

Art + History

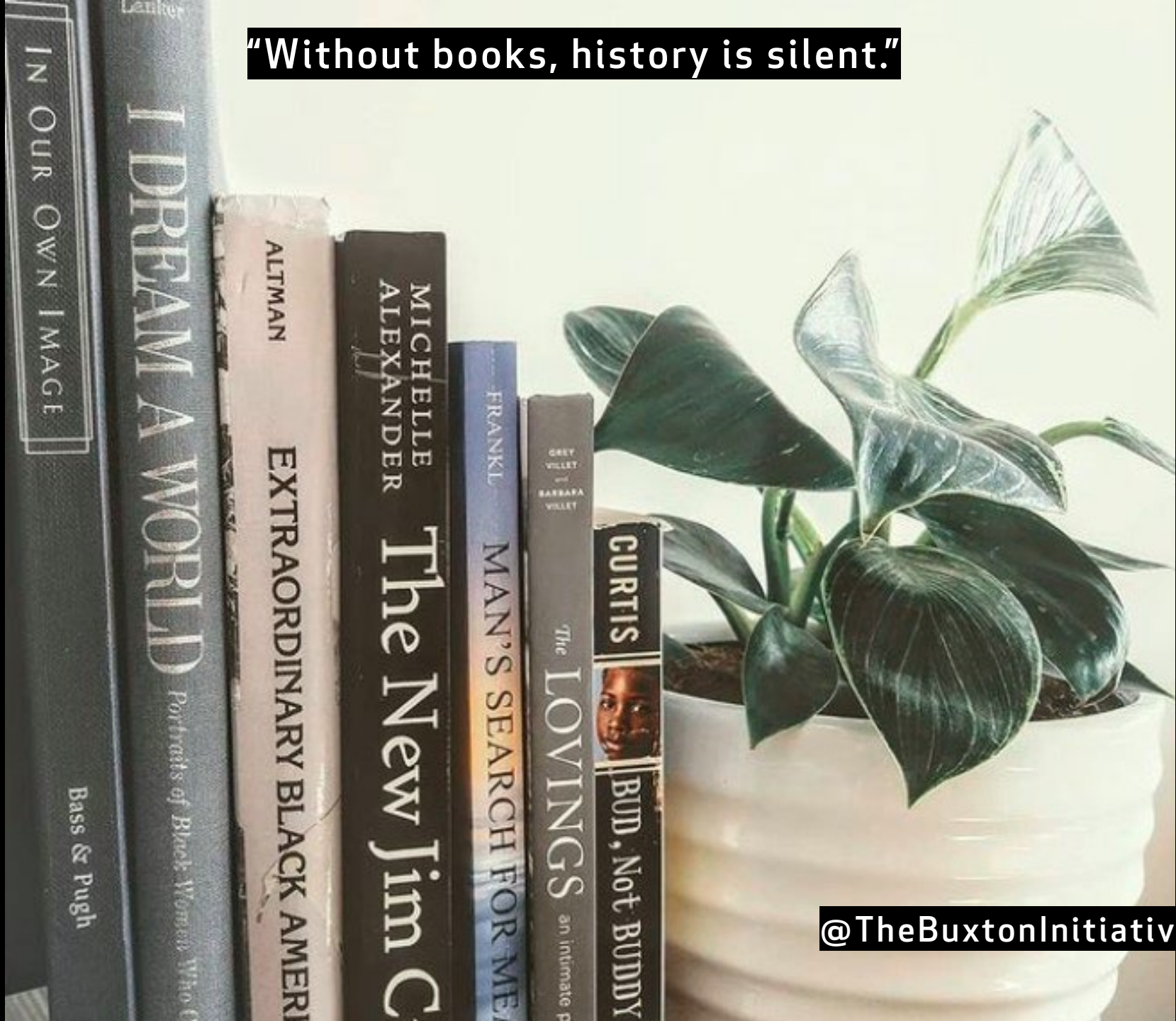


Des Moines Artist Jill Wells

Photo by Joe Cummings

@jillwellsart

"Without books, history is silent."



