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The Hilltop 2-18-2009 The Black History Issue

Hilltop Staff

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HAPPY BLACK HISTORY MONTH!

THE HILTOP

The Daily Student Voice of Howard University

Wednesday, February 18, 2009

BLACK HISTORY ISSUE
We asked the staff: What is your favorite movement, period, or person in black history?

Danielle Kwateng
Managing Editor
Black Power Movement
"Black people had unadultered pride and questioned past paradigms."

Vanessa Rozier
Editor-In-Chief
Coretta Scott King

Mercia Williams-Murray
Deputy Managing Editor
Ben Carson
"I have admired since I read his book in 5th grade."

Shivonne Foster
Campus Editor
The creation of black history month.

Jada F. Smith
Nation & World Editor
The Creation of the Freedmen's Journal

Jessica Littles
Special Issues Editor

Chadwick Johnson
The intellectual/artistic Black Francophone presence in Paris during the 20s and 30s.

Deontay Morris
Sports Editor
The Negro Leagues

The Nation's Only Black Daily Collegiate Newspaper

Natalie Thompson
Metro Editor
The Civil War

Aleesia Mann
Life & Style Editor

Bob Marley

Kandace Barker
Business Manager

The Barack Obama Movement
"That's the only thing I've actually been a part of..."

Linsey Isaacs
Assistant, Campus Editor
The 2008 Election

Jeremy Williams
Layout Editor
"I think we had an honest black community then."

Travis White
Photo Editor

Stockley Carmichael

Jenise Cameron
Copy Editor
Malcolm X

Cierra Jones
Copy Editor
Harlem Renaissance

Johnson W. Sattiewhite
Graphic Design Manager
Shirley Chisholm

Paul Laurence Dunbar
Letter from the Special Issues Editor:

Thank God I'm Black! I get goose bumps when I think about the rich and amazing history of the past and present. My black history, my American history, my African history—these are all relevant to my existence and to most of the Howard University population. The creation of Negro History Week by Carter G. Woodson in 1926, which evolved into Black History month in 1976, was only the catalyst in American people celebrating black contribution to history. But even in 2009, we still have a long way to go in acknowledging the historical significance of African culture in shaping American culture, and unfortunately many African-Americans, black people, black Americans, or however you choose to be identified still do not realize how important their own history has been in shaping the culture of this nation.

It is everything from our music to our scientific inventions that has financially and culturally motivated this country to greatness—much of which can be traced back to our African roots. I found it amazing to read about the West-African slaves who would entertain themselves in the cotton fields by rhyming off the top of their heads. It was a form of entertainment that they used amongst themselves and in front of their masters, and 1,000 years later, young black men and women stood on corners in Harlem and the Bronx "freestyling"—eventually allowing this audacious form of rhythm and poetry to evolve into a world-wide phenomenon. If you think there's no connection, educate yourself.

And still we are living in historical times: In 2008 alone, we elected our first black president, a rapper sold a million albums and the first black film studio was opened. No matter how you feel about the individual people who achieved these historical monuments, it is hard not to recognize the importance of their success.

But not only have we been a part of history on a broad level, we live within history everyday by attending Howard University. I love the diversity of this campus and the historical insights that are readily accessible to us. Although I have had many gripes about the student body and the administration, as a whole, I must say that attending Howard makes me proud to be black—not to the exclusion of recognizing the long road ahead of us, because we as a community still have a long way to go. But I truly love being black. We are so freakin' beautiful and amazing. Our complexities are dynamic and gentel. I love the soul-permeating rhythm that seeps into our swagger, the creativity of our hairstyles, and the resourceful methods of our minds—all entities that I was raised to appreciate. I have an affinity for black men, and challenge them to greatness and my heart is with all my sisters; I encourage them to keep progressing.

This issue is so special because we really tried to cover a broad range of black existence—from the literature, to music, to politics. We focused on the present and sought to connect it to our traditional history and show the triumphs and complexities of our culture.

