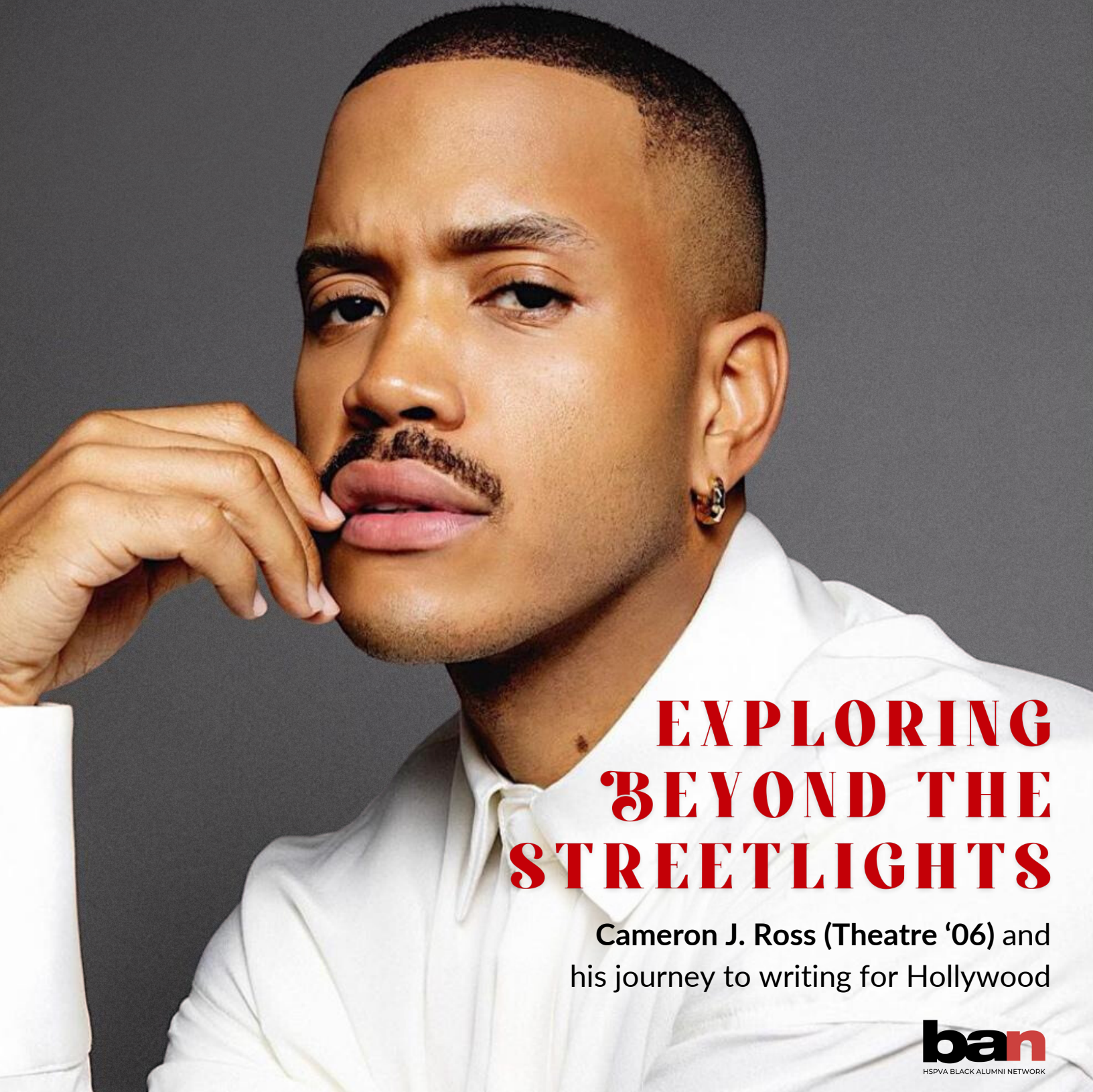


the
check-in.



**EXPLORING
BEYOND THE
STREETLIGHTS**

Cameron J. Ross (Theatre '06) and
his journey to writing for Hollywood

inside.

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3

A NOTE FROM
THE EDITOR

6

HAPPENINGS

4

THE COMMONS

8

CONVERSATION:
CAMERON J. ROSS

13

INTERLUDE

14

SPONSOR
SPOTLIGHT

15

CALL BOARD

17

CLASS NOTES

20

WHO WE ARE




ON THE COVER

Photo courtesy of Juan Veloz.

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WRITE: Share your thoughts on this issue and anything else PVA-related at hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com

Dear Friends,

By now, you've no doubt had your fill of Thanksgiving dinner, desserts, and discounted goods courtesy of Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday... but are you full? The holidays can be a joyful season for some and an isolating season for others. Regardless of your view, it's one of the best times to take stock of the things you're grateful for and the people who fill up your cup.



