I am today,” he explains. “When children remember who you are, they are going to make choices based on the things you pour into them.” He wants them to move with confidence and purpose. “I cannot take for granted the life I am living,” he says. “I have a house. I’m living well, but there is nothing more important than having a young person connect to their own sense of worth and self.”

Leroy Campbell’s creative process is thoughtful and substantive. His art interprets history and attempts to say something about our present. “I’m living in the present even though I’m drawing everything from the past,” he explains. He starts with a story or a concept. Once he has a concept in his head, he will sketch out that concept. He then creates a character that brings context.

He’ll read news articles to find that character. “That silhouette with elongated necks? Now that figure has an environment, a background, a thought process,” he explains. “I focus on not only what the figure believes, but what he wants you to believe.”

In his artwork, there are quotes around the characters, often inspirational. “You see this figure with no eyes and no nose, only a mouth. I want the viewer to think the figure itself is actually saying these things to them,” he explains. Once you’re done looking at his art, a conversation often begins.

“When people look at a painting and it resonates and moves them, they are not only looking for what is conformational but also motivational.”

He notes that his work is not random and that an extensive amount of research and thought goes into his work. He strives for each element to be cohesive—the backdrop, the figure, the choice of colors, etc. “I am always about uplifting—spirit uplifting, higher consciousness, education and empowerment,” he says. “Because that is what I lived. That is what I got. That is what I know. I am documenting our story because without the documentation of our art, of our history and culture, there stands a chance it will be rewritten or reappropriated.”

Leroy sees art as self-reflection and a means to heal. “When people look at a painting and it resonates and moves them, they are not only looking for what is conformational but also motivational,” he explains. “Something that is already self-identified. Artwork is a direct connection to the energy that is our birthright in the universe.”

He goes on to explain further. “We are using elements—paint. We are putting the elements in balance. We are putting in science. We are putting in math. All of those

## *The Many Shades of Leroy Campbell (continued)*

elements are embedded in art. The healing force in all of those elements is in us every day. So how we arrange them, and how we put them together matters. The organic forces, the spirit's underpinnings are of those elements and energy we all need to survive and thrive."



*Give and Take by Leroy Campbell*

After viewing his paintings, Leroy wants viewers to understand that we do not become who we are by ourselves. "I don't care how old you are, what age you are, you are not a whole person without the input and connection, that multigenerational connection, of all of the people in your life," he says. "When you are connected and whole, you find your individual walk. Your individual walk is your contribution to that whole network."

Leroy believes young artists are in an excellent time to get their work seen. He suggests using social media and building out a website to showcase their work. He also suggests they find a mentor and they should ask for what they want. "As an artist, find your voice," he says. "Find out what you want to say. Tell your story and talk about your own journey." Reading is also important to Leroy. He suggests reading the stories and bios of other artists as well as the history of art. Apprenticeships and having an entrepreneurial spirit is also key. "Be open to working for an artist who is doing work in the areas you're interested in, and work at your craft," he sug-

gests. "Try different mediums, paint, stay busy, treat your art like work. Get up. Just like you get up and work hard for someone else, do the same thing for yourself. Don't disrespect yourself: eat right, eat healthily, exercise regularly."

He admits it is not easy, and the people who really care about your well-being won't be easy on you. "Stay connected to those people who have your best interest at heart. People who fuss at you care about your future," he says. He believes in the midst of adversity, the ones that persevere can reach success. "After failure, get the lesson quickly, and keep going . . .," he emphasizes.

**"When you are connected and whole, you find your individual walk. Your individual walk is your contribution to that whole network."**

The idea of the artist having to starve to be successful doesn't sit well with Leroy. "Don't let yourself starve. It's not necessary to starve to be motivated, but it's necessary to find an environment that is conducive to your creativity," he says. "Try to find a lifestyle where you can be at peace and be comfortable so that the creativity can flourish." He believes the gifts of being an artist and the gift of creativity come from God. "These are gifts given to you by the ultimate gift-giver," he continues, "a gift that you can't keep to yourself if you choose to and a gift you cannot give back. You have to protect it and take care of it. You will find your place and enjoy the opportunity your gift creates, and you will enjoy the success and the benefits that it gives others."

