100 YEARS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY:

A Fiber Art Retrospective by Tina Williams Brewer

It Happened: The Courier Was There
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This publication was made possible through a generous contribution to Pittsburgh Filmmakers/Pittsburgh Center for the Arts from Alcoa Foundation.
The *Pittsburgh Courier* has recorded news affecting African-Americans since 1910. My staff and I are honored to be the “keepers” of what is an incredible and extensive record – both in print and in photographs – of a people’s culture that has had profound impact on American history.

The *Courier* was first published 100 years ago and eventually became the most widely circulated Black newspaper in the country with 21 regional editions and an international edition. At its height, more than 450,000 people received the *Courier* each week and were given the opportunity to read an unvarnished version of cultural and historical events that told the story of the Black experience in America. While we stand on the shoulders of those acclaimed journalists and photographers who chronicled those events, people, and information that changed the course of history in America, the *New Pittsburgh Courier* is pleased to continue the legacy that honors their many contributions.

It was clear from the early days of the *Courier* that the twentieth century Black experience was irrevocably steeped in discrimination, benign neglect and racism. The many contributions of Black Americans were ignored or relegated as unimportant to the growth of this nation by other mainstream media and publications. While African-Americans excelled in many fields of endeavor that shaped the landscape of today’s America, their stories were almost exclusively told in the pages of the *Courier* to a people that otherwise would have no knowledge of the vast contributions of African-Americans.

The information reported in the *Courier* had a profound impact on Black politics, world events, civil rights, sports, entertainment, business and journalism. We are privileged to associate with those giants who recorded the history of a people’s unwavering march to overcome the many obstacles that withheld their dignity as a mighty race of people. As the Black intellectual W.E.B. DuBois said, “The twentieth century challenge to resolve the issue of color is the greatest challenge America will have to overcome.” His words were truly prophetic.

The series of 10 quilts created by Tina Williams Brewer in this exhibition attempt to provide a broad-based perspective on pivotal issues, events and individuals that contributed to the past 100 years of Black history as reflected in the *Pittsburgh Courier*. We are honored that Tina chose the *Courier* as the source for her artistic storytelling and we hope that these quilts help to convey some of the rich stories contained in our photographic archives.

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**NEW Pittsburgh Courier**

*It Happened: The Courier Was There*
The Pittsburgh Courier: 100 years of history.

Samuel W. Black, Curator of African American Collections, Senator John Heinz History Center

Robert L. Vann garnered control of the Pittsburgh Courier in 1910, after numerous Black newspapers had come and gone. None of those papers had the impact of the Pittsburgh Courier which played a seminal role in the struggle for 20th century civil rights. Both as a business and an institution, the newspaper impacted the advancement of African Americans.

Founded by Edward N. Harleston in 1907, the Pittsburgh Courier was transformed from a regional paper to a national voice by editor, publisher, legal counsel and treasurer, Robert Lee Vann in 1910. Joining Harleston in the early years of the paper were Edward Penman, Hepburn Carter, Scott Wood, Jr., Harvey Tanner, Cumberland Posey, Sr., Samuel Rosemound, William Nelson Page and William Hance.

The first issue of the Courier was published on January 15, 1910 and it was formally incorporated on May 10, 1910. Under the direction of Vann, the paper grew to become the largest and most influential African American publication in the nation, with a circulation of more than 450,000.

The Pittsburgh Courier was the first African American newspaper to publish both national and local editions. At one time the Courier had as many as 21 editions in cities and states from the Atlantic to the Pacific including Illinois (Chicago Edition), Michigan (Detroit Edition), Far West (Los Angeles), Pacific Coast, Southern (Miami), Texas, Georgia, Louisiana, Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh and Philadelphia Editions), Midwest, Missouri (St. Louis), Ohio, New York and Washington, DC. The paper had more than 400 employees in 14 cities at its peak.

Typical of many African American papers, the Pittsburgh Courier addressed politics, society, economics and race. From its earliest editions, it addressed the issue of African American men fighting in World War I and the Great Migration. Under the management of Ira F. Lewis, the Courier initiated the “Double V” campaign for victory at home and abroad during World War II.