@TheBuxtonInitiative

Charlayne Hunter-Gault journalist, author, school desegregation pioneer

Charlayne Hunter-Gault

Born February 27, 1942, in Atlanta, Georgia

... been in the middle of a riot or the eye of a storm, you know it's very calm. It is. That is exactly what I felt the night of the riot...

...idents had been out there the night before. It was part of the resistance ritual. "Two, don't want to integrate." It sounded alien when it got louder and louder and louder. A brick came through the window. I realized and it was like, "Wow! There is a

get frightened about it until ten or fifteen

it is part of what helps me in my journalistic capacity to be detached but at the same time engaged.

... school in Atlanta, we had had hard-core laws were certainly not as well as that we were prepared to compete in was a minor miracle that the black

... difference. We didn't want to go to it—that wasn't it. It was those facilities

...ts between Hamilton [Holmes, the court] and me over our approach to the really much more interested in integration. I was much more interested in

... I ever thought it would be. I didn't tell us to be perfect, I guess. And I

You have to assess every situation that you're in and you have to decide, is this happening because I'm black? Is this happening because I'm a woman? Or is this happening because this is how it happens?

Whatever I have faced as a woman is probably a lot more subtle than what I have faced as a black person. We did find out, for example, at *The New York Times*, that women across the board were making less money than most men. And there was a successful lawsuit. But the same thing happened with blacks. And there was also a successful lawsuit.

I have never looked on being black or being a woman as a handicap and, honestly, I have used those things to my advantage, in the workplace particularly.

I have never apologized for doing black stories, being interested in black stories, and insisting that every institution that I work for report black stories.

I think the South has a much greater opportunity than the North to right some of the historic wrongs.

People have been lying in the North about race relations as long as I've been here. I haven't seen that many integrated schools, and yet I have seen a lot that are as segregated as the one I went to.

Integration has some negative by-products as well. It has helped to dilute some of the institutions where we have had this tremendous reservoir of confidence-building and strength—the black colleges, the churches, the family.

So there is good news and bad news. The good news is that you do begin to see some commitment to change. The bad news is that you've got to chip away at the concrete of institutional racism.

... challenges that we in the



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Barbara Jordan: lawyer, educator & politician



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Jewel Plummer Cobb: cell biologist/physiologist

Jewel Plummer Cobb

Born January 27, 1924, in Chicago, Illinois

When I was a sophomore in high school, I had a microscope given to me in a laboratory to look through, and that was it. I said, "That's for me, biology."

In my family I'm the third-generation. My son, an MD, is the fourth. My father graduated Cornell in 1908 and from Rush Medical School in Chicago. He was a doctor during the Depression and had his car at the transfer station when black folks came from the north and transferred in the streetcar. So they would go to the office and not have to pay any extra money for parking.

We went to the University of Michigan but I left because black students were not allowed to live in the dorms in 1941. Then I went to a black college and I graduated from Talladega.

At graduate school I did a lot of production research. I had thirty-six articles published in basic good stuff in cancer research.

It's a more sophisticated public that will get itself more often, but not among the poor. Health care is one of the tragedies still in America. We have nothing to take care of health care delivery. It's always the poor, but it has now impacted the middle class. I see myself as a biologist first—although I'm not much now—and an administrator secondly. When I was at Connecticut College, I took my research lab with me [from Sarah Lawrence College] to a research lab there, while doing my teaching. I was in the lab every morning before I went to my class and a little bit of teaching. I was doing the three

...of the condition of society that creates problems and for women. But I think there are ways anger can be turned into something positive. ... shock and nonacceptance and skepticism that

existed for me here in my own country was a "several times over" reaction." Because academia is typically white male, the president, the trustees, the faculty, the students, the staff, the president. The learning curve, the acceptance curve, the curve, and that's how I think racism is manifest.

We have what I would call educational genocide. I'm concerned about learning totally, but I'm concerned in the time of the more black kids are going into science. They are very few and far between. I'm glad that there are more black students in the laboratories than I was in the football field. I'd be happy.