Right now, Leroy is working on his first "autobiographical children's book" entitled *Super Power*. "It is about a boy born with a birth defect on both his hands and left foot who is bullied and teased," he explains. "He tries to find a way to make the children accept him. They kept teasing him and made him feel isolated." The young boy starts to learn how to draw and trace. It makes him feel

## *The Many Shades of Leroy Campbell (continued)*

stronger. When he returns to school with his new talent things become different. When the kids start to bully him, he pulls out his sketchbook and starts to draw. The teasing stops. “He realizes that what made him feel good, made others feel good too,” Leroy explains. “So, the moral of the story is that if a child knows their worth, they don’t have to try to be like anyone else or make anyone else like them.” He suggests that bullies wouldn’t exist if they knew their worth.

Leroy is working on more art as well. It will be a series that celebrates the many ways we enjoy each other and life, titled Black Joy.

*To see more of Leroy Campbell’s work, visit [leroycampbelloriginals.com](http://leroycampbelloriginals.com) and follow him on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).*

## Liliane Lathan: Passion Through Photography



*Photo by Udo Asomugha*

| “Through the camera, you can capture the hopes and dreams of a people.”

Liliane Lathan is a photographer from Los Angeles. Born in New York, she was raised in a family of filmmakers and artists. She has always had an interest in the visual arts. Starting out illustrating and painting, Liliane eventually became interested in photography. She went on to earn a BFA in photography and imaging from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. “I do a little bit of everything,” she admits. “That means events, production, weddings, concerts, portraits and documentaries.” She describes her work as “eclectic, rich and colorful.”

## *Liliane Lathan: Passion Through Photography (continued)*



*Photo by Liliane Lathan*

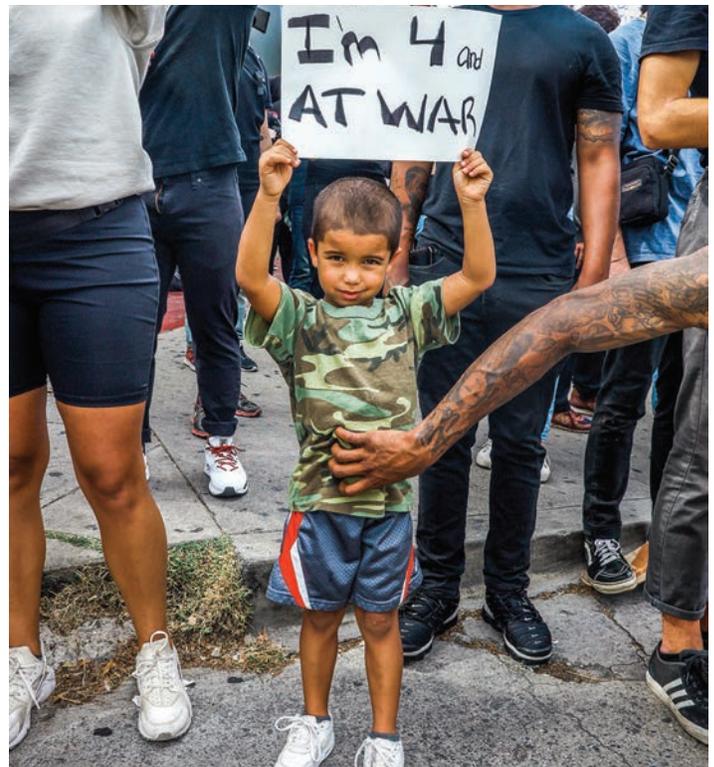
Liliane's area of expertise includes candid and portraits. She's particularly fond of capturing hip hop events and R&B shows. "I love to convey the passion and grit these artists have for their craft through my photos," she says. She has photographed artists and celebrities like Beyoncé, Daniel Kaluuya, and H.E.R. Lili's street portraits are known for capturing the vibrancy and diversity of her subjects.