From the era of the Great Migration to the Civil Rights Movement and beyond, the Pittsburgh Courier was at the center of providing news coverage, opinion and commentary on all issues and events affecting African American life.

For many years, the Pittsburgh Courier served as a voice of consciousness for African Americans. It was, along with other sources of the Black press, the main instrument of communication for news affecting African Americans. It reported on events of World War I, anti-lynching legislation, the Scottsboro Boys case of the 1930s, the rise of Joe Louis, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, World War II, and the major civil rights cases of the 1940s, 50s, and 1960s. The Pittsburgh Courier was an influential press voice during the Vietnam War and through its columnists and editorials – ignited debate over war, poverty, race, civil rights and peace.

The Pittsburgh Courier became more than a newspaper – it became an institution – an institution that had far-reaching influence in the halls of Congress and the family living room. Through the Courier’s city edition, columnists would bring to life the everyday happenings of the Hill District and other areas of Pittsburgh. Local reporters such as Edna Chappell (McKenzie) and Frank Bolden would report on race discrimination in western Pennsylvania while Teenie Harris would photo-document the news of the day.

John L. Clark with his column “Wiley Avenue,” would
share information, while sports reporting by W. Rollo Wilson, and Bill Nunn, Sr., gave life to the paper and enthralled readers.

Nationally, the columns and editorials of George Schuyler brought talent and intensity to the paper, while Robert L. Vann was instrumental in the national shift of African American political affiliation from the Republican to the Democratic Party during the 1930s. He championed the programs of Franklin Delano Roosevelt – an endorsement that rang loud throughout Black America. During the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, Vann sent J.A. Rogers to observe and report for the *Courier*.

The *Pittsburgh Courier* was a major force in the integration of American society, addressing the issues of segregation. It helped open up relatively closed sections of American society like sports, business, and accommodations to African Americans.

Through its influential sports reporting, the *Pittsburgh Courier* helped integrate baseball, basketball and football. Its innovative reporting and the establishment of the Black College All Stars institutionalized the *Courier*’s sports editions. As a result, the American and National Football Leagues as well as the National Basketball Association and Major League Baseball relied on the opinion of *Pittsburgh Courier* sports reporters and editors such as Bill Nunn, Jr., for information about the talents of Black athletes. Many African American athletes who were first reported on in the *Courier* went on to Hall of Fame careers as professionals.

But most importantly, the editors of the *Pittsburgh Courier* used its voice to call for much needed changes in the living conditions of African Americans locally and nationally.

The impact the *Pittsburgh Courier* had over decades of African American politics, world events, civil rights and many other issues is truly significant.

The leadership of the paper over the years, the editors, reporters, photographers and all of the other people who helped to make the paper happen are a critical part of history.
Throughout the past 30 years, the artistic mention of “story quilt” has been synonymous with just a few names, and Tina Williams Brewer is one of them. She is an innovator whose insight has permitted her to encourage others in the creative process and allowed her to generously embrace collaborative efforts.

Internationally known for her artistic exploration of African American history and the personal experiences associated with it, she uses symbolism, textile, and fabrics to create story quilts. These works are motivated by issues focusing on family, women, and children, and spirituality. Her work is in permanent collections at locations as geographically distant and diverse as the United States Embassy in Cairo, Egypt; the African American Museum in Dallas, Texas; the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, Ohio. Currently, her work is on tour in “Textural Rhythms: Quilting the Jazz Tradition” curated by Carolyn Mazloomi.

Never an advocate of the traditional, Brewer has guided her work and that of others toward the unusual and unexplored. Brewer generously shares her talents with both young and old aspiring “artists.” She has brought the joy of quilting to hundreds of individuals through her residency programs as well as her volunteer efforts.

Brewer has been a leading force with the Pittsburgh-based residency program of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts as well as the Art and Kids Museum Project with the Society for Contemporary Craft and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts’ Preserving the First Culture traveling program. She is on the board of directors of Pittsburgh Filmmakers/Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, an emeritus board member of Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, and is a member of the Fiberarts Guild of Pittsburgh and Women of Visions.