We have a Division I-A football team with nearly five thousand members, about 80 percent of whom are black, and about 10 percent of them will graduate. It's very disappointing. We know what it's all about, we know statistics, we know the solution to the problem is to have a strong academic monitoring program in place. You cannot take top dancing and cheerleading for four years programs. That's not

When I realize my plan is to try to work in New York with some kind of statewide program linking a university with a school system to have what I call Saturday science schools, a whole network of them where youngsters in inner cities come on Saturdays from nine to twelve o'clock. They would learn more about being comfortable with math and their parents have to be involved. I know that it can work.

We all are aware that America was built on the backs of slaves. There is no debate about that. So I am really so concerned about the domination of the future of the children from this period. The great grandchildren and great-grand-grandchildren of those people that helped fund the country are being cast aside and left in the gutters to waste away and then to be blamed. That's what gets to me, blaming the victim.

I hope we can pay teachers the salaries that they deserve. It is absolutely fantastic that we have given such a poor status level to the most important shapers of human character and development we have in this country.



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Aletha Gibson: champion tennis player and professional golfer



Aletha Gibson

Born August 21, 1917, in Eden, North Carolina

When I was younger I just stayed away from home. All I did was make my ride the subway back and forth and walk various sections of New York. They called me a wayward child. When I did come home, I knew what to expect when my father came home. Not a question, a whip.

My parents were doing their best to raise me, but I just didn't fit in. When I was given a twelve-page pamphlet after winning Wimbledon in 1957, you could see no prouder parents of any child in life than my mother and father.

I learned paddle tennis with a friend of mine on 14th Street. She and I were competitors. The young boys who played on another court up the block hated when we and challenged me. And I accepted. I played it all—basketball, shuffleboard, badminton, volleyball. I just loved to play.

Bobby Walker was the first to help me. After seeing me play public tennis in forty-two or forty-three, he gave me my first tennis racket and introduced me to the Metropolitan Tennis Club up on Convent Avenue. The teaching pro at the club was Fred Johnson, the best his left arm in the west, and before it or not, he was the one who taught me the service toss and racket preparation. With one arm.

I played and practiced most of my life in Harlem on boards, on wood. Fastest court surface in the world. Balls none at you like bullets. That helped me when I played on other fast surfaces like grass at Wimbledon.

I knew that I was an unusual, talented girl through the grace of God. I didn't need to prove that to myself. I only wanted to prove it to my opponents.

I had played at Wimbledon in 1954. My next best match was scheduled for the Ladies' Crown Court. I made a bid to myself. Althen, you're not going to look around. You're not going to listen to any calls or remarks. All you are going to do is watch the tennis ball. I did that. I didn't acknowledge the referee's calls; whatever they said about line, I went the first way we hit. Then I looked around at the audience to see if they were. "How do you like that?" But then after that I lost the second set six-ten because I had no concentration.

After being the black champion of the American Tennis Association for ten consecutive years I felt I was ready. After that I was nobody could beat me.

I had the best serve in women's tennis. I had the best overhead in women's tennis. And I had the most killing net by in women's tennis.

You got to know your opponent. You got to know their strengths, their weaknesses, we know they were, what balls they don't like. Once I know that, they only see the ball at their weak points, not their strengths.

I was ruthless on the tennis court. Win at any cost. I became an athlete. If your first serve ain't good, I'll knock it down your throat. It just so happened that I had the talent to win at another level instead of being the winner on the tennis court.

Before the singles final at Wimbledon they came into the locker room to show us how to carry to the Queen which was introduced on Centre Court—which I did, I think very gracefully. Upon winning the championship, she came down on Centre Court to present me with the trophy. It was quite an honor.

Ellen Stewart: fashion designer and theatre producer

Ellen Stewart

Born November 2, 1929, in Alexandria, Louisiana

I came to New York to study fashion in 1956. I was the first Negro to be called "Miss" in Saks Fifth Avenue. Remember the elevator at that time was the highest position a colored person could get.

My boss at Saks Fifth Avenue tried to get trained American whites to work with me as the designer and she couldn't get them because white wouldn't let me be the boss. So who worked with me? I had a department of African people, thirteen of whom were Jewish women, people who had been with top countries in their countries and who had managed somehow to survive the Holocaust. Think about the universality. I had all these languages in my workroom.