As COVID-19 raged on and a generational uprising confronted this country's history of racism, Liliane hit the streets of L.A. to capture the movement as it was unfolding. Her photos depict the hopes and dreams of the protestors. One young man's shirt reads "your Black is your magic." Another man holds up a Black Lives Matter flag underneath the flag of Mexico. Liliane's eye perfectly captures the solidarity between people of all walks of life. "I love to document people fighting for justice with resilience, hope, unity, and love," she says.

Liliane is currently working on a portrait series about black restaurant owners. "It's a beautiful thing to go after your dreams, and that's exactly what they've done, which is incredibly inspiring," says Liliane. As she re-



*All Black Lives Matter march in Los Angeles (June 2020). "This photo reflects the pride and passion of the marchers," Liliane says. Photo by Liliane Lathan.*



*George Floyd protest in Hollywood (June 2020). "This photo represents all of the innocent lives lost, including children," Liliane says. Photo by Liliane Lathan.*

## *Liliane Lathan: Passion Through Photography (continued)*



*Beyoncé enjoying the show at a star-studded fundraiser for her mother's theater. Photo by Liliane Lathan.*

laxes—painting or cuddling with her cat—she's brainstorming a few ideas for projects. She's thinking about creating a self-love portrait series, a series of neighborhoods in L.A., or a continuation of capturing the Black Lives Matter movement. Whatever Liliane chooses next, it will be full of substance and inspiration. She has moved beyond taking pictures or simply capturing moments in time. She has elevated her art to mastery of photography where her images tell powerful stories.

*To see more of Liliane's work, visit [lilanelathan.com](http://lilanelathan.com) and follow her on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).*

## Traer Price: Your Jewelry Is Personal



*Photo by Traer Price*

### | “What you wear is part of your journey.”

Multidisciplinary designer and artist Traer Price was born in New Haven, Connecticut. A Harvard and Stanford University graduate, Traer is the “first black show designer/choreographer of high tech, internationally renowned fountains,” according to the Hutchins Center at Harvard. Some of her water choreography show highlights include “I Will Always Love You,” by Whitney Houston at the Dubai Fountain in Dubai, UAE, and “Luck Be A Lady,” by Frank Sinatra at the Fountains of Bellagio at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, both produced for LA firm WET. “I translate unseen, inner landscapes—emotion, memory and personal cultural history—into visual experiences and tangible form,” she says. Traer sets out to inspire others with her success as an artist. Her success is their success. “The inner landscape I channel is a collective one,” she explains.

## *Kingsley Kobayashi: Using Business to Help Others (continued)*



*Traer Price's water choreography at the Fountains of Bellagio at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas. Produced for LA firm WET. Photo by Randy Andy/Shutterstock.com.*

In her second act, Traer is the owner of Traer Price Design—a small design studio based in St. Petersburg, Florida. Traer Price Design primarily creates “worn art,” or handcrafted jewelry. She uses her jewelry to represent the shared experiences of the black diaspora. Traer is inspired by a cultural shift that calls for black women’s voices to be heard and understood. “I feel liberated and encouraged,” she says. “I aspire to have my creativity, in all its forms, be part of that light.”

All of the lessons and knowledge that Traer has gained throughout the years isn’t lost on her. She continues to share what she has learned with others and looks forward to more opportunities to share with children. “As I grow and evolve, I understand how important self-resonance is. Knowing ourselves deeply allows us to see each other in truth and with care,” she says. “I want to spread the gospel of art and design and the inner connection it brings.”



*Traer Price's water choreography at the Dubai Fountain in Dubai, UAE. Produced for LA firm WET. Photo by Philip Lange/Shutterstock.com.*



*Traer Price specializes in “worn art” or handcrafted jewelry. Photo courtesy of Traer Price.*

Traer sees art and design as a portal that connects to life in its entirety. This is the way she experienced art and design, and she would like for others to experience the same. She calls it “vibratory attunement—a celebration of our own rhythms, each other’s gifts, and the life force in our beautiful home planet.” As she calls to her ancestors for inspiration, Traer is spreading positivity and good vibes to everyone her art touches.