In keeping with one of the most popular Thanksgiving traditions, I would like to share a few of the things that I'm thankful for:

- **BAN's Executive Board:** It is truly a blessing to work alongside such dedicated and talented individuals who are not just great coworkers but also great friends.
- **Everyone who participated in our events this year:** Between the volunteers, performers, sponsors, students, and parents, it takes a lot of person-power to pull off a successful event—and next month's Holiday Jam will be our fifth event this year!
- **Olly Sholotan, Autumn Knight, Herman Matthews, Dr. Jan Taylor, and Cameron J. Ross:** These alumni took time out of their busy schedules to be interviewed for this year's newsletters, and openly shared their experiences with us to inspire, inform, and empower our network.
- **Alumni mentors:** HSPVA has always had exceptional teachers, but sometimes you just need someone to fill in the gaps. Thank you all for giving back to our students in this way.
- **Our Network:** You all make our work worthwhile and your support means the world to us.

Although this is the last official *Check-In* of the year, we invite you to continue checking in with us. Let us know when you have an upcoming show so we can help promote it. Let us know when you're feeling proud of an accomplishment so we can celebrate with you. If not us, check in with your loved ones. Check in with that friend you haven't heard from in a while. Check in with that barista you see almost every day at your local coffee shop. They need their cup filled too.

ALL THE BEST,

GABBY BYRD

SECRETARY & NEWSLETTER EDITOR
HSPVA BLACK ALUMNI NETWORK

**a note
from the
editor**

the commons.



What happened?

➔ 5th Anniversary Celebration

Last month, at the historic Eldorado Ballroom in Houston's Third Ward, we toasted to five years of unity, growth, empowerment, and artistic excellence! The evening included student and alumni performances, an unveiling of our 2024 scholarship fundraiser, a raffle, lite bites & beverages, and an exhibition of alumni artwork curated by Robert Hodge (Visual '98).

October 14, 2023

➔ Speed Mentor Match

In collaboration with Kinder HSPVA's Black Student Union, we held our 4th annual Speed Mentor Match followed by a Q&A panel. Thank you to all of the alumni mentors who participated in person and online!

If you're interested in becoming a mentor for our six-month Leadership Through Legacy Mentorship program which begins January 2024, please email us!

November 28, 2023



the commons.



➔ Giving Tuesday

Earlier this week, thanks to our generous community of supporters, we were able to raise almost \$600 this Giving Tuesday. For those who weren't able to participate on Tuesday, there's still time to make a tax deductible year-end gift. Make an impact today!

Access the campaign below or visit givebutter.com/BANgivingday23

November 28, 2023

[CLICK HERE](https://givebutter.com/BANgivingday23)

➔ Online Art Auction

Been looking to build your art collection? Not sure what to get the art lovers in your life this gift-giving season? Consider bidding on a piece in BAN's 5th Anniversary online art auction (a few of them are shown above!)

Access the auction below or visit givebutter.com/BAN5/auction

Deadline: December 31, 2023

[CLICK HERE](https://givebutter.com/BAN5/auction)

What's next?

➔ Holiday Jam

There's no place like home for the holidays. Catch up with old friends and meet a few new ones at our 6th Annual Holiday Jam. Doors open at 7pm.

Purchase tickets below or visit holidayjam2023.eventbrite.com

December 23, 2023

[CLICK HERE](https://holidayjam2023.eventbrite.com)

HSPVA BLACK ALUMNI NETWORK PRESENTS
SIXTH ANNUAL
HOLIDAY JAM
JOIN US FOR
MUSIC • CONNECTIONS • FOOD
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
HOLIDAYJAM2023.EVENTBRITE.COM
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2023
7PM - 9:30PM
1414 TEXAS AVENUE, HOUSTON, TX 77002
ban
HSPVA BLACK ALUMNI NETWORK

happenings.



Asa “Big Ace” Davis (Instrumental ‘12) and Morgan Morgan (the DJing duo known as Autobahn) will be performing at Cafe Erzulie in Brooklyn, NY alongside Quinette and Stonie Blue on **December 2** starting at 10pm. The event is part of the cafe’s “First Saturdays” series.

Visit cafeerzulie.com/events to RSVP

Monica Harris-Roach (Vocal ‘83) and **Elia Adams (Theater ‘19)** will be performing in Vincent Victoria’s *8 Notes to Heaven*, a show exploring the rivalry between Rick James and Prince. The show runs **December 7-17** at the Midtown Arts Center in Houston.

Purchase tickets at vincentvictoriapresents.com



DACAMERA Young Artist, pianist, and vocalist, **Brooke Wyatt (Jazz ‘18)** will be performing with her trio as part of the free “Sip and Share at the Square” series on **December 15** from 5-7pm at Lynn Wyatt Square.

Learn more at dacamera.com/free-events

DECEMBER 2023



Houston's Urban Nutcracker is a reimaging of the classic ballet with a multicultural twist incorporating various dance styles and music genres, and reflecting the city's vibrant cultural influences. **Marlene Watts (Dance '06)**, along with several current Kinder HSPVA students, will be performing in several numbers on **December 16 and 17** at the Stafford Centre in Houston. **Carmen Jones-Marigny (Dance '08)** has choreographed the Clare choreography for the show since it's inaugural production in 2018.