In 2009 Brewer was named Lifetime Achievement Artist by the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts and she received the 2008 award for Service to the Arts. Brewer graduated from Columbus College of Art and Design with a Bachelor of Arts. She is a native of Huntington, West Virginia and lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with her husband, John Brewer. She has two children, John Emery and Kristine, and four grandchildren.

An Interview with the Artist

Q. What inspired you to create these quilts?

The challenge of representing a creative experience centered around the Pittsburgh Courier 100 year anniversary instantly excited me. Just the idea of working with 100 years of photo archives from the Courier made me realize that I could create quilts from material which had almost been lost. This journey would be inside fertile grounds that only the ancestors have traveled.

Q. How did you proceed to explore this material?

I decided to break the century up into ten decades, each representing a specific theme in African American history. The images chosen for each decade summarize what occurred during that ten-year period, and beyond. The fabric designs and colors are intended to capture the passion of the time. The photographs within each quilt are selected to create a window into that era to visually lead the viewer back in time.
Q. How did you select the photos which are layered onto the fabric?

I decided to use the African principal of Kwanzaa as a guide for the first seven decades. Each principal became the theme of the quilt. For the last three, I used an ancient story board method known as Lukasa to illustrate the events.

With photos and fabric, I am depicting the African American community as it has come together through collaborative efforts to combat the problems associated with economic and social discrimination.

Q. Who inspires your work?

I am inspired by many artists, but the brilliant collages of Romare Bearden and the fabric technique of Harriet Power are special to me. I am inspired by my history, and by the stories I am presenting. I am inspired by the life and community around me, and I am inspired by my ancestors.

Q. What techniques do you use to create your compositions?

I employ the use of mixed media, including photo transfer, and layers of various types of fabrics to tell the stories. I create depth by layering the fabrics. The designs used are a free-flow approach to quilting, akin to the crazy quilt patchwork and appliqué tradition.

The photos in the quilts appear to be opaque, but upon closer examination, one can see that they are transferred to transparent fabric and collaged to the background. The images are appliquéd or quilted in place in a manner that will allow the background layers to interact with the photo. Thus, the images are “woven” and integrated into the composition to create a sense of movement.

Q. What do you want the viewer to see as they examine these quilts?

The images within each quilt are intended to inspire a series of thoughts which will lead to further investigation so the story continues with the viewer. I also want people to understand their own history—their own story—and understand that what is today was shaped by the layers and colors of the past.

Created in 1966 by Ron Karenga, Kwanzaa comprises “the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world.” Kwanzaa is divided into seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

“Lukasa” are memory boards that record history, tell stories and preserve ancient folklore.

The narratives that accompany the quilts on the following pages were written by historian John Brewer.
The history of Black newspapers in the United States began in 1827 with a small, but powerful venture called *Freedom’s Journal* published by John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish in New York City. It was the first time a published news source was devoted strictly to issues related to the Black community. Subsequently, in 1843, Martin Delaney published a newspaper called *The Mystery* in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to increase the amount of information concerning the underground railroad available to the Black community.

Access to the information in these publications was highly restricted by white slave owners and, combined with the high level of illiteracy in the Black population, these news sources struggled to gain widespread readership. In the early 1900s, however, things were beginning to change.

The Niagara Movement, led by W.E.B. DuBois, was strongly encouraging Black Americans to work with its educated leadership to move from simply a “state of existence” into inclusion in the American mainstream. Three critical and long-standing organizations were formed as an outcome of this movement – the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League and the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

The NAACP emerged in 1909 under the leadership of people including Mary White Ovington, Arthur B. Spingarn, W.E.B. DuBois and Mary Church Terrell. Its goal was to ensure equal rights to all people and to eliminate racial hatred and discrimination. Today it remains the nation’s oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots civil rights organization.

Almost simultaneously, the Urban League, a community-based group dedicated to empowering Black Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream was formed under the guidance of leaders including Mrs. Ruth Standish Baldwin and Dr. George Edmund Haynes. This group remains a central force in the economic development of the Black community today.