Under the creative direction of Layout Editor Jeremy Williams, who did a fabulous job in making all of the editorial content come to life, we created something memorable with this issue. In this issue, editors Eboni Farmer and Jada F. Smith offer their differing perspectives on black women rocking natural and relaxed hair, Staff Writer Genet Lekew covers black nationalism and we also take a look at present day black music. In all of this, we attempt to remain relevant and emphasize the growing importance of black history. The recent strides black people have made do not mean we still do not have a need for Black History month. In fact, it means that this month is even more important in continually paying homage to the people and movements that made the present history possible.

Until next time,

Jessica N. Littles

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Nationalism: Does it Have Place in Culture?

BY GENET LAKW
Staff Writer

"Back to Africa," "black and proud," "by any means necessary." These phrases are reminiscent of the forces of black advocacy and black power.

First introduced by Marcus Garvey in the 1910's and '20s, the Back to Africa concept is one major part of the foundation for Garvey's fame, as are his notions on black progress and unity. With his Black Star Line, a series of steamships, he intended to transport blacks back to their African origins. Jamaican-born Garvey began the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914, the first of its kind. The UNIA aimed to promote a sense of race, pride and unity among blacks living everywhere.

"When we're talking about nationalism in America, we see a disagreement on what is a nation between blacks and whites," said Louis Wright, Ph.D., a political science major and Pan-Africanism professor. "That's how I see nationalism."

In this sense, blacks organized groups in response to whites' vision of what a democracy is in America. This vision included slavery, discrimination and determining humans to be property—notion blacks rejected. "These organizations, for the most part, are not going back to Africa," Wright said. "In fact, I think Europeans will go back to Europe before blacks will go back to Africa, in that sense."

E. Ethelbert Miller, director of the Afro-American Studies Resource Center, recognizes the central role of Africa in Black nationalism thought.

He recalls his personal experience within the black nationalist movement during his own matriculation here at Howard. Striving to connect and identify with their African roots, young black students adopted African ideals and ways of life, leading a vegetarian diet and learning Swahili, spoken in Tanzania and Kenya.

According to Miller, for some, learning their history is easier because they are surrounded by a learning environment. "I know plenty of brothers and sisters in both organizations [New Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam]," said James Morgan, a sophomore radio, TV, film, major and Afro-American studies minor. "I've got family in those organizations as well...that's how I was raised, they are the kind of people who I choose to find myself with in my personal life."

While embracing one's identity is crucial, it is also beneficial to recognize and appreciate the existence of others. "It's very important that we have a working relationship with people who are Asian-Americans, people who are Latino, because that's the future," Miller said.

"And you don't want to have your nationalist ideas preventing you from sitting down at the table with other people," Miller said.

According to Miller, a negative aspect of black nationalism is that its main objective becomes to focus solely on black pride. Conflicts and wars arise that are difficult to resolve because people refuse to sit down and converse with someone who is different.

"I'm a strong supporter of the U.N. because I feel that we need global solutions as opposed to some of these very ethnic and regional answers to our questions," Miller said. "You can't solve some of the chronic problems unless you have a world view."

Morgan believes modern-day nationalist organizations are still necessary to combat continuing discrimination and racism against blacks. He cites black injustices such as Hurricane Katrina, the cases of Sean Bell and Megan Williams and police brutality.

"Every other group has their own organizations and their own traditions that they do in order keep their culture together, in order to keep themselves straight," Morgan said.

"I see it as us trying to unify the black race." he said. "It's not the rejection of other people because to have to get out of the mentality if we're doing something for ourselves, then we're rejecting white people."

Who's Who of Black Nationalism

Lewis Woodson
Woodson is considered by some to be the father of black nationalism. Using the alias Augustine, Woodson published articles in The Colored American newspaper advising blacks to create their own independent institutions. Woodson was also one of the founding board members of Wilberforce University, an HBCU in Wilberforce, Ohio.

Kwame Ture (pictured to right)
Trinidad-born Ture, also known as Stokely Carmichael, studied philosophy during his matriculation here at Howard University. He gained leadership of the Students Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and founded his own All-African People's Revolutionary Party.

Maulana Karenga
Karenga founded Kwanzaa, a pan-African holiday celebrated by blacks to connect with the African heritage and wisdom. He was instrumental in organizing the Million Man March and created his own black nationalist group, the U.S. Organization.