Purchase tickets at houstonurbannutcracker.org

Since 2018, **Carmen Jones-Marigny (Dance '06)** has also choreographed and danced for Houston rapper and founder of the Black Angels Collective, Tobe Nwigwe. "Heaven & Earth" is an otherworldly portrayal of the collective's inception and the making of a movement told through dance performance art. Several alumni will be performing at the **December 23** show at the Wortham Theater Center in Houston.

Purchase tickets at blackangelscollective.com and get 50% off select seats until 12/1 with the code: BACFRIDAY.

Read more about Jones-Marigny on page 18.



DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING HAPPENING SOON?

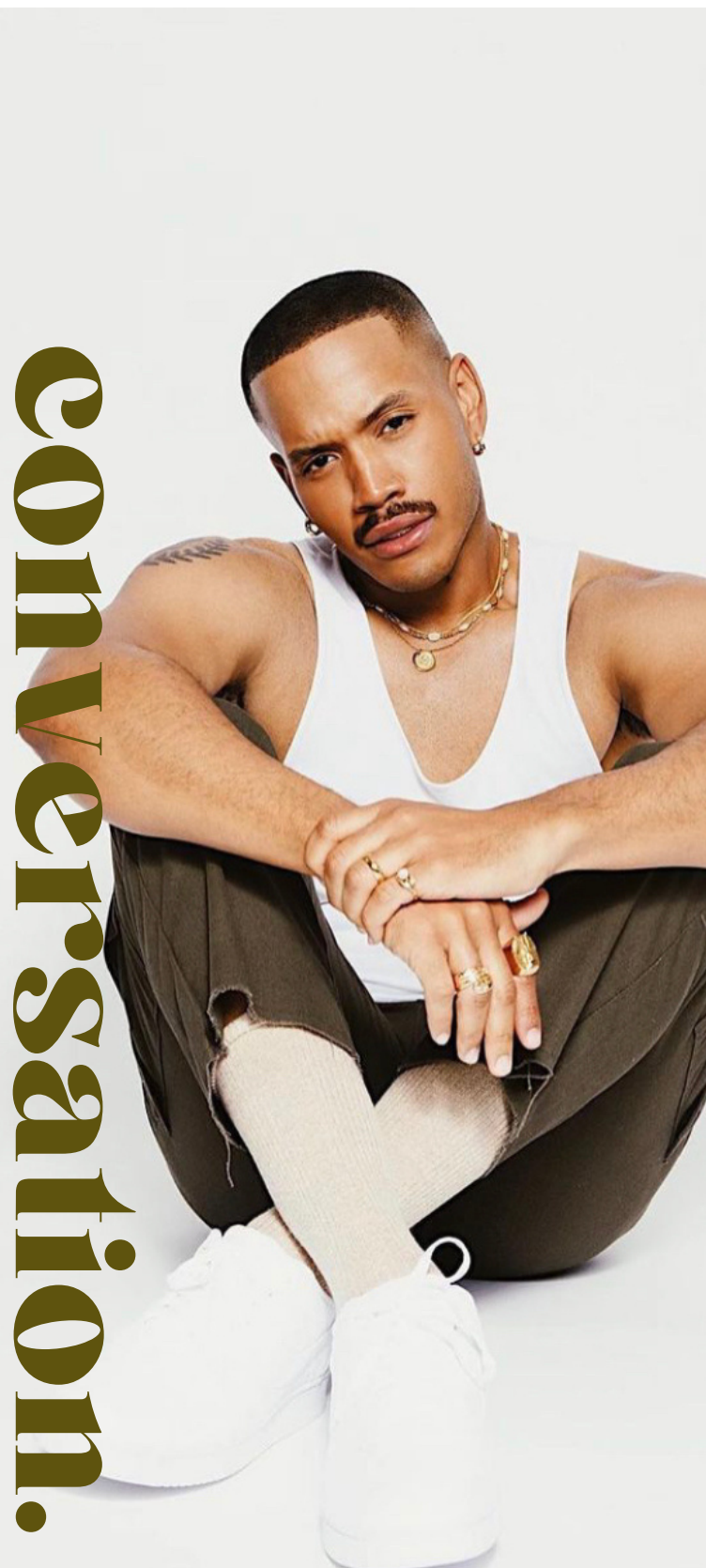
Let us know and we'll help spread the word! Email us at hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com or send us a DM on Instagram.

happenings.

Exploring Beyond the Streetlights

by Jordan Gonsalves

CONVERSATION.



It was a hot, summer Houston day in 1994. Outside, the buzzing of cicadas could be heard under the swelling sun. **Cameron J. Ross (Theatre '06)** was seven years old. He was going to the local movie theater on I-10 East and Federal Road with his mother, where the matinees were one dollar. They were going to see *Crooklyn*, Spike Lee's new coming-of-age film about a young Black girl named Troy and her life in 1970s Brooklyn. It was important to his mother that he be exposed to media that celebrated Black culture. At home, they watched shows like *A Different World* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* together as a family, with his father and his younger brother.

Little Cameron was excited to watch *Crooklyn*. He sat in the red cushioned movie theater seat with his favorite snack in hand: a tub of popcorn with a packet of M&Ms poured and mixed in. As the theater lights dimmed and the opening scenes began to play, Cameron was transfixed. The little kids playing hopscotch and double dutch in Brooklyn's neighborhood of Bed-Stuy were fascinating to him. He played those games with his friends too, but his playground in Houston was lined with green suburban lawns and tall streetlights. For Troy, the nine-year-old character in *Crooklyn*, the entire city of New York was her playground – and its streets, lined with bodegas and drag queens and loud neighbors. Her independence awakened something within him.