The third long-standing and influential organization formed during this period of time was the Black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Founded by Heinz Company security guard Edward N. Harleston and brought to life by a group of businessmen including Robert L. Vann, Cumberland Posey Sr., William E. Hance, Samuel Rosemond, William Page and others, this publication offered unified solutions to problems faced by the Black population in America.

Robert L. Vann was the publisher of the *Pittsburgh Courier* from 1910 to 1940 and his influence changed the political direction of Black Americans by helping to break ties with the Republican party during the Great Depression in 1932. The foundation he established enabled the growth of the Black-owned newspaper to surpass all other Black publications in the world in reach and influence.
In the 1920s Black artists including poet Langston Hughes and writer Richard Wright helped lay the foundation for America's first social, cultural and intellectual Black Renaissance in the country. More liberated lifestyles for Black Americans and less restricted expression of personal taste became manifest in everything from types of clothing to social relations. Black Americans courageously began to come together to operate their own businesses despite the harsh economic and social conditions confronting them. The Black culture's forces of creativity in art, writing and music also began to emerge and be recognized. People began to raise their voices in defiance of repression.

American music and dance lovers were brought together with the improvisations to traditional dance steps by Black entertainers. The two-step and waltz became the soft shoe, black bottom and the Charleston. Black jazz and swing artists travelled the country and voices singing the blues, bebop and ballads were accompanied by orchestras and bands from coast to coast. During this era, Langston Hughes created a character named Jess B. Simple who demonstrated how racial problems could be solved with clarity and resolution. "Simple" offered a recipe for successful intervention to eliminate world conflicts, poverty and racial discrimination. Hughes' series of essays about this lovable character were widely read and highly influential.

Also significant was Richard Wright's novel, *Native Son*, which became a blueprint for both Black and white scholars as it eloquently described the complexities of a young Black boy living in America. The *Pittsburgh Courier* remained a powerful voice throughout this time. Internationally known historian J.A. Rodgers wrote an influential weekly column called "Your History" for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, accompanied by illustrations from *Courier* artist, Sam Milai. As a combined force, these men were instrumental in changing cultural stereotypes by bringing business, scientific and historical facts to the forefront, highlighting significant contributions made by Black Americans that served the greater good of all Americans.

“The *Pittsburgh Courier* was of major significance in African-American culture not only in Pittsburgh, but in America through most of the 20th century.”

— Samuel W. Black, Curator, African-American Collections, Senator John Heinz History Center
COLLECTIVE ECONOMICS
For decades, Black Americans had been excluded from every level of social, political and economic development realm of mainstream America, but in the 1930s a new mind-set began to form – an independent attitude that said “we’ll form our own team”. And that’s what they did.

During the Great Depression hundreds of Black-owned or operated businesses were founded, financed by a form of bank called, “The Numbers.” Strong entrepreneurial spirits permeated Black America and in Pittsburgh, men like Joe Robinson, William “Woogie” Harris and Gus Greenlee became leaders in business development. Negro League baseball teams, community centers, restaurants, barber shops – even indoor golf courses were created almost overnight. A circle of cooperative economics emerged.

By the end of the 1930s, Black Americans living in Pittsburgh had their own baseball stadium, Greenlee Field, where they could cheer on their favorite players from the Pittsburgh Crawfords to the Homestead Grays. The Roosevelt Theater on Center Avenue in the Hill District featured headliners from across the country while the Rock and Roll club on Liberty Avenue featured jazz swing and bebop led by names like Billy Eckstine, Earl Hines and Maxine Sullivan. Mary Dawson Caldwell’s Opera House provided opportunities for Black music students to learn classical instruments and voice. The Harlem Casino, a popular entertainment center, also offered an outlet for Black cultural growth.

Black sports heroes took the national center stage as names like Satchel Paige, Joe Louis and the Harlem Globetrotters gained prominence. Black bands including the Darlings of Rhythm, the first all-Black female band, played around the world and the Pittsburgh Courier was there to report on all of it.

Courier publisher, Robert L. Vann, had become a nationally known statesman and Courier reporters including George Schuyler and John L. Clark wrote passionately about this period of time. Schuyler’s book, Black No More, outlined his philosophy on issues related to race and helped shape race relations on a national scale. An American Black world, parallel to the white world, was being formed.