Elijah Muhammad
The Honorable Elijah Muhammad is most known as the Supreme Minister of the Nation of Islam (NOI). He preached ideas of black separation, creating many independent businesses and avenues operated by African Americans for their own use. In conjunction with NOI minister Malcolm X, Muhammad hoped to strengthen and advance black minds.

- Genet Lakew, Staff Writer
Timeline in Black Fashion

BY TAHIRAH HAIRSTON
Staff Writer

Elizabeth Hobb Keckly was a slave and also a talented seamstress who made dresses for wealthy white women. She eventually used her talents to buy her way to freedom with a $1,200 loan from a faithful patron. In 1861, Keckly became the personal designer of Mary Todd Lincoln's (Abraham Lincoln's wife) wardrobe.

In the 1920s, the time of the Harlem Renaissance and flappers, Josephine Baker became a style icon on the stage and off. She created the image of a sophisticated lady who wasn't afraid to show a leg or two as she brought European and American fashion together with her glamorous style. Many singing divas such as Beyonce and Diana Ross have imitated her banana skirt performance attire.

Jackie Kennedy was known for her keen fashion sense, but it was Ann Cole Lowe's wedding dress design in 1952 that dropped all jaws as Jacqueline Bouvier became Mrs. Kennedy. Lowe received much praise for her work and opened two boutiques in New York; today her designs can be seen in New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian.

Stephen Burrows is the first African-American fashion designer to reach international status in the 1970s. He is known for his use of color and "let it-see" hems, which made eyes all over the international fashion world focus on American style. Burrows' has dressed the likes of many famous faces from Naomi Campbell and Grace Jones to Gabrielle Union and Oprah. He also has won numerous Coty Awards, which is the highest fashion award that can be given.

In 1974, supermodel Beverly Johnson was the first African-American model to appear on the cover of Vogue.

From the velour tracksuits to the gold rope chains, hip-hop has definitely had an influence on the fashion world. With hip-hop, African Americans created their own culture where Dr. Marten boots and high-top faves became popular phenomena. Hip-hop culture dominated the '80s, '90s, and even fashion today.

Kanye West and Pharrell are two style icons that influenced a different side of the hip-hop culture. Kanye West, also known as the "Louis Vuitton Don," made the preppy image "fresh to death," with his infamous polos, slightly tighter than normal pants and overall couture fashion sense. Pharrell, or "Skateboard B" made hip-hop and skateboarding collide in the fashion world. His two fashion lines, Ice Cream and Billionaire Boys Club, are popular all over the world.

Our first family, Mr. and Mrs. Obama, stumbled upon the fashion world making a huge impact on branding and image. First Lady Michelle Obama has created the image of powerful feminine as all eyes were on her attire throughout the 2008 Election season. Even Anna Wintour, editor of Vogue, made comments on Mrs. Obama's Inauguration attire.

"I am America. I am the part you won't recognize. But get used to me. Black, confident, African Americans' Impact In the Fashion World."

The exhilarating world of fashion could not be mentioned without taking note to the contributions from African Americans because they have made an impact on fashion in all aspects. This is just a taste of the contributions that have been made in the fashion world, these African Americans have opened the door for many inspiring young African-American designers, fashion journalists and photographers.
Hip-Hop and Black Love Intertwine

BY ASHLEE GERALD & MACY LYNN FREEMAN
Contributing Writers

Nearly three decades after becoming a cultural phenomenon, hip-hop has remained a channel through which its artists can manifest their realities. Although hip-hop has brought recognition to the black community, what has it done for the concept of Black Love?

"Tell me whom you love, and I'll tell you who you are," This proverb reflects the ideas of past generations of blacks who saw one another as family, but what changes have occurred since then?

As hip-hop made its transition from the East Coast to the West Coast, regional differences and the formation of gangs caused tension within the black community. When gang violence increased in the black community, hip-hop music began to reflect and encourage it. Lyrics perpetuated the idea of killing other young black men, making black love a rare concept.

Professor Anthony Randolph, a second-year teacher at Howard, is a professor of Blacks in the Arts as well as several other courses in the Department of Music. He believes hip-hop creates a "musical picture of the social, cultural, economic and spiritual condition" of the black community.