The people in the building where I rented a little basement for La Mama were furious that a colored man living amongst them. Somebody called the Health Department and told them that prostitution was going on in the building and that "Negroes had entertained sixteen white men in five hours. Well, many young men were helping me, building, putting in those in, trying to make this little place into a room.

An elderly man came with a stenographer for my arrest. We'd kiss what we were about and he turned out to be a person on my level. So he says, "Listen, because a restaurant and a man get a divorce." He asked what our name was for the store. My nickname has always been "Mama," so he wrote it down and, laughing, said, "Well, if you're gonna call it that, call it La Mama." And that's how we got the name.

couldn't get critics to come and see our work down in that basement. I thought playwrights deserved to be published, and when I would send the plays, I didn't have critics and publishers would send them back and say we don't do without criticism. I decided I would take my plays to see get criticism there, and then come back and get them published.

that's why in September, 1965, on a student ship 42nd Street, sixteen people sat out with twenty-two plays. We had a barn and fields, wherever we could. We played for an hour. The critics wrote that they didn't know what we were writing about or what we were talking about, could not act, but they liked us. By my going, I've

doesn't leave me very much time to go and see what somebody else is doing.

I'm not interested in the play. I'm interested in the person. If the person looks, we do it. And if the play's a flop, I'm not bothered because I believe in that person.

In the beginning we used to pass the hat and whatever was in the hat was divided up by the writer. Sometimes the hat had something and then sometimes it didn't have anything.

The next, someone, and expenses I paid from my design job. I used to work for and six jobs, coming from one to the other because the more La Mama grew, the more money was needed. I worked myself into a state of exhaustion and the doctor said I had to give up one or the other. So I gave up the money and kept the theater.

The criticism that I get from foundations is that La Mama is an international theater and that we are not American. The criticism that I get from blacks is that La Mama is not a black theater. It was very difficult for me because, particularly in the sixties, La Mama was boycotted by blacks because I was not a black theater. My life was threatened. I think our politics is about five percent black after twenty-five years.

One writer, who was a La Mama playwright, got to be "minister of culture" for the black movement. I would see him and he wouldn't speak to me, but he'd always call me up late that night and say, "Mama, forgive me, I couldn't speak to you in front of my friend, but you're my mama." And he wasn't the only one. It was heavy, heavy.

I got invited to fly on my broom to all kinds of places to be with people to create, to make workshops. I went to Lebanon. La Mama's got a very strong following with the Druze, with the Maronites, with them all. La Mama's beloved in Syria. I worked with the Palestinians, the Kurds, got a huge contingent in Turkey. We have a big gold crown, an award from Korea. There's La Mama in Tokyo, in Melbourne. I slept out in the jungle with the pygmies. I've brought dancers from Zaire and Nigeria. There's an underground La Mama in Czechoslovakia. I've done extensive work in Romania. There's been a La Mama group in Yugoslavia since 1966. I've had the good fortune to go to these places and be welcome.



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James Baldwin:

novelist, playwright, essayist, poet and activist

**THE WORLD
IS BEFORE YOU, AND YOU
NEED NOT TAKE IT OR LEAVE
IT AS IT WAS WHEN YOU
CAME IN.**

James Baldwin

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Two Chains Gamble Sugar Plantation



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SHE + HER / THEY + THEM
made sure the family stayed together



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THE LOVINGS, An Intimate Portrait



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THE LOVINGS, An Intimate Portrait



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Bernard S. Cohen: civil liberties attorney



Attorneys Bernard S. Cohen and [Name] discuss the case with the Lovings.

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"The Couple That Rocked The Courts"

- *Ebony* article, 1967



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Zora Neale Hurston:
author, anthropologist and filmmaker

I have the nerve to walk my own way, however hard, in my search for reality, rather than climb upon the rattling wagon of wishful illusions.

Zora Neale Hurston

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Nelson Mandela: South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, political leader and philanthropist



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My heart, my soul, my siblings.