*To see more of Traer Price's work, visit [traerprice.com](http://traerprice.com) and follow her on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).*

# Heidi Abbott: Capturing the Beginnings of a Movement



*Photo by Jordan Shanks*

## | “Be where the people are.”

Heidi Abbott migrated to Richmond, Virginia, after college for a teaching job in 1984. She had no ties to the city. Over the decades, Heidi has established herself as a pivotal community figure within the city. An attorney and civic leader, Heidi uses her talent as a photographer to connect people from different walks of life. “For me, photography has always been an incredible communication tool,” she says. “It allows people to see the beauty in themselves and lets people from very different worlds recognize their common humanity.”

At the turn of the decade, Richmond was still figuring out a way to move forward from its history of slavery and racial segregation. In the summer of 2019, the Boulevard was renamed Arthur Ashe Boulevard to commemorate the late tennis legend. On a rainy day in December 2019, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) revealed Kehinde Wiley’s Rumors of War statue. Heretofore unimaginable progress was in the Commonwealth. Then the images of George Floyd’s murder went viral ostensibly impacting every open and hidden place on the planet.

As nationwide protests began in the spring of 2020, Governor Northam announced that the Robert E. Lee statue would be removed. “That’s when I started making my daily (and sometimes nightly) pilgrimage to the statue,” says Heidi. “I ended up meeting people from all over the country who came to the Lee statue in its ever-changing form to protest, have conversations, and celebrate a new era in Richmond.”

## Heidi Abbott: Capturing the Beginnings of a Movement (contiuned)



Photo by Heidi Abbott

As the city and country were at a crossroads, Heidi was gathering inspiration and material for her *Deconstruction* series, a combination of photography and mixed media pieces. The pieces center around both the removal of the monuments and the protests. While mixed media is new to her, Heidi appreciates the creative possibilities the medium affords. The series was shown as part of the *Racial Awakening* exhibit at the Richmond Art Garage. It was shown alongside filmmaker and photographer Jordan Shanks' *Love Letters to America: Part II* series.



Photo by Heidi Abbott

Heidi's next project is deeply personal. It is a collaborative project with a young man who is serving a federal prison sentence until 2037. "He is like a son to me—a son, a brother, a scholar, an artist, and a man," she says. Even though communication has been difficult, they have been exchanging ideas back and forth by letters and the occasional phone call. "The things I learned in developing the mixed media pieces for the *Deconstruction* series have been incredibly freeing and helpful in thinking through how to most powerfully convey his words," Heidi says. "We are going through lots of trial and error, but that's what it's all about. I'm excited to see what we end up with."

To see more of Heidi Abbott's work, visit [heidiabbottart.com](http://heidiabbottart.com) and follow her on [Instagram](#).