However, "Hip-hop seems to have an edge that is not conducive to relationships," he said. "We really don't get into the emotion, the heart, in terms of love and relationships with hip-hop artists."

This month's hip-hop symposium focused on the AIDS epidemic affecting the African American community. HIV/AIDS activist Maria Davis spoke on AIDS awareness and prevention. Davis believes that hip-hop culture can have a negative impact on the concept of black love. "Being that the hip-hop culture deals with young people, I think it hinders black love," Davis asserted.

While some hip-hop music replaces concepts of love with images of lust, there are artists whose music is quite amorous. The first rapper that may come to mind when thinking about love and Hip-Hop is lyrical heavyweight Common. With songs like "Come Close," "Faithful," and "Love Is," Common proves that he can talk about love and still hold on to his masculinity.

Darryl Banks is a freshman Economics major from Washington D.C. He believes that Common is "probably one of the few" rap artists that can successfully articulate love and relationships. According to Banks, Common sees love as more of a personal issue.

During a time when the all-mighty dollar influences what the media puts out for people to see and hear, it is easy to understand why individuals want to emulate the glamorous lifestyle associated with Hip-Hop, but love does not have a price tag so as the media will continue to promote what will generate revenue, Hip-hop will remain a plug for tangible pleasure.

Music Review: India Arie and Volume 2

BY MACY LYNN FREEMAN
Contributing Writer

Unique, passionate, uplifting, and spiritual are just a few words that come to mind when thinking about soulful artist India Arie.

Arie introduced herself to audiences in 2001 with the song "Video," when she proclaimed that while she may not look like the average girl from the videos, she has "learned to love herself unconditionally." With this, women were able to realize the beauty of self-acceptance.

The music to follow "Acoustic Soul" would prove to be just as moving. Whether singing about life lessons or thrilling romance, she has a gift for inspiring people. When it comes to creating soul-stirring songs for people of every age and every race her style is impeccable.

India possesses a quality that makes her stand out in the music industry. She's in a class of her own. Overall, Testimony: Vol. 2, Love & Politics is a musical oasis of poetry accompanied by mellow and upbeat sounds.

"Chocolate High" featuring Musiq Soulchild is one of Arie's latest singles. "Chocolate High" is a ballad about two people being honest about their feelings for each other singing.

"There is something about your love that makes me just want to open up. Your flavor is the sweetest thing in life. I'm addicted to your chocolate high." Musiq was a perfect addition to this track. Listeners hear both sides of the loving relationship depicted in this melodic narrative.

One of the most tender and heartfelt songs on the album is "He Heals Me." This song is about finding love and friendship with someone who makes you feel good about yourself.

"Psalms 23" is about not letting the challenges we face keep us down. Inspired by the biblical psalm of David, Arie creates a song about walking in faith despite life's ever-present hurdles. In it, Arie talks about "picking up the pieces" after things go wrong. The track features Hip-Hop legend MC Lyte. Together they give the song a strong feminine presence.

Music lovers bear witness to artistic genius with India Arie's latest work. Each song offers listeners something fresh.
Perspectives: Black Girls and Nappy Roots

BY EBONI FARMER
Online Editor

I don't care about hair. If I had to cut it off it wouldn't even faze me. At the same time, I also love my hair because I am becoming more comfortable with it as time passes.

One of the highlights of my first visit to Howard my sophomore year in high school was when I saw the most beautiful girl with a huge Afro.

I was awe struck, because back home in Connecticut it wasn't common to see a black girl wearing her hair natural. I got the impression that this place was different.

It was a place where you could express yourself without society's negative stereotypes of black beauty bearing down on you, a place where you could find yourself.

Well that's exactly how I feel today. I'm not sorry that a comb can't run through my hair without a struggle.

Yes, it’s nappy and that’s how it’s supposed to be. It makes me upset that I ever thought my hair wasn't beautiful for what it is. I wish that I never had to go natural because I already was. Yes, its just hair but the history that this hair has runs so deep that it represents more that what it is on the exterior.