Cameron didn't know it then, but *Crooklyn* would have a big impact on him. For the first time, he could see a world outside of Houston, Texas. A world beyond the streetlights of his playground. He thought perhaps he would become a preacher or a doctor. But now, he could dream even bigger.

Cameron J. Ross is a multi-hyphenate: a TV writer, actor, and producer based in Hollywood – a dream that he has been working toward for the better part of a decade. He says the mission of his career is to express the full breadth of the Black experience in vivid imagery. In keeping with that mission, he won a Special Tony Award in 2021 for his work with an organization he founded called the Broadway Advocacy Coalition. The group’s goal is to ensure that the Broadway community plays a more impactful role in dismantling systemic racism. They were recognized by the Tony’s for their work which included a high-profile multi-day forum on race called “#BwayforBLM.” The forum examined how white supremacy has permeated the industry and how to approach racial equity. It was part of the national conversation around anti-Blackness in America following the murder of George Floyd in 2020.



Photo by Chris Sorensen

At the 74th Annual Tony Awards.

Ross has written for the shows, *The Summer I Turned Pretty* and *Gentefied* on Amazon Prime and Netflix, respectively. He also previously acted on Lena Waithe’s BET comedy series, *Boomerang*. Now, he’s developing a new series (taking place in Houston) with a major studio. If his new show is greenlit, he will become part of a small group of Black showrunners that comprise 5% of all showrunners in Hollywood.



Playing the role of Dre in Lena Waithe’s *Boomerang* series on BET.

For Ross, getting to this point in his career as a credited creator, writer, and executive producer has been a storied journey of surrendering to his imagination.

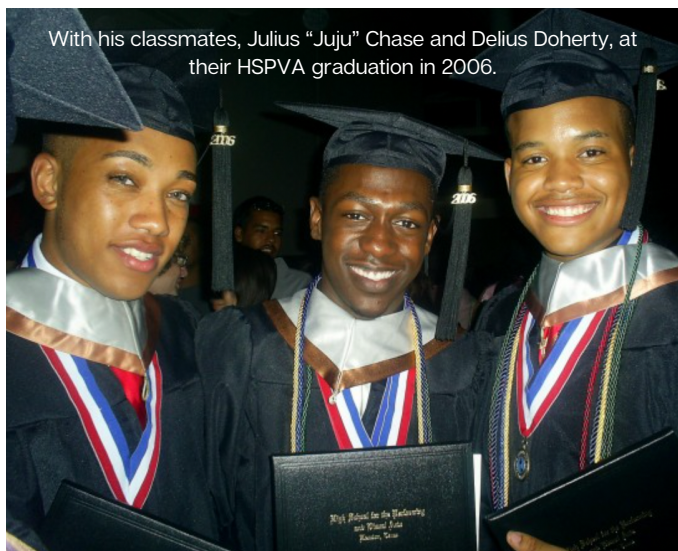


Sheron Ross, Cameron’s mother, was an actress, dancer, and the magnet coordinator for the arts program at Kashmere High School. She also coached Cameron’s performances. “She was my mom-ager,” Ross said. He remembers performing in his third grade talent show, singing “Sumthin’ Sumthin” by Maxwell. His mother choreographed the mid-song dance break: several 8-count movements of the eight year old doing “the bounce” and “raising the roof.” On stage, he felt free. The feeling of captivating his audience felt like volts of electricity pulsing through his young body.



As a young boy in Houston, TX.

One day, he saw a flier in the hallway to audition for the play, *Boys Next Door* by Tom Griffin. Ross was cast as the schizophrenic golf player, Barry. For the first time in years, that freeing feeling of being on stage rushed back to him, and he felt alive. He immediately asked his mother if it was too late to audition for HSPVA. Even though he was already into his freshman year, his mother managed to organize an audition, and he got a call back. "They felt like celebrities to me," Ross said.



"I remember seeing Black boys that seemed so free and confident in who they were, the way they spoke and celebrated themselves."

He got in. And the years that followed would change him. He would go on to meet classmates that would impact his career over a decade later.

Just like when he watched *Crooklyn*, HSPVA symbolized the life that was more than what he grew up knowing. He was exposed to new fashion and food and art. This caused tension between him and his father. He had become obsessed with Niko Niko's, the Greek restaurant that was five minutes away

from HSPVA's 4001 campus. It was a staple for many students who wanted tasty food after rehearsal or before a show. "Mom, can we have Greek food tonight?" Ross asked. His mother was a great cook, and usually made Creole food for dinner. "Why do you want to eat that?" chimed in Ross's father. He wanted his wife's mac & cheese with ham hock or Crock-Pot beef stew every night for dinner. He struggled to understand why his son didn't want that too. This friction became a dynamic in their relationship. One day, Ross convinced his father to try Niko Niko's. "He didn't say much when he tasted it. I knew he preferred my mom's red beans and rice, but he still tried it because it was important to me," Ross said. Ross's father came to respect that his son was becoming enriched with new cultures and new outlooks on life. Even though he was changing, he supported him.