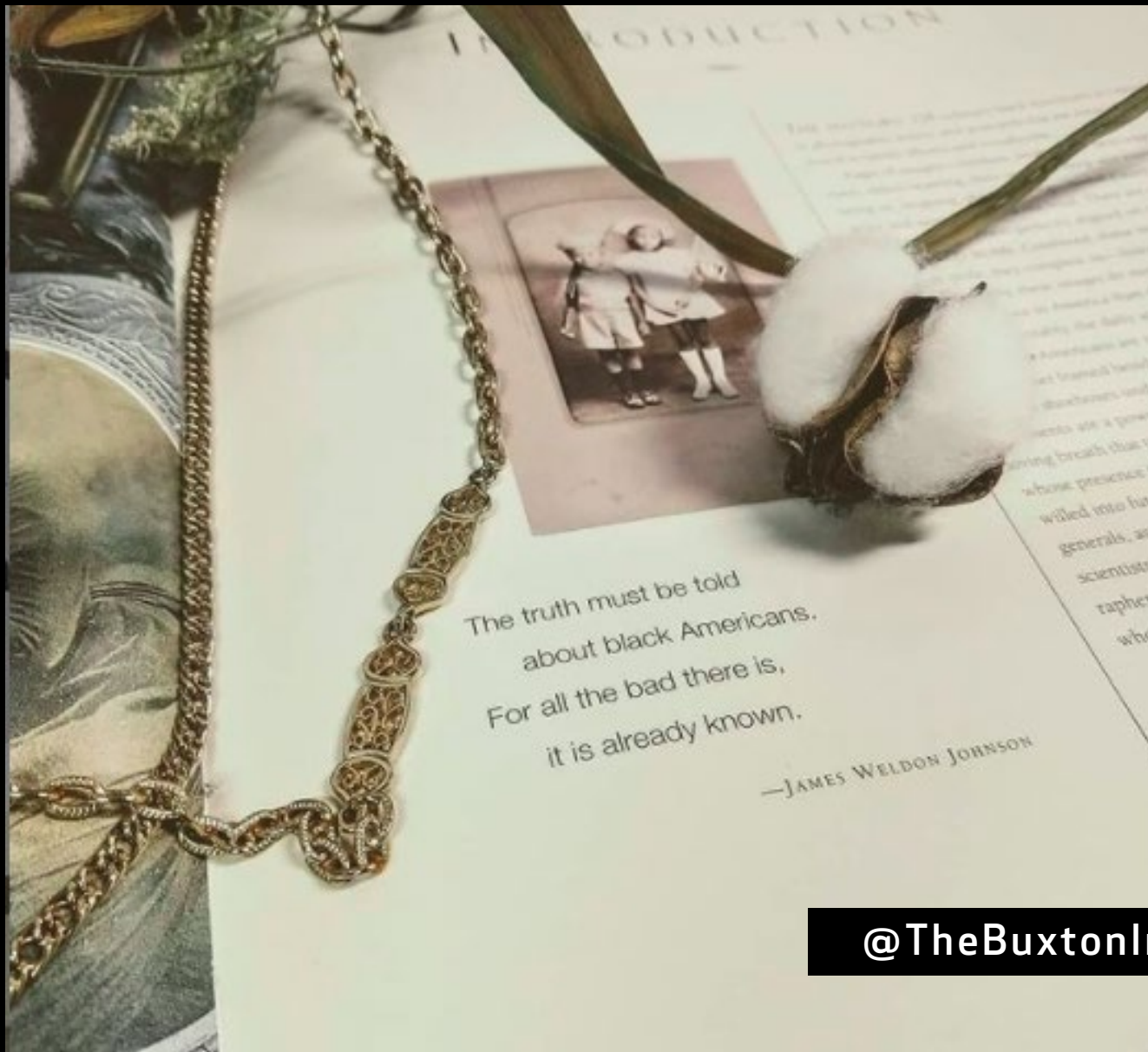
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In Our Own Image- Treasured African-American Traditions, Journeys and Icons



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James Weldon Johnson: poet, author and NAACP leader