One of our own Howard women was discriminated against by Ruby Tuesday's last year, because she was wearing box braids. In a column titled "The Perils of Politics of Hair," written by Grace Salvant for The Roar, she explained how someone she spoke with over the phone said that it was a 'race thing' but rather an 'image thing.' An 'image' that I believe we shouldn’t be afraid to have even if society wants to hold us in contempt.

What makes me proud of natural hair is the history behind it. I know I wasn't thinking about its history as my scalp was burning or when I dipped into my account to feed my addiction to straight hair.

The history of relaxers brings us to time when we believed that in order to assimilate into society we had to have straight hair because that’s what was accepted. I don’t know of any study that's been done to refute this in present-day.

Recently Chris Rock premiered his documentary, “Good Hair” at the Sundance Film festival. He was inspired to create the film after his daughter asked him ‘Daddy why don’t I have good hair?’ She asked this question in the 21st century. The ability to turn natural from kinky was discovered a century ago.

Garret Augustus Morgan, who is also responsible for the invention of the gas mask and the automatic traffic light, discovered the first relaxer in 1910.

He stumbled upon his creation while working on creating a lubricant for the machine needle.

He wiped his hands on a wool cloth when he came back to the cloth the next morning he woke up to find that the cloth was straight. He proceeded to testing the lubricant on an Airedale dog, which is known for its curly textured thing.

If little girls are still asking why don't they have good hair, there is no way the Eurocentric beauty being dominant has changed.

I hope that as future leaders in the global community, we can joint together to educate the world and especially our community.

I’m not knocking relaxers, but coming from someone who wore them from age 12-18, having natural hair feels great.

If I had to use a simile to describe how I felt while wearing a relaxer, I’d say it was like wearing a faux fur. It just didn’t feel like the real thing to me. I understand that everyone has their own belief as to why relaxers are necessary or justifiable. Somehow, I justified it for six years, but in the end being natural just came naturally.

I understand that it isn’t the easiest decision for some to make. However I do believe that all black women should embrace their natural beauty because it’s a part of our history and struggle in this country.

BY JADA F. SMITH
Nation & World Editor

Going to such a progressive school like Howard University, it's easy to find a variety of informed black students who are culturally enlightened and proud of their rich heritage — which is a beautiful thing.

However, just because I have chosen not to trade in my perm and flat iron for an afro or dreadlocks does not make me any less culturally intact than anyone else. Yes, all black hair is beautiful — emphasis on “all.”

So why does that phrase seem to apply more for black women who have chosen to wear a natural style than for black women who chose to relax or add weave to their hair?

I wholeheartedly reject the notion that straight hair, weaved hair, dyed hair or relaxed hair is an attempt to “assimilate” with European culture. I'm not saying that that’s never been the case, but it certainly does not apply to every black woman who chooses not to “go natural.” I never have and never will want to be anything other than a black woman.

Hair, just like clothing, is a form of personal expression that every woman should be able to style freely without fear of being judged by someone who thinks that they’ve fallen victim to the influence of popular culture and even if she did, isn’t that her prerogative? Does that make her any less of a good representation of a Black woman?

When you impose your own styling preferences on others, you’re not only making them extremely uncomfortable, but you're encouraging cultural suppression.

Back in 1997, the movie, B.A.P.S., formally introduced the world to something black people have known for a long time: black women can truly get creative when it comes to their hair. Blonde wavy waves with the words “BOO-YAH” written in rhinestones on the back, loops pinned to the side of the head, bangs, and even spires of hair styled to emulate a waterfall.

Some may call it “ghetto” or “country,” but one thing that can't be denied is that it is unique to the African-American experience and serves as one of the many representations of black culture. Encouraging a specific hairstyle to be applied to all the women in cultural group is like encouraging the world to create a monolithic view of black women.

We should be embracing the diversity of our hair, just like the way we've learned to embrace the diversity in our skin tones.

It almost reminds me of the scene in Spike Lee’s “School Daze,” where two groups of black women fought over their hair differences, instead of embracing each other's variations. That was over 20 years ago, so why are we still doing it in today?

Being at Howard, I have personally felt like I’ve been looked down upon by women who wear natural hairstyles, as if their way is “right” or “better.”