It was at HSPVA where Ross was also first introduced to musical theatre, which he immediately fell in love with. He played the lead in the Theater Department's 2006 production of *Once on This Island*. Chasing his dream of moving to New York, he majored in musical theater at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA). His first New York bucket list item was to buy rush (discounted) tickets for *The Color Purple* on Broadway. He lined up by himself at 6am for the tickets that ended up being front row. It was one of the few productions on Broadway at the time that had an all-Black cast. It was a show where he could see himself playing a role, the role of Harpo. In fact, Ross even thought the actor playing Harpo that day, Brandon Victor Dixon, looked just like him. By



Speaking with Fox 2 Anchorwoman/Reporter Blair Ledet (Vocal '10) at HSPVA BAN's "What I Wish I Knew LIVE: An Edutainment Series" at their 2022 Homecoming event.

age 23, Ross would go on to play the role of *Harpo* in the national tour of *Oprah Winfrey Presents The Color Purple*. He remembered trying on his costume shoes for the first time. When he looked down at the inner sole of the boot, “Brandon Victor Dixon” was written in Sharpie.

After two exciting years touring with *The Color Purple*, Ross began auditioning for other roles, but they were never the perfect match. He longed for the kinds of rich, dynamic Black characters he saw on TV while growing up. His breaking point came when he got an audition for *Law & Order*. It was a big deal. “As a stage actor, once you gained a *Law and Order* credit, it was like you’re now a real TV actor, and I wanted that badge,” Ross said. The audition was for the role of “Thug 3.” He didn’t end up booking it, but there was a part of him that was relieved. “Auditioning for that role as a Black man was demoralizing,” Ross said. He was frustrated that many of the roles he was being offered were negative stereotypes of Black Americans.



In the national tour of *Oprah Winfrey Presents: The Color Purple*.



On the set of his short film, “They Come, They Go.”

He thought of the impact that Black cinema and TV had on him as a child. He remembered the feeling he got when he watched *Crooklyn*. Seeing that film as a young Black boy, he realized he was entitled to explore the endless opportunities and sceneries of life. For there to be more inspiring Black characters and stories, he had to create them. “I wanted to make something that defied Black stereotypes, yet was still fresh and real,” Ross said. His first unofficial script was a revamp of *A Different World* called “Hillman,” named after the fictional HBCU that the original characters attended. Ross became so committed to becoming a writer that he left New York for Los Angeles.

“I only had \$2,000 to my name, but I was going to make this happen,” Ross said.

He describes the next period of his life as the “struggle years.” Even though he was physically in LA, gaining entry into Hollywood writing rooms was a challenge. He didn’t know any TV executives, and he wasn’t a nepotism baby. To make ends meet, he took a marketing job at a beauty brand. Then, he worked as a production assistant at Viacom screening scripts from pitches. While the work wasn’t fulfilling, he was able to make valuable connections. He eventually decided that if he was going to be serious about his writing career, he needed to invest 100 percent of his effort into it. In 2019, he quit his job at Viacom and decided to put all of his energy into producing his very own short film titled “They Come, They Go.” He believed this would be his big break.

Low on cash and full of belief in himself, he moved out of his apartment and onto a friend’s couch in LA. That friend was Chaia Raibon (Theatre ‘06), one of Ross’s closest friends at HSPVA. During this time, most of

his wardrobe found a home in the backseat of his 2008 Blue Honda Accord that he fondly named “Blue Ivy.” Officially homeless, he invested all \$2,000 of his savings into his short film. To hire the production team, the cast, and the publicity team, he leveraged the connections he had made over the years. He invited everyone he knew to the Hollywood premiere.

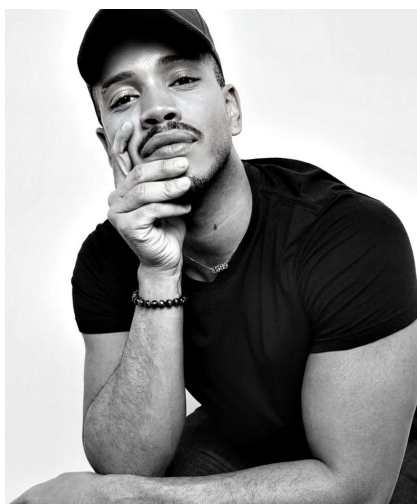
A few hours before the premiere, Blue Ivy broke down. Sweating with anxiety, he propped open the hood, checked the battery, and troubleshooted the engine. After what felt like an hour, the car engine eventually started. Relieved, he pulled his “director’s outfit” from the backseat, quickly put it on, and sped over to make it in time. The film was so well received, Ross was signed as a writer and actor to The Gersh Agency, one of the top Hollywood agencies in America. He was floored. He had bet everything on himself, and it was finally paying off. He was going to become a Hollywood writer.

Since 2020, Ross has written and acted on major network shows, and his HSPVA network has continued to help him along the way. It was actually his PVA classmate, Dime Davis (Theatre ‘04), who encouraged him to read for the role of Dre in BET’s *Boomerang*. She was one of the showrunners and co-executive producers of the show, made by Lena Waithe’s production company, Hillman Grad Productions.