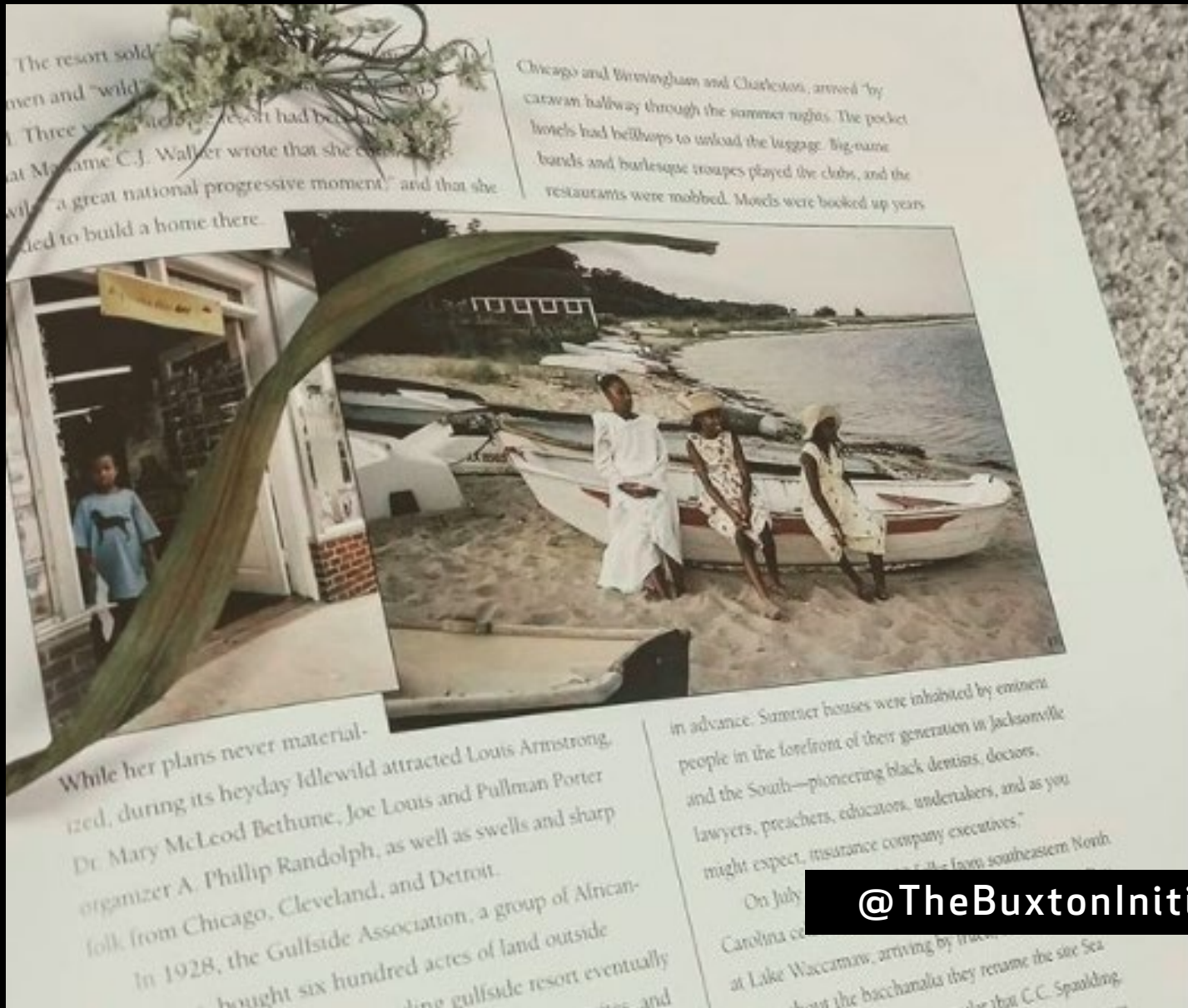
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Ellen Holly: television actress



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A.L. Lewis: built the American Beach, FL community in 1930's



The resort sold
men and "wild
Three years after the resort had been
at Madame C.J. Walker wrote that she
will "a great national progressive moment" and that she
decided to build a home there.

