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Making the Invisible Visible

It is with great excitement that I announce the opening of an awesome translation of research through art.

By JéWana Grier-McEachin, Executive Director

Photo: Pro16 Productions

On September 6, UNC Asheville, ABIPA, and other partners launched a new exhibit, Black in Black on Black: Making the Invisible Visible, in the John Cram Partner Gallery at the Center for Craft. The exhibition is a visual conversation about the lives and contributions of Black/African American communities in Western North Carolina (WNC).

Bringing together stunning artwork and visual design by WNC-based artists (Ann Miller Woodford, Ronda BIRTHA, Viola Spells, and Reggie Tidwell) with social science data and stories, this exhibit invites audiences into an often invisible history of our region. As Woodford states, "My emphasis has been on people who have dedicated their lives to humanity, but have been overlooked, ignored, and often forgotten."

Deeply personal art is integrated with charts and quotes from the Heart of Health: Race, Place, and Faith in Western North Carolina project. Heart of Health is a three-year community-participatory research study that seeks to better understand the role and impact of race and racism on health through secondary data analyses and interviews. It is co-led by researchers from UNC Asheville, ABIPA, Sparrow Research, and community partners from around WNC.

"One of our first findings was that much of the data on African Americans and drivers of health and inequities, for example, land and business ownership, have been suppressed due to small populations or other reasons. This collaborative research seeks to highlight

and encourage responsible collection and use of data and stories," said Ameena Batada, UNC Asheville professor of health and wellness, and one of the co-leads on the Heart of Health project.

Visitors to the exhibit, both in-person and online, are invited to a multisensory and interactive experience, including paintings, photographs, narrative text, quotes and graphics, sculptural pieces, digital data visualization, and music. The exhibit also invites visitors to learn about the ways in which African Americans and others in WNC are working to reduce racism and build community through grassroots and organizational efforts.

JéWana Grier McEachin, executive director of ABIPA, co-lead on the Heart of Health project, and programming chair of exhibit partner The Links, Incorporated, remarked, "The gathering of data and translation of research through Black in Black on Black has been influenced by the connection of the artists, research team, and community advisory board. This sort of six degrees of separation between the research exhibit and active change agents through organizations in Western North Carolina is impactful and invaluable."

Black in Black on Black: Making the Invisible Visible will be on display in the John Cram Partner Gallery at the Center for Craft, located at 67 Broadway Street in Asheville, from September 6 through January 7, 2022. A virtual tour will be offered online.

Learn more about the exhibit, artists, and research at heartofhealthwnc.wordpress.com, annstree.com, thinlyfoldedegg.com, facebook.com/ZenobiaStudio, and pro16productions.com.



Ann Miller Woodford



Reggie Tidwell



Ronda BIRTHA



Viola Spells



BLACK in BLACK on BLACK

Support for this project was provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interdisciplinary Research Leaders program.

Interdisciplinary Research Leaders is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation led by the University of Minnesota.

Phillip Cooper: Recovering Out Loud!

I started smoking marijuana at the age of 13.

I began selling drugs in high school as well as experimenting with harder drugs.

I dropped out of college due to my addiction and committed serious crimes that landed me in prison for three and a half years. While in prison, I rededicated my life to Christ and got active in 12 Step Meetings.

Upon release from prison, I continued my routine with my church and recovery meetings. I am still here today, fighting for people and *recovering out loud!*

On January 16, 2022, I will have 13 years clean.



Kelly White, MHE, MPH. Photo: Pro16 Productions

Recovery

by Kelly White, MHE, MPH,
ABIPA Health Education Program Manager

Recovery is for everyone: every person, every family, every community
~ SAMHSA.gov



The month of September brings with it the awareness for recovery and celebration of recovery in all forms. Recently we have had many deaths due to overdose from drugs in our area. But, there are many who have been able to seek the help they need to make a full recovery. They have returned to the community to help others who are dealing with a drug or alcohol addiction—people who just need an ounce of support and someone to be there when times are tough.

What most people do not realize, or may not

understand, is that addiction is not just about taking and seeking drugs. Studies have shown that mental health plays a large role in why most begin down the path to drug use.

How do we learn, as a community, to take away the stigma from those who are suffering from an addiction as well as those who are years into their recovery?

Begin by learning more about substance abuse and the foundation it is built on. Remember that mental health can be a preface, so be thoughtful in how you approach the topic.

Consider donating your time and volunteering at some of the local meetings and events. This can allow you time to speak with others and find out how you can be of service.

Lastly, spread awareness as well as supporting information about recovery and what it means. This could include a celebration of life for those you may know who are in recovery.

We are reminded, during recovery month and beyond, that no one has to recover alone, regardless of the journey you walk, and, that we are all in this together.

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Asheville Buncombe Institute of Parity Achievement

ABIPA promotes economic, social, and healthy parity achievement for African Americans and other underserved populations in Buncombe County through advocacy, education, research, and community partnerships.

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