It would be a very inaccurate representation of our people if we all tried to all rock the same do. I know, embrace, respect and love the history of black women’s hair. From Madame C.J. Walker to Angela Davis 'fro, cornrows to kinky twists and dreads, to weaves, pressing combs and relaxers.

Just because I chose to rock the latter does not make me any less Afrocentric than any other black woman. I really don’t know what the big deal is anyway about hair; it may be relaxed now but in five years, who knows? That's what I love about our hair: we can do it all!
Chocolate Cities Emerge as American Dynamics Change

ALESSA MANN
Life & Style Editor

Slavery and the subsequent emancipation play a large role in the dispersion of blacks in America. Although Washington, D.C. is widely known as “Chocolate City,” several cities in Northeast and Southeast United States have majority black populations, according to the U.S. Census Bureau 2006-2007 statistics.

Before the Civil War, Slave populations were concentrated in states like Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia. But, after the Civil War, as freed blacks began to exercise their autonomy, many began to move to different cities across the U.S.

Washington, D.C., Detroit, Mich., Baltimore, Md., and Gary, Ind. were some of the major cities blacks began to move to during the Great Migration, a period between 1910 and 1930 when blacks began to move to Northern and Western states.

This pattern of migration has endured over the years, resulting in these cities’ majority-black populations today.

1. Gary, Indiana
   83.9% black
2. Detroit, Michigan
   82.8% black
3. Jackson, Mississippi
   76.0% black
4. Birmingham, Alabama
   74.8% black
5. Baltimore, Maryland
   63.8% black
6. New Orleans, Louisiana
   63.5% black
7. Memphis, Tennessee
   62.4% black
8. Richmond, Virginia
   57.2% black
9. Atlanta, Georgia
   56.8% black
10. Washington, D.C.
    55.5% black

10 Great Reads from Black Authors

If you’re not in the mood for gritty urban-lit (is it too gangsta for proofreading?), and you’ve gone through all of the great Harlem Renaissance prose, there are still plenty of options— that’s recent, yet relevant. Here are ten great books by black authors:

1. Shattered Vessels by Nancye Flowers
   This page-turner about sisterhood, abuse, and self-worth explores the question, “How much is too much?”

2. The Dew Breaker by Edwidge Danticat
   Edwidge Danticat does it again with her most recent novel about a father who used to be a prison guard. It wouldn’t be so bad if this prison wasn’t in Haiti, under the ruthless Duvalier regime, where torture tactics were a valuable skill set.

3. Living Water by Obey Hendricks
   Hendricks takes a small, less-popular Biblical story and weaves it into a present-day novel about preaching the Good News.

4. Fledgling by Octavia E. Butler
   What happens when the trailblazer for black female science fiction writers and first science fiction writer ever to win the MacArthur Genius Grant turns her attention to the world of vampires? Fledgling happens.

5. Them by Nathan McCall
   Gentrification, as a topic, probably feels like a twice beaten dead horse by now; but even though it’s the subject of Them, the novel is worth the read.

6. By the Light of my Father’s Smile
   by Alice Walker
   OK, this novel is a year over the age limit for this list, but it’s worth the rule-bending. When “Alice Walker” is printed on a book’s spine, you can bet what’s inside is worth its salt, and… Smile is no exception.

7. Sugar by Bernice L. MacFadden
   It’s 1940. This story is the intersection of three lives when the protagonist somehow inherits the house next door to Pearl, another character, and sets up shop.

8. Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? by Beverly Todd
   The question itself is enough to pick up the book. Part study, part sociological analysis (through the use of real-life accounts), … Together in the Cafeteria takes readers on a quest for this and other answers.

9. The Pursuit of Happiness
   by Christopher Gardner (with Quincy Troupe)
   The movie does not tell you everything. To rewatch, the movie does not tell you everything. The book shows who Gardner is as a man— how he grew up, what motivated him, and what he was doing before his life changed.

10. Dreams From My Father
    A Story of Race and Inheritance
    by Barack Obama
    We couldn’t resist including one of President Obama’s books. Obamamania aside, the book is touching not because of the actual account, or Obama’s talent for words, but because it is truly introspective.