“The Courier started as a sheet of paper and grew to become the most important product of America’s black press...”
— Robert Hill, Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs, University of Pittsburgh
COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY
International issues were beginning to come to the forefront in America in the 1940s. The “Double V” symbol created by the *Pittsburgh Courier* representing victory both at home and abroad rallied the Black population and represented a clear goal. The victory overseas would come in the form of freedom from fascism and racism. And the victory hoped for at home would be a victory over “Jim Crow” a series of state and local laws in America that allowed for “separate but unequal” status for Blacks and other non-white races. The *Pittsburgh Courier* worked to unify the international and national efforts for freedom and provided coverage of stories from as far away as Ethiopia, India and Africa.

Reporters including Roi Ottley and Frank Bolden provided news about the brave battles being waged by Black Americans to gain freedom for their country. They kept the American public informed about the highly trained and skilled Tuskegee Airmen who fought alongside their white counterparts to achieve the same goals. These Airmen and thousands of other Black soldiers worked tirelessly to support democracy and their efforts eventually led to the desegregation of all armed forces in the United States by President Harry S. Truman in 1948.

International news coverage provided by the *Pittsburgh Courier* moved beyond the boundaries of the military and included stories about black entertainers, athletes and other luminaries. The accomplishments of talents including bandleaders Duke Ellington and Count Basie often received more acclaim from outside of the United States than from within. Dancer and performer Josephine Baker blazed trails in Europe for Black Americans that have never been duplicated, eventually becoming known as the “Black Countess of Europe.” The situation at home, however, was slower to change.

While Black Americans were being acclaimed in Europe and on other continents, they were often treated differently in the United States. Internationally respected singer Paul Robeson came home from his success in Europe only to be badly beaten in Mississippi for his views on civil rights. Jim Crow laws continued to require segregation in public schools and transportation, restaurants, even in restrooms. Lynchings and blatant discrimination were common, but powerful forces, including the *Pittsburgh Courier* were working to create change.

The *Pittsburgh Courier* staff, including writers Hazel Garland, John L. Clark, and Frank Bolden; illustrator Sam Milai; photographer Charles “Teenie” Harris and others worked hard to provide balanced reporting on the accomplishments of Black Americans and Black leaders. They kept the American public informed about the status of Black GIs in Europe, Africa, Italy and elsewhere during WWII. Special correspondents witnessed acts of heroism by the 99th fighter units trained at Tuskegee Airmen School, and GIs in combat zones who fought to preserve Democracy at home and abroad.

Under the leadership of Mrs. Jessie Vann, the widow of Robert L. Vann, the *Pittsburgh Courier* continued to grow as a powerful source of information and in the 1940s became the largest Black newspaper in the world.
PURPOSE
In 1954 a landmark court case, Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, set the tone for positive change in race relations. Its ruling that separate but equal facilities are inherently unequal, paved the way for integration and progress in the Civil Rights movement. Civil rights icons including Congressman Charles C. Diggs, Jr., Martin Luther King, Jr. and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. led a coordinated effort to end racial discrimination.

A defining moment in the battle for civil rights came when people across America were riveted by an incident in Mississippi. A young Black boy, Emmet Till, was kidnapped, brutally murdered and tossed in a river after being accused of whistling at a white woman as she walked into a store. The *Pittsburgh Courier* covered the story which revealed the shockingly brutal nature of Jim Crow in the South. When the boy’s assailants were acquitted by an all-white jury, it outraged the nation and helped people understand the reality of race as it existed in America.

Black churches were a powerful force in the Civil Rights movement and hosted assembly after assembly to encourage peaceful change. They helped empower Black Americans to protest against economic and social discrimination and to begin to assert their rights as American citizens. Both nationally and internationally the *Pittsburgh Courier* continued to report on news in the Black community, highlighting civil rights accomplishments by luminaries such as attorney Thurgood Marshall; world-renowned dancer and anthropologist, Katherine Dunham’s ground-breaking views on human rights; social activist Dorothy Height’s outlook on Black motherhood; and financial news with the first Black stockbroker to work on the New York Stock Exchange.