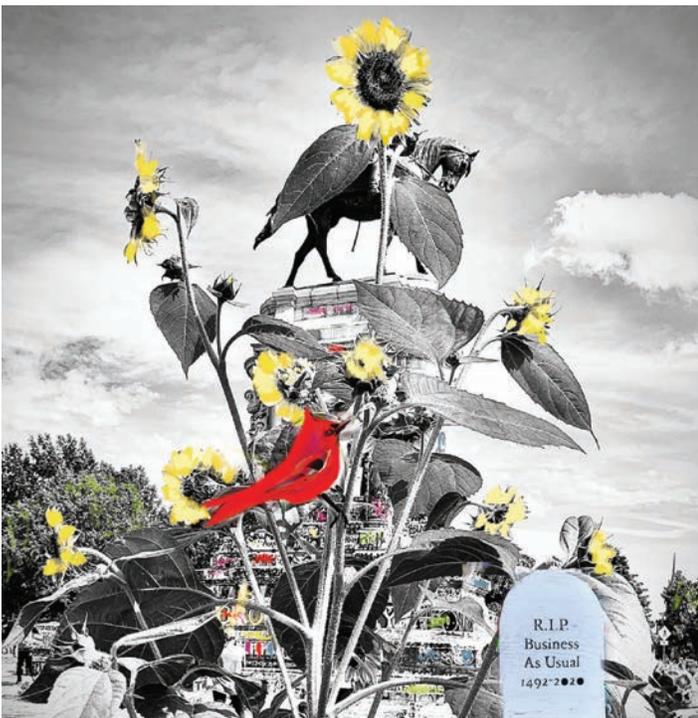


Photo by Heidi Abbott

# James Harris' Men to Heal: Let's Talk Mental Health

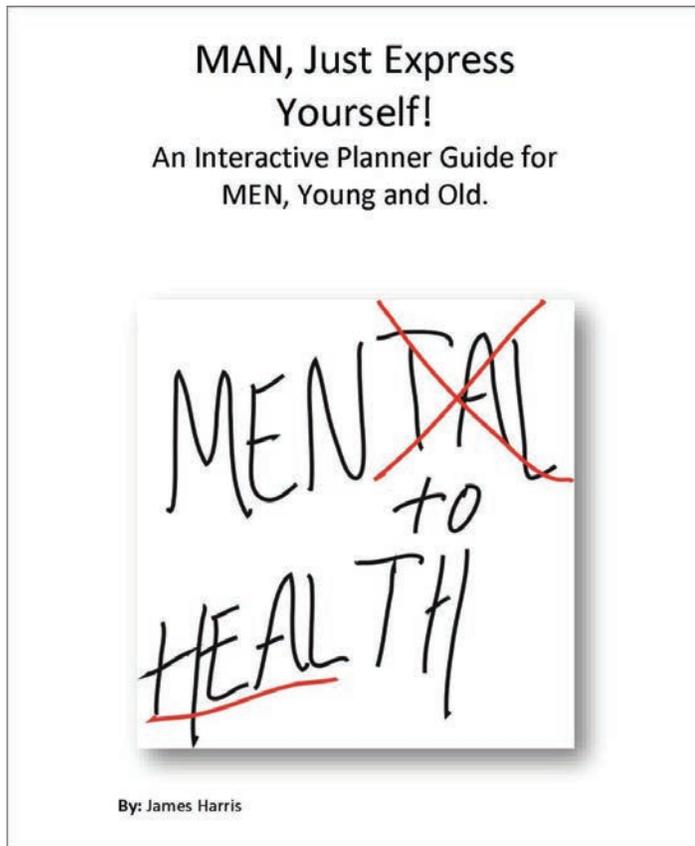


*Photo courtesy of James Harris*

“This movement encourages men to pay more attention to their mental and physical health, communicate effectively, and increase their knowledge of self.”

James Harris is a father and a serial entrepreneur based in Richmond, Virginia. As a U.S. Army veteran who served for eight years and took two deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, James has seen how mental health issues have affected families and communities. Now a licensed mental health professional and therapist, James has created a movement that encourages men to start taking care of their overall wellness, mental health, and physical health. “This movement encourages men to pay more attention to their mental and physical health, communicate effectively, and increase their knowledge of self,” he explains. Coined Men to Heal, James hosts sessions in the community and via Skype with people around the nation and in other countries— e.g., the UK (Manchester, England) Spain, Germany, Amsterdam, and Afghanistan. To bring more awareness to the mental health movement, James has also created Men to Heal t-shirts and apparel to help him bring awareness to the issue. James also has a YouTube channel called “Men to Heal” to provide insight to men, families, and professionals in the field.

## James Harris' Men to Heal: Let's Talk Mental Health (continued)



*Man, Just Express Yourself!: An Interactive Planner Guide for MEN, Young and Old*

In 2019, James knew it wasn't enough to just have virtual sessions with patients, so he created The HEALing Hub community center in Richmond, Virginia. The center provides outpatient therapy, massage, yoga, mindfulness, and financial literacy seminars. The HEALing Hub also provides free meals for the less fortunate every third Sunday. Before COVID, James hosted quarterly two hour sessions with around 65 attendees. He hopes to resume these in-person sessions again soon.

James is actively promoting his first book, an interactive journal titled *Man, Just Express Yourself!: An Interactive Planner Guide for MEN, Young and Old*, and growing his Men to Heal YouTube channel. "My insight and knowledge can serve as a tool to assist families," James says. "The lasting effects of COVID are going to have a tremendous impact on the mental health of people all over." He sees his book as benefiting young men in particular and believes introspection is vital to growing mentally. He hopes young boys can take the lessons they've learned in his interactive journal well into adulthood. "Oftentimes when mental health is discussed, men tend to be overlooked because of a lack of male health-care providers and personal male issues like ego and embarrassment," says James. "I'm bridging the gap."