For the last year and a half, Ross has been busy developing a TV series with a major studio. In his own words, it’s “a love letter to Houston and to my mom.” The pressure he put on himself to deliver for his community mounted as Hollywood writers went on strike this year.

“It was scary because I wasn’t sure if all my hard work over the years was just going to fall through,” Ross said.

His show, along with all others, was stalled during the strike. Ross was nervous about his development deal getting canceled. The writer’s strike lasted nearly five months. It centered around the future role of streaming and artificial intelligence – and their effects on writers and their pay. Ross remembers the moment it ended. He happened to be in Houston. “I was on the couch, in the home I grew up in, constantly refreshing my email.” When he got the message that the deal reached was even better than expected, he breathed a sigh of relief.



Now the show is back in development, and Ross is ecstatic. It has taken years of hard work for him to reach this point in his career. He can’t help but thank his younger self, the same little Cameron who watched *Crooklyn* at the dollar matinee theater in 1994. He remembers the moment when that film gave him the permission to dream of a life bigger than what was expected of him.

A man with a mustache, wearing a red baseball cap with a logo, a yellow ribbed knit vest over a dark shirt, and dark pants, is sitting in a yellow armchair. He is holding a microphone in his right hand and has his left hand raised. He is smiling and looking towards the right. The background is dark.

"HSPVA was the first place I saw kids being so fearless and confident in their individuality in a way that I had never experienced before."

"I remember thinking, What is this place?"

The quote has been edited for clarity.

in.terlude

CURATION OF THE *Craft*

1



ANGEL EYES - LAUREN DESBERG

2



GO THERE - SIR

3



CALLS FOR ACTION - HARISH RAGHAVAN

4



HERCULES - COMMON

5



CAN YOU FEEL THE MUSIC - KHALIL FONG

6



I WANT YOU - ROBERT GLASPER

7



I DON'T WANNA - AALIYAH

8



SHAKE IT OFF - MARIAH CAREY

9



SECRETS AND LIES - ALINE VIDA

10



ODYSSEY - FREELANCE

11



HIGHER - REGINA BELLE

12



INDUCTIVE REASONING - CHANS THOMAS

13



THE DREAMER - IMMANUEL WILKINS

13



UPDATE - ONE O'CLOCK LAB BAND

13



HOW INSENSITIVE - KELLYE GRAY



For this issue, we would like to recognize the writers, producers, and those behind the scenes of the songs you enjoy.

Check out this playlist and see if you can match an alum to the song.

Curated by Malcolm Jackson



scan playlist

sponsor spotlight.

Learn more about JP Morgan Chase and KCOH The Source, two of the sponsors that helped make The Wiz Emerald City Experience a success!

JP Morgan Chase & Co. has played a pivotal role in our community's success, reflecting their unwavering commitment to education and community enrichment. As a financial powerhouse, JP Morgan Chase provides a comprehensive suite of banking services, investment solutions, and financial expertise, positioning them at the forefront of industry innovation.

Beyond their financial prowess, JP Morgan Chase & Co. actively engages in community initiatives, exemplified by their dedicated support for the HSPVA Black Alumni Network Scholarship Fund. This noble endeavor underscores their commitment to fostering educational opportunities, particularly in the arts, for emerging talents. Through strategic partnerships and generous financial contributions, JP Morgan Chase ensures that the next generation receives the support needed to thrive academically and artistically.

The impact of JPMorgan Chase & Co. extends beyond the financial realm, embodying a profound dedication to social responsibility. Their involvement as a past event sponsor has not only elevated our experiences but also exemplified a corporate ethos that values education, diversity, and community empowerment. We express our heartfelt gratitude to JPMorgan Chase & Co. and La Tonya J. Johnson, Vice President, Houston Location Manager for being a steadfast partner in shaping a future where education serves as a beacon of hope and opportunity for all. Their enduring support exemplifies the transformative power of corporate responsibility, making a lasting impact on the lives of students and fostering a community where educational dreams can flourish.



1230 KCOH The Source



1230KCOH.COM

KCOH The Source is a historically significant commercial radio station in Houston, Texas and is one of the oldest African-American-owned radio stations in the United States. The station is known for its contributions to the African American community, providing a platform for discussions on social and political issues, as well as featuring diverse music genres.

Check out the livestream online at 1230kcoh.com

call board.

OPPORTUNITIES



HBCU GRADUATES: The Robert Frederick Smith Applied Public History Fellowship for HBCU graduates offers a two-year appointment providing advanced training and scholarly support in public history, museum management, outreach programming, and partnership building.

Deadline: December 15, 2023

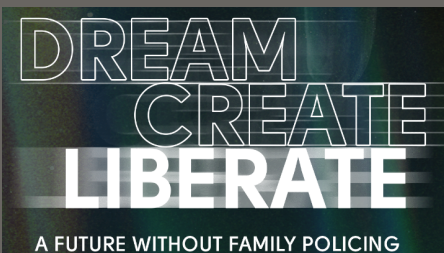
Visit nmaahc.si.edu/connect/strategic-partnerships or click the image to learn more.