In Pittsburgh, the Black community was paralleling the nation and was beginning to enjoy vibrant activity in business and the arts. The city’s “Hill District” was the hub of activity and the center of more than 1,000 Black-owned businesses. This progress was derailed when the building of a sports and entertainment facility, the Civic Arena, fragmented the lower Hill District and decentralized the Black community. More than 2,000 Black families were displaced and hundreds of businesses were closed down. It was a serious setback, but a determined Black community continued to move forward.
SELF DETERMINATION
The 1960s led by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., John and Robert Kennedy, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and Malcolm X were filled with hope and determination. College campuses across the country staged protests to demand equal rights for all Americans. Labor unions, churches, women’s organizations and gay rights movements pounded the pavement demanding new policies and practices. Freedom Riders staged protests and travelled the South seeking unification and peace.

In 1963 an organized and unified march on Washington, DC attracted more than 250,000 people and legitimized the Civil Rights movement in a powerful and unforgettable way. Those who attended were the first to hear Martin Luther King Jr.’s historic “I Have a Dream” speech. Then, a series of shots pierced that hope.

Within a five-year period, President John F. Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy and Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. were all assassinated in pursuit of their shared dream of a country free of racial discrimination. Malcolm X, a leader of the masses of poor people in America and Muslim minister, was also gunned down. The war in Vietnam added to the stress and confusion of the country. A lesser nation might not have survived. America’s strength and resilience helped it move forward.

The Pittsburgh Courier, as the voice of the Black community, encouraged peace and understanding as it reported on both political and non-political news. Civil rights icons including Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Mary Bethune and Congressman Charles Diggs, Roy Wilkins and others continued their work to create a peaceful nation. Sports figures like boxers Cassius Clay (later known as Muhammad Ali) and Joe Louis gave hope to a disenchanted community, and entertainers including Harry Belafonte and Dick Gregory were some of those who kept Black America’s hopes alive during a complicated and difficult period of history. In Pittsburgh, local influencers such as Jim McCoy of the United Negro Protest Committee, Bouie Hayden, Dr. Charles Greenlee and Attorney Byrd Brown helped people make sense out of what had happened.

Joe Robinson’s Crawford Grill and Birdie Dunlap’s Hurricane provided places for people to gather, talk and heal as they formulated plans about how to improve the future. At the Pittsburgh Courier, satirical cartoonist Ollie Harrington; national photographer Gordon Parks; war correspondent and roaming reporter Robert Ratcliff; and community activist Frankie Pace, were some of the contributors who kept the nation informed through this critical time period.
FAITH
Sports have always provided a forum for breaking barriers and Black Americans throughout time have shown prowess on the fields, tracks and courts of the world, providing opportunities for achievement and celebration.

It was just six decades ago that baseball player, Jackie Robinson walked into a stadium filled with thousands of people screaming racial slogans, determined to end his dream of becoming a National League Player. By his talent, he proved that he planned to stay.

The Negro League glory days with Josh Gibson, the “Black” Babe Ruth, and Satchel Paige’s “Bee Ball” provided cause for admiration. Pittsburgh Courier writer Bill Nunn, Jr. made sure everyone read about their talents and he put stars like Roberto Clemente in front of the national news media.

Toni Stone, a female baseball player, tried out for several Negro League teams before she was permitted to play for the Indianapolis Clowns. Her team entertained the fans before the games began and created excitement for the Negro Leagues by having fun both on and off the field. Ms. Stone became the first female to play in the Negro Leagues.

Mr. Nunn and other Courier sports writers made sure that these talents and others like Bobby Grier, the first Black football player to play in the Sugar Bowl, made it to the headlines. Bobby Grier’s talents quieted voices including Governor Marvin Griffin of Georgia, who had demanded that Georgia Tech decline from playing because of the inclusion of Black players. Black athletes around the country received support from colleges and universities largely because of the support of Courier writers including Bill Nunn, Jr. and Sr.