To learn more about James Harris' Men to Heal, visit [mentoheal.com](http://mentoheal.com), subscribe to his [YouTube](#), and follow him on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

CHEF'S CORNER

# Chef Tyrone Workman



*Chef Tyrone Workman on the set of RLP Productions' "Beyond the Plate RVA" with Rebekah Pierce. Photos by the RLP Productions staff.*

“Comfort and spice with a touch of tangy sweetness.”



## Cajun Grilled Pork Chops w/ Rice Pilaf, Tomato & Cucumber Salad, and Key Lime Pie

**Course:** Dinner

**Cuisine:** American with Cajun influences

**Prep Time:** 1 hour

**Cook Time:** 2 hours

**Total Time:** 3 hours

**Serving Size:** 4 servings; Key Lime Pie serves 8

### Ingredients (Cajun Grilled Pork Chops w/ Rice Pilaf):

- 4 1/2 inch to 1-inch pork loin chops
- 1 tbsp of cajun spice
- 2 tbsp of melted butter
- 1 cup of converted rice
- 1/2 cup of onions diced small
- 2 tbsp of olive oil or butter
- 1/2 tsp of salt
- 1/2 tsp of fresh ground pepper
- 2 cups of chicken stock
- 1/2 cup of diced red peppers
- 1/2 cup of frozen green peas
- 3 medium-size tomatoes (cored and cut into quarters)
- 3 medium-size cucumbers (peeled and sliced about 1/4 inch thick)
- 1 medium-size Vidalia onion (peeled and sliced about 1/8 inch thick)
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 4 tbsp fresh basil (diced)
- 1/4 cup sugar
- Fresh salt and pepper (to taste)

#### Pork Chops

1. Preheat grill to 350°F
2. Season pork chops with cajun spice on both sides.
3. Grill pork chops for 6-8 minutes per side; cook to medium/medium-well.
4. Drizzle with melted butter and serve.

## *Chef Tyrone Workman (continued)*

### **Rice Pilaf**

1. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper, and heat the oven to 400°F
2. Wash, slice and seed the squash, cutting it into approximately 1/2-inch-thick rings and wedges.
3. Arrange on a sheet pan, drizzle with oil then season with salt and coriander.
4. Roast for 30 to 45 minutes, turning the pieces about halfway through until the squash is tender and slightly browned in places.

### **Tomato & Cucumber Salad**

1. Prepare tomatoes, cucumbers, and onions and place in a medium-size bowl.
2. To make the dressing, in a small bowl mix the vinegar, oil, basil, sugar, salt, and pepper.
3. Add to the tomatoes, cucumbers, and onions.
4. Cover and refrigerate. Served chilled.

### **Ingredients (Key Lime Pie):**

- 1 9-inch graham cracker premade pie crust
- 2 cans sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup key lime juice
- 6 egg yolks
- ½ pint fresh raspberries
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 tbsp of granulated sugar

### **Preparation:**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F degrees.
2. Combine milk, lime juice, and egg yolks together in a small bowl and mix well.
3. Pour mixture into pie crust and bake at 350°F for 15 minutes.
4. Remove from the oven and let stand for 10 minutes; refrigerate for 3 hours.
5. In a small bowl, mix together with the heavy cream and sugar until you get stiff peaks.
6. Slice pie and garnish with whipped cream and raspberries. Makes 8 servings.



*This recipe and Chef Tyrone Workman was featured in Season 2, Episode 1 of RLP Productions' "Beyond the Plate RVA" in November 2020. Chef Tyrone is the executive chef at Taylor's at Market Square in Richmond, Virginia. Visit [rlpproductions.com](http://rlpproductions.com) to learn more about the show.*

COMMUNITY

# Breaking the Cycle: Creating Positive Change for Future Generations



*Breaking the Cycle participates in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrations in 2020.  
Photos courtesy of Breaking the Cycle.*

| “It is our job to give the youth a glimmer of hope.”

*By Allyson Edge*

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.