VISUAL ARTISTS: Derwent, the internationally renowned fine art brand, invites artists to submit original works created in pencil for the Derwent Art Prize and exhibition. A total prize fund of £13,000 will be divided amongst the winners and approx. 80 artworks will be shown at the gallery@oxo in London.



Deadline: January 4, 2024

Learn more at derwent-artprize.com

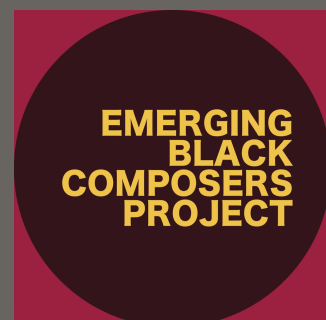


ARTISTS/WRITERS: upEND Movement invites you to submit Afrofuturist-inspired visual art, poetry, and short works of fiction for their first creative publication, *Dream, Create, Liberate: A Future Without Family Policing*. Applicants must be 18+ years of age. Awards range from \$500-\$1,000.

Deadline: January 31, 2024

Learn more at upendmovement.org/dream/

COMPOSERS: The San Francisco Conservatory of Music has opened applications for the third annual Emerging Black Composers Project. In addition to a \$15,000 commission, selected composers will receive mentorship and an opportunity to workshop their piece with an ensemble months before it is due. Black composers age 35 or younger who have completed a degree program in composition, music performance, or have equivalent experience are eligible to apply.



Deadline: February 13, 2024

Learn more at sfcmm.edu/discover/initiatives/

call board.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

BECOME A BAN VOLUNTEER!

We are looking for dedicated and reliable individuals to commit to the following volunteer roles:

- Event Staff
- Alumni Mentor
- BAN Intern

Sign up below or complete the form at tinyurl.com/BANvolunteers

[CLICK HERE](#)

Want to know more? Email us at hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com



Want to share information about job postings, casting notices, and scholarship opportunities?

WRITE US!

Want to promote your small business here in *The Check-In* newsletter?

WRITE US!

Want to donate concessions items for this year's Black History Show?

WRITE US!

class notes.

straight A's

a.cknowledgements



Dr. Chad Brawley (Instrumental '93)

Honored at Lemon-Lime Light Media's "First Class Men of Houston" Dinner. Brawley was 1 of 35 men distinguished as "leading in their careers, accomplishing goals, serving the community, and exuding class."

Lenora (Vocal '09), Tay Powers (Instrumental '00), and LeToya Lockett (Vocal*)

Performed at the much-anticipated Honeyland Festival, a celebration of Black expression and culture (*left*).

Brian Harris, Jr. (Vocal '18)

Selected by the New Canon Project for Rising Composers to create a new choral composition (*far left*).

Delandria Mills (Instrumental '93)

Accepted an honorary membership into the Epsilon Omega Chapter of Tau Beta Sigma National Honorary Band Sorority at Morgan State University (*middle*).

Ashley Tamar Davis (Vocal '98)

At *The Houston Sun's* 40th Anniversary Celebration, Davis received the publication's Entertainment Award. For her music supervision work on the *Trap Jazz* film, she was also nominated for a 2023 Hollywood Music Media Award (*right*).

Charles Jones (Vocal '00)

Contributed vocals for *The Color Purple* movie hitting theaters on Christmas Day (*middle of page*).

Ashley Hildreth (Theatre '13)

Roundabout Theatre Company's production of "Covenant" was recently chosen as *The New York Times* Critic Pick. Standby tickets available for sold out shows now through Dec. 17 (*left*).

Paul Cornish (Jazz '14)

Top three winner of the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Piano Competition (*bottom right*).

Dr. Aziza Glass (Vocal '06)

Recently opened CAWLM Veterinary Hospital in Houston's Third Ward (*above*).

Malcolm Jackson (Instrumental '10)

Performed with the Colour of Music Festival Orchestra in Sacramento, CA. Frank McComb (*right of above*).

Trevon Anderson (Dance '19)

Performed with KAROL G at the 2023 Billboard Music Awards (*bottom left*).

Andre Hayward (Jazz*)



special congratulations

At this year's DocFest Gala, trombonist **Andre Hayward** and drummer **Mark Simmons** were both inducted into the HSPVA Jazz Hall of Fame!

Mark Simmons (Jazz '93)



Black Angels Collective

MILAN FASHION WEEK

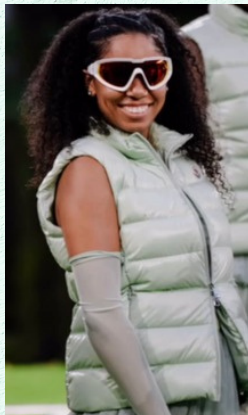


Image Courtesy of KBOPhotos

CARMEN JONES-MARIGNY
(DANCE '08)

HSPVA “Angels” in Moncler

Images courtesy of Ricardo C. Aguilera



NATALIA SILVANI
(THEATRE '13)



TYLER ARCHIE
(DANCE '15)



MAYA PETTY
(DANCE '08)

Meet the Choreographer:

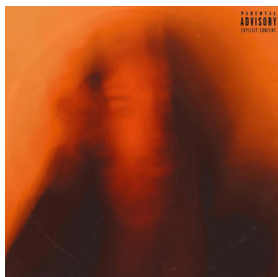
Carmen Jones-Marigny (Dance '08) Article by Tyler Archie

Local performer, ballet instructor, and newly-international choreographer, **Carmen Jones-Marigny**, has broken barriers for black and brown professional dancers in our community. She obtained her BFA in dance from Adelphi University on Long Island, NY then went on to study at The Ailey School.