In other arenas, Ralph Boston’s long jump, Flo Jo’s speed, and Muhammad Ali’s agility in the boxing ring broke barriers and helped them dominate their sports. Althea Gibson, Arthur Ashe and the Williams sisters took talent on the tennis court to new levels. Tiger Woods transformed the world of golf for minorities while Kareem, Wilt and the great Michael Jordan left the basketball court taking the bar of achievement to heights that had not yet been imagined.
DESTINY
Music is a universal language and the immense contributions of Black Americans to the body of American music are undeniable. The destiny of many talents was formed in music halls across the country and reflected the lives of those who performed.

In the early days, Gospel ballads told the stories within the souls of those held as slaves and, in time, Swing and Bebop began to tell a more joyful story. Jazz and Blues provided a combination of messages – all compelling. Despite the yoke of slavery, Black Americans had developed a distinctive art form, inherited from their African ancestors.

A single song could spread through a cotton field during a hot summer afternoon and would provide a rhythm of positive emotions for all who heard it. Even slave masters would find themselves humming the tunes they had heard as they supervised the work being done in the fields.

The Harlem Renaissance set the tone for American urban areas to release a stream of talent into the arts including musicians, poets and writers such as: Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Miles Davis, Nat King Cole, Billie Holliday, Arna Bontemps, Phyllis Wheatley, Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, James Baldwin and many others.

The unforgettable sculptures of Selma Burke and Thad Mosely; the acting talent of Sidney Poitier, the playwriting of August Wilson; and the world-class writing of Pittsburgh-born John Edgar Wideman; added to the list of incredible creative talent emerging from this period of time and helped create an enviable artistic legacy for Black Americans.

“At its peak the Courier was truly the ‘Voice of Black America’ because of its reach and depth. Everybody in the Black community in the country read the Courier.”

— Ralph Proctor, PhD, Board member, August Wilson Center for African American Culture, Pittsburgh, PA
business, education and politics, the arts, sports – all have been pathways to success and achievement for Black Americans over time. Pittsburgh has been, and continues to be, rich with African American men and women who achieve in all areas of life, making our region stronger for the future.

Reverend Dr. Leroy Patrick was dedicated to the spiritual as well as practical liberation of Black people, and remains as an example for men and women of the cloth to follow. Bishop Duane Darkins with his dual role as politician and minister, also set the bar for those preaching the Gospel.

Lawyers, judges, and legislators have helped shape our system over time by defending the rights of Black Americans, and include luminaries such as Wendell Freeland, Homer S. and Byrd Brown, Livingstone and Justin Johnson, Wendell Stanton, Paul Jones, James Jordan, Richard Jones and Everett Utterback.

Black achievements in education were marked by people like Mary McLeod Bethune who founded Bethune-Cookman University. With her savings of less than five dollars, she started a one-room school for girls in 1904. Other great educators followed her lead and brought life to inner city schools. Pittsburgh’s first Black principal, John M. Brewer, Sr. defied the odds at Miller Elementary in 1955 by creating food and clothing banks and by supporting Black children in every aspect of education.

State education secretary Delores Tucker devoted her entire life to the improvement of conditions in public schools. She was joined by Dr. Helen Faison, former acting head of Pittsburgh Public Schools, Frank Bolden, K. Leroy Irvis and many others. In business and politics, national powerhouses like Oprah Winfrey and Carole Mosely Braun, the first Black female Senator, have taken the stage.

Locally, families like the Davenports stepped up to bring Pittsburgh’s first Black radio station into existence. Pittsburgh’s Urban League continued to make great strides in promoting economic issues and has boasted tenacious leaders including Art Edmunds, Leon Haley, Dr. Oswald Nickens and Esther Bush.

“We are privileged to associate with those giants that recorded the history of a people’s unwavering march to overcome the many obstacles that withheld their dignity as a mighty race of people.”

— Rod Doss, Editor and Publisher, New Pittsburgh Courier
HOPE AND HEALING
For more than 200 years, a long line of men and women have been part of the continuing journey of the Black culture in America. They had no map or trail to follow; they created the path for themselves. Integrity, faith and courage were their trademarks, and no one person could have achieved what he or she did without the others.

Carter G. Woodson, known as the “Father of Negro History”, W.E.B. DuBois and John Hope Franklin were some of those who took responsibility for recording Black history, helping to keep a record of America’s journey. The Pittsburgh Courier’s Robert L. Vann, Jessie Vann, John H. Sengstacke and most recently, Pittsburgh Courier publisher Rod Doss helped, using the force of journalistic communication to keep both a record of history and provide perspective.