Chicago and Birmingham and Charleston, arrived "by
catamaran halfway through the summer nights. The pocket
hotels had bellhops to unload the luggage. Big-name
bands and burlesque troupes played the clubs, and the
restaurants were mobbed. Motels were booked up years



While her plans never material-
ized, during its heyday Idlewild attracted Louis Armstrong,
Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, Joe Louis and Pullman Porter
organizer A. Phillip Randolph, as well as swells and sharp
folk from Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit.
In 1928, the Gullside Association, a group of African-
Americans, bought six hundred acres of land outside
the gulfside resort eventually
and

in advance. Summer houses were inhabited by eminent
people in the forefront of their generation in Jacksonville
and the South—pioneering black dentists, doctors,
lawyers, preachers, educators, undertakers, and as you
might expect, insurance company executives."

On July
Carolina co
at Lake Waccamaw, arriving by truck
about the bacchanalia they rename the site Sea
for that C.C. Spaulding,

[@TheBuxtonInitiative](https://www.thebuxtoninitiative.com)

Jill Wells' Suggested Resources



The screenshot shows the Ames Public Library website. At the top, the URL is amespubliclibrary.org. The navigation bar includes links for 'Using the Library', 'Books, Movies & More', 'Events & News', 'Learn & Explore', and 'Get Involved'. A search bar is present with the text 'Search books, videos, etc.' and a 'SEARCH THE CATALOG' button. The main content area features a section titled 'MORE THAN MONOLITHS' with a carousel of book covers: 'LOVECRAFT COUNTRY' by Matt Ruff, 'THE ART OF WAR' by Sun Tzu, 'BECOMING' by Michelle Obama, 'Vincent's Gardens' by Jennifer Hodgson, and 'IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK' by James Baldwin. Below this is an 'UPCOMING EVENTS' section with the following details:

Date	Event Name	Time	Age Group
MAY 1-30	More Than Monoliths Display	All Day 5/1 - 5/30	Teens, Adults
MAY 17-21	Science in the City	All Day 5/17 - 5/21	Family
MAY 18 TUE	Storytime Online	10:00am - 10:30am	Family
MAY 18 TUE	Walk-In COVID-19 Vaccinations	10:00am - 3:00pm	Adults
MAY 19 WED	Genealogy Plus	10:00am - 12:00pm	Adults
MAY 20 THU	Teen Advisory Group (TAG)	7:00pm - 8:30pm	Teens

@amespl.org/MoreThanMonoliths

Jill Wells' Suggested Resources



@amespl.org/MoreThanMonoliths

**MORE
THAN
MONO
LITHS**

Ebere Agwuncha

Thurs, June 24, 7pm

via zoom

Eulanda Sanders

Thurs, July 22, 7pm

via zoom

Group Conversation

Sat, Aug 21, 1pm

Hybrid



ARTIST TALKS
with CAMERON GRAY



Iron Sharpens Iron
Oil on canvas
Current location:
Polk County Jail West Wing

@jillwellsart



Birds of a feather

Oil + Mixed Media Collage on
canvas

Current location: Artist Studio

@jillwellsart



Be The Change | Disability Rights Iowa Mural, detail

Oil on interior wall + paper interactive tactile rendition of mural

Current location:

666 Walnut St, Des Moines, IA 50309

prints available upon request

@jillwellsart

Be the Change | Disability Rights Iowa mural



@jillwellsart

Be the Change | Disability Rights Iowa mural



@jillwellsart

Be the Change | Disability Rights Iowa mural



@jillwellsart



Stand Tall

Oil on canvas

Current location: Artist Studio

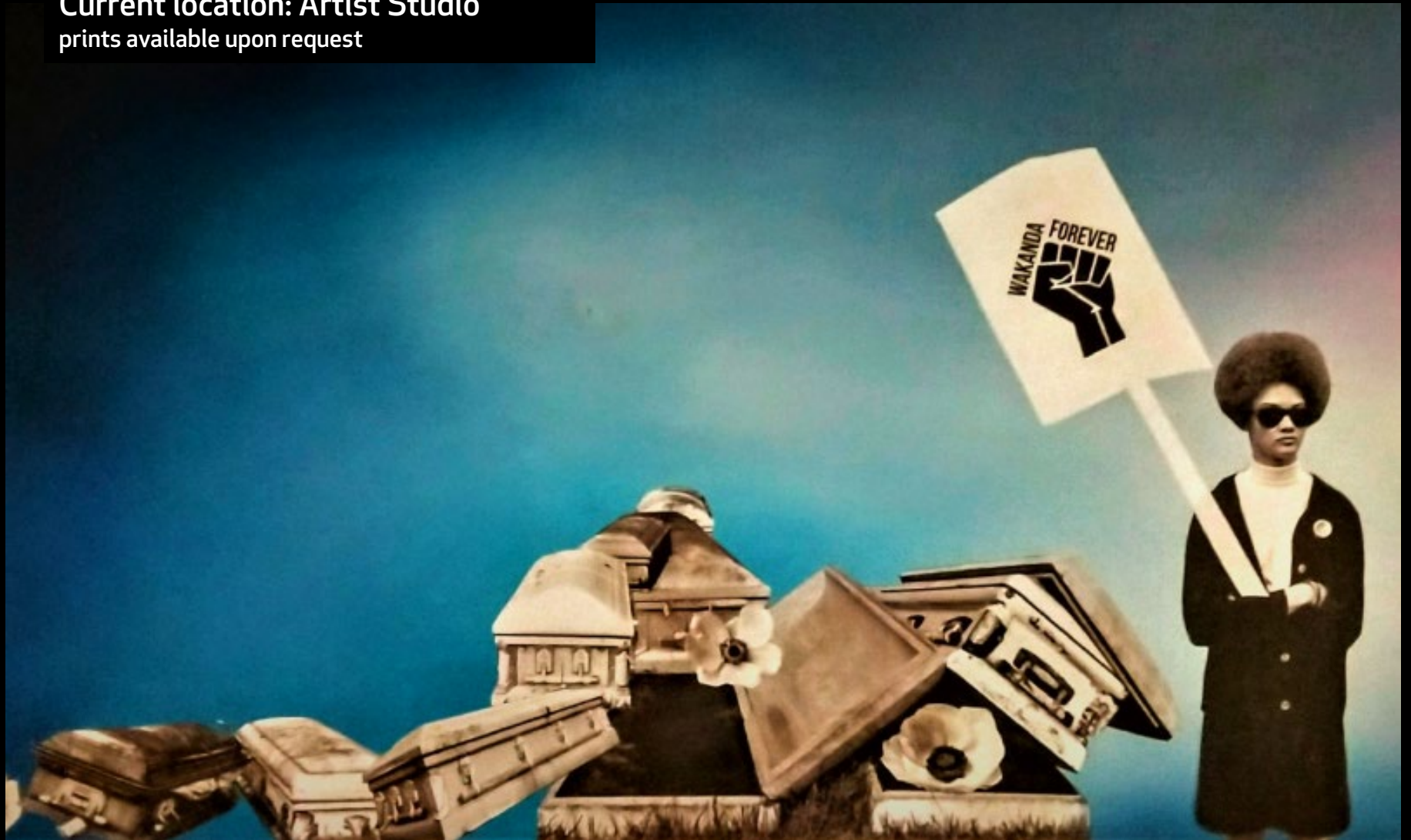
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The Spirit Lives On

Oil + Mixed Media Collage on canvas

Current location: Artist Studio

prints available upon request



@jillwellsart



What We Will Overcome

Oil + Mixed Media Collage on canvas
Current location: Artist Studio

prints available upon request

@jillwellsart



Penny Saved, Penny Earned | E Pluribus Unum

Oil + Mixed Media on canvas
Current location: Artist Studio

prints available upon request

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A Warm Place

Oil on canvas

Current location: Private Collector





Arms of an Angel

Oil on canvas

Current location: Artist Private Collection

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TedX Talk: The Power of Public Art



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Evelyn K Davis Center, May 2021

1711 7th Street Des Moines Iowa



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