Her continually growing list of accomplishments include dancing for Solange Knowles, Urban Souls Dance Company, The Motown and More Revue, and currently serving as a performer for Houston's own Tobe Nwigwe, leading the execution of excellence as the 'Black Angels Collective' Director and Choreographer, elegantly being the epitome of what it means to be Black Excellence.

After being personally requested to choreograph the Moncler Fashion show by Pharrell for his "Art of Terrain" collection, under the creative direction of Tobe Nwigwe, she artistically brought to life the vision, utilizing 20 professional dancers—most of which are Houston natives. Carmen continues to exceed expectations as she is now in her 5th consecutive season of choreographing for "Houston's Urban Nutcracker" and a major production for the "Black Angels Collective" debuting December 23, 2023.

a.lbums and other music news



Kiana Tenille (Vocal '20)

Her EP entitled *Midair* is streaming now on all platforms.



Piper Stringz (Vocal '19)

Be on the lookout for her next release, *Ain't Got Time*, in December.



Robert Glasper (Jazz '97)

In December, is streaming now, exclusively on Apple Music (left). His song "Back to Love" featuring SiR and Alex Isley is nominated for two 2024 GRAMMYS: Best R&B Song and Best R&B Performance.

Fernell Hogan (Theatre '15)

For his performance in the Tony Award-winning musical, *Kimberly Akimbo*, he and the cast were recently nominated by the GRAMMY Recording Academy for Best Musical Theater Album (left).



Dr. Seth Parker Woods (Instrumental '03)

2024 GRAMMY-nominated for Best Classical Solo on his *Difficult Grace* album (left).

Bryan-Michael Cox (Vocal '96)

DJ'ed the Soul Cypher and played piano for Muni Long's performance at the 2023 BET Soul Train Music Awards (left).

a.ppearances



Ashley Mayeux (Dance '07)

Will be performing with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater for its upcoming 65th Anniversary season. The season runs from Nov. 29 to Dec. 31 and is dedicated to the women of Ailey (left).



X'ene Sky (Instrumental '10)

X'ene's Witness, an opera by Justen Leroy which prominently features Sky, recently debuted at the Marciano Art Foundation in Los Angeles. Read the composer's words about X'ene in *Essence Magazine* (right).

Olly Sholotan (Theatre '15)

Catch him in the Atlantic Theater Company's production of *Buena Vista Social Club* now through January 2024 (right).



Marlon Taylor-Wiles (Dance '03)

Featured in the national ad campaign for Oura Ring, a smart ring for tracking fitness, stress, sleep, and health (right).



Robert Hodge (Visual '98)

His latest exhibition entitled "Extended Play" is now on view at the David Shelton Gallery in Houston.

Grantham Coleman (Theatre '08)

Catch him playing the role of Edwin Jones in the new western series, *Lawmen Bass Reeves* (streaming now, only on Paramount Plus) and the role of Ronnie Mathis in *Power Book III: Raising Kanan* (premiering Dec. 1 on the Starz app). Coleman also stars as Blyden in the *Rustin* film streaming now on Netflix (bottom).



Alana Bright (Theatre '20)

Co-directed and starred in *Wine West*, a dance short film (right).



Know an alum whose name should be listed here?

Email us at hspvablackalumninetwork@gmail.com or send us a direct message on Facebook or Instagram

who we are.

The purpose of the HSPVA Black Alumni Network is to connect Black alumni of The High School for Performing and Visual Arts, support alumni and current students' endeavors, and provide resources, scholarships, and networking opportunities to champion the next generation of HSPVA artists and professionals.

2023-24 creative team



DENISE WARD
President
Vocal '12



CAPRA FELLOWS
Vice-President
Theatre '11



GABBY BYRD
Secretary
Vocal '11



KIERRA MARTIN
Treasurer
Dance '13



MALCOLM JACKSON
Parliamentarian
Instrumental '10



HENRY ELLIS DAVIS
Technology Coordinator
Theatre '09



JORDAN WOODS
Communications Chair
Dance '13



EDWARD BELL
Engagement Chair
Vocal '10



TAYLAR LEWIS
Scholarship Chair
Theatre '11



ALDARIAN MAYES
Jazz '10



TAWANA HUNTER
Vocal '02



DJ CARR
Vocal '18



CHRISTIAN WARNER
Dance '12



REGINA MORGAN
Vocal '10



DANIELLE KING
Theatre '13



JORDAN GONSALVES
Vocal '13



TERRANCE TURNER
Instrumental '10



JHACOLE DUNN
Vocal '94



STEPHEN HUDSON
Vocal '03



**CHANDRA HENSON
WHITAKER**
Theatre '96