Those creating the history were led by people like Martin Robinson Delaney, the leader of the underground railroad system in the United States; a system that kept communication vibrant, even in times of severe and forceful news restriction. People like Ralph Bunche, the first Black person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, and Stokely Carmichael, the orator of the Black Power movement of the 1960s provided proud moments for the Black population.

They were led by people like Nelson Mandela, who stood as a lonely figure in the movement against Apartheid in South Africa and more current leaders including the Reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. Despite strong and consistent resistance, these men held their ground to allow America to grow to become the nation it is today.

These Black Americans paved the way for the election of America’s first Black president, Barack Obama, whose role as America’s 44th president represents the most recent landmark in Black history; a history marked by the accomplishments and dedication of both President Obama and all who went before him.

“The Courier was a catalyst for many areas of Black life in America and was a force in motivating political and cultural reforms.”

— Louise Lippincott, Curator of Fine Arts, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA
Contributors

**John Brewer** is an oral historian from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His passion for African American history has spanned his entire life, beginning with the stories he was told by his father, John Brewer Sr. He has also studied with Dr. Raymond Manassee, Dr. Helen Edmunds, Dr. Ralph Proctor and Dr. James H. Brewer.

Brewer founded the Trolley Station Oral History Center in Homewood, Pennsylvania, with the mission of discovering new source information about the Black community in the Pittsburgh region and elsewhere. The Center also works to educate, inspire and direct information about critical issues related to the African American community to historians, scholars, museums and other individuals.

Brewer’s research and experience has led to the publication of three books including: *African Americans in Pittsburgh*, *Pittsburgh Jazz* and *The Room*. The books include images that date back as far as 1920.

Brewer is a member of the Senator John Heinz History Center Advisory Board, the Pennsylvania History Commission Advisory Board and the National Negro Opera House Renovation Board. He has lectured throughout the state of Pennsylvania at locations including the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania State University, McKeesport and the Community College of Allegheny County.

After graduating from Peabody High School in Pittsburgh, Brewer earned a BA in history from North Carolina Central University and worked with Equitable Gas Company for 28 years. He currently lives in Homewood, Pennsylvania, with his wife Tina and they have two children and four grandchildren.

**Samuel W. Black** is the Curator of African American Collections at the Senator John Heinz History Center. He is the editor and curator of “Soul Soldiers: African Americans and the Vietnam Era.” He is the recipient of the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History and the S.K. Stevens Award from the Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations. A Smithsonian Fellow, he serves as the vice president of the Association of African American Museums.
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Tina Williams Brewer photo by John Colombo

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EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

Alcoa Corporate Lobby
Winter 2010

Senator John Heinz History Center
Spring - Summer 2010

August Wilson Center for African American Culture
Fall 2010 - Winter 2011

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Winter 2011

Please visit www.TinaWilliamsBrewer.com for specific dates.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

Linden Elementary
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Brookline Elementary
Pittsburgh Pennsylvania
In conjunction with Fiberart International 2010
and Pittsburgh Center for the Arts
When I am working, I often feel as if my fingers are being guided by forces I don’t completely understand, but that help me create far more insightfully and knowledgeably than I would be able to otherwise. I believe these forces are the thoughts, feelings and insights of my ancestors—those whose stories I try to tell.

— TINA WILLIAMS BREWER

A key to the images on the Courier quilts in PDF format is available from Tina’s website at no charge. Sizes of the quilts are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUILT TITLE</th>
<th>SIZE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>28” x 25”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>44” x 32”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Economics</td>
<td>37” x 37.5”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Work and Responsibility</td>
<td>43” x 35”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>56” x 36”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Determination</td>
<td>52” x 37”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>47” x 37”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>51” x 37”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>67” x 46”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope And Healing</td>
<td>56” x 37”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For updated information about exhibitions, lectures, and artist in residency programs, or to view other fiber art story quilts by Tina, visit www.TinaWilliamsBrewer.com.