Breaking the Cycle was founded in 2016 by Clark Atlanta University alumna Markeena Novembre with a goal to lead, inspire, uplift, and transform the local community. She established different chapters at other HBCUs because often the communities around HBCU campuses are disenfranchised. Breaking the Cycle is a way for students to help their communities continue to grow and create positive change. Currently, there are chapters at FAMU, Howard University, Hampton University, Clark Atlanta University, Delaware State University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College. The organization frequently hosts panels with all of the chapters so that the schools have the opportunity to collaborate together.

## *Breaking the Cycle: Creating Positive Change for Future Generations (continued)*



*Breaking the Cycle celebrates Kwanzaa in 2019. E-board members lead their peers in creating a chain of cards to celebrate the black community.*

In the past three years, Hampton University's chapter worked towards forming relationships with other organizations in the local Hampton Roads and Norfolk community. "In my time being in the program, we worked towards establishing not one but two mentoring programs in the Hampton Roads area," says Nina Pinto, vice president of the Hampton University Chapter. "We've volunteered at different food banks, tutored students at local churches, and held educational sessions on Hampton's campus. We also established ties with a local juvenile detention center to mentor their youth."

Their work largely focuses on the youth, especially on their experiences working with the juvenile detention center. "If we inspire them and give them a plan, they know they can go back to high school, get their diploma, and go on to college with the proper resources," says Pinto. "It really gives them a glimmer of hope, like 'Okay, it's not over for me after this. I can really go out and go do something with my life.'"

Within the Hampton Roads community, Breaking the Cycle identified issues of food insecurity and a lack of affordable nutritional food options. As a result, they set out to promote healthy eating practices and establish community pantries stocked with healthy foods. Although volunteering has looked a little bit different given the current climate of COVID-19, the organization still hosts food drives and fundraising events to donate to nonprofits in the area. Breaking the Cycle looks forward to working directly with members of the community post-pandemic.

*To learn more about how you can support the Breaking the Cycle Hampton Roads Chapter, you can follow them on [Instagram](#).*

# Barack Obama



*Photo courtesy of Paula Madison*

Former President Barack Obama, the son of a successful Kenyan economist and an intellectually curious white mother, taught a nation of immigrants that no dream is too big to achieve. Charismatic and cerebral, Obama earned degrees from Columbia University and Harvard Law School. After graduating, he worked as a community organizer in Chicago. There, he met his wife Michelle Obama whom he married in 1992. They have two children, Malia Ann and Natasha (Sasha) (born in 1998 and 2001, respectively). In 1996, he was elected to the Illinois state senate where he served for eight years. In 2004, he was elected to the US Senate to represent the state of Illinois and announced in 2007 that he would run for president. Defeating Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries, Obama became the first African American to win the designation of a major party in a United States presidential election. In the 2008 presidential election, he defeated the late senator John McCain to become the 44th president of the United States and the first African American to hold the highest office in the land.

## *Barack Obama (continued)*

As president, he served two terms—defeating senator Mitt Romney for reelection in 2012. During his two terms, he passed healthcare reform, withdrew troops from Iraq, ended the 2008 recession, reduced carbon emissions, and promoted climate change. Post-presidency, Barack and Michelle Obama have focused their efforts on the Obama Foundation. The Obama Foundation works to “inspire, empower, and connect people to change their world.” One of its biggest projects is the Obama Presidential Center. The Obama Presidential Center will celebrate “our nation’s first African-American President and First Lady on the South Side of Chicago.” The Obamas also signed a Netflix production deal and book deals that will expand on their vision of connection and empowerment.

Throughout his time as a public figure, Obama has voiced his admiration for the written word. He believes storytelling has the power to bring people from different walks of life together. During his teenage and young adult years, he was an avid reader. From Shakespeare to James Baldwin, he gained a knowledge of history, philosophy, and political thought that would prove beneficial in his political career. He has written several books: “*Dreams of My Father* (1995),” “*The Audacity of Hope* (2006),” and “*Of Thee I Sing* (2010)”. Obama’s new memoir *A Promised Land* was released on November 17, 2020. He wrote the book with hopes that young people would see themselves in him and understand that they too can make positive change in the world no matter from where they start.

“Any worthwhile endeavor tends to be a collective effort . . .”  
– Barack Obama