
J-grad recognized for social justice work; another joins Calif. social justice org.

Charles E. Simmons, '70, and wife Sandra were honored by Wayne State University in January for their work with the [Hush House](#), a Detroit residence converted into a museum and community center that focuses on poverty and social justice.



Dani McClain, '06, the first Phyl Garland/BA Network scholar, joined the online advocacy group [ColorOfChange.org](#), based in Oakland, Calif., at the end of 2008. She was previously a reporter with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. "I like it so far," McClain told us. "I'm doing research and writing on important issues here, but it's a change to be using adjectives and to telling readers what to think after three years of having rhetoric stripped from my style."

Detroit News sports columnist **Rob Parker, '88**, took a buyout from the newspaper at the end of 2008. Buyouts have been common with much of the newspaper industry in demolition mode. In Parker's case, was he forced out because of the [type of question](#) he put to the Detroit Lions coach, leader of the first 0-16 NFL team? On Dec. 21, Parker asked Rod Marinelli whether he wished his daughter had married a better defensive coordinator. Protests followed after video of the news conference exchange was aired. Parker is also a commentator on ESPN.



Garland fund raising inches closer to finish line

At the end of 2008, \$68,918.50 had been raised to create the Phyllis T. Garland/Black Alumni Network endowed scholarship, reported Sharon Meiri Fox of the J-school development office.



The amount did not include a \$7,500 anonymous matching gift. Added that pushes the total to \$76,418 and leaves the Garland fund \$23,582 short of becoming a sustaining scholarship fund. Jessica Hopper, a student in the current class, is the fourth winner of a \$5,000 scholarship since 2005.

Remember, gifts to the fund can be matched, so \$25 and \$50 contributions become enhanced \$50 and \$100 gifts. Send gifts, payable to Columbia University and noting "Phyllis T. Garland Scholarship" in the lower left to

Columbia University GSJ, 2950 Broadway, New York, NY 10027. Attention: Jodi Lipper or Sharon M. Fox. [Photo of Garland, 1935-2006]

Evocateur

for Eartha Kitt

Akua Lezli Hope, J-'77

Your purr was always there
 How catwoman, a role you made your own
 was inhabited as shape shifter transmutes flesh
 making us believe along
 that this human is something else
 and more

your fluidity sprung from
 being beaten
 metal made malleable early
 after your forging in rough nameless times
 unfathered streets and pass along mothers
 poorly shod feet and indifferent others

What did Orson Welles taste in your blood
 in your bitten lip?
 holding you close was not enough
 kissing did not teach
 his hungry genius yearned to know
 your secret
 only in some bloodletting
 might he glimpse the mystery
 of your transformative magics

Not just the must of recreation, lemons into aid
 where is sugar?
 where is water?
 there was only this blood still wanting
 with a community of riches
 but no family to focus your light

How some light must blaze brighter
 to not be extinguished
 nameless times of foodlessness,
 ragged, bare, singular in want when you can see
 through windows of great stores of promise

When along wide Harlem boulevards
 that concrete Mecca, Black folk did promenade,
 hatted, coiffed, well shod
 as from cabarets, clubs, bars,
 distant tinkles of laughter, joy, music
 suggest you take this in and envision
 yourself fabled, fabulous
 so you carve your talent
 with movement, with work,
 with your own fanned flame
 your own coals carried in singed heart

Continued on next page



Eartha Kitt photo, tvoneblogs.com

Now your name is known, held dear
Eartha, as your voice held us
curled us around you,
spun us up your erotic ferocity
velvet whips, your recitative trill
cajoled, commanded, electric
to watch as you simmered or blazed in every camera angle
whenever you were there, you, we watched
and then these late, later years
teaching dance, passing your body's gift on,
your effort to give, transfer,
as all great ones do
shamans loving us into better selves
dancing us, singing us anew



*The writer and artist is
based in Corning, N.Y.*

Appreciation: Mark Griffith, 48, CBS News and NABJ board

Mark Griffith served the National Association of Black Journalists and the journalism craft with distinction, and good cheer. He died [Dec. 18](#) at age 48.

My lasting impression of Griffith was his preparation and passionate attention to detail during an informal yet lively discussion in the wee hours of an NABJ board weekend in New Orleans in winter 1989.

The stakes were high. New York was getting ready to host its first – and to date only – NABJ convention. The meeting that summer was a record success.

Griffith's fingerprints are permanently etched into that milestone event.

As colleagues mourned Griffith's passing, this common thread emerged: He treated everyone with dignity and respect, people said, whether the person was a marquee media star, journeyman pro, or stressed yet aspiring student trying to find his or her way.

Griffith was always there to help and encourage.

There's a saying that the true measure of a man is what he does out of public view. Mark Griffith probably thought he planted seeds and cultivated crops of talented journalists privately. We could not help but notice however.

Rest in peace brother. – *Wayne Dawkins*

'The Old Man and the Storm,' *Frontline* documentary by J-prof.

Six months after Hurricane Katrina slammed into New Orleans, producer **June Cross**, a professor at Columbia Journalism School, came across 82-year-old Herbert Gettridge working alone on his home in the lower Ninth Ward, a neighborhood devastated when the levees broke in August 2005.

Over the next two years, Cross would document the story of the extended Gettridge clan – an African-American family with deep roots in New Orleans – as they struggled to rebuild their homes and their lives. Their efforts would be deeply affected by larger decisions about urban planning, public health, and the insurance industry, by the decisions of policymakers about federal funding for rebuilding the Gulf, and state and city plans for dispersing those monies.

The [moving personal story](#) of Gettridge and his family reveals the human cost of this tragedy, the continued inadequacies of government's response in the aftermath of Katrina, and how race, class, and politics have affected the attempts to rebuild this American city.

Visit www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline

Optimism, despite a distressed vocation

Black journalists pre-inauguration celebration

On Jan. 19, 300 guests squeezed into every nook and cranny of the four story National Visionary Leadership Project house. [Read the rest of the [Dawkins' dispatch](#)] Also, [Shown the way, Obama journeys on, Betty Winston Baye, '80](#), The Courier-Journal, Louisville.

The **Black Alumni Network** of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism was founded in May 1980 and since July the group has published a monthly newsletter. The BA Newsletter's mission is to keep people connected. We publish job changes and moves, news about books and films published or produced by alumni, and family milestones. And of course we keep alumni connected to news from the Columbia GSJ. Log on to our Web site at www.jrn.columbia.edu/alumni/services/ban/ or see our link on the home page of www.blackjournalist.com Wayne J. Dawkins – **editor**, Betty Winston Baye, Kip Branch, Kissette Bundy, Angela Chatman, Cheryl Devall, Dan Holly, Keith Rushing, **contributing editors** E-mail tips, comments, suggestions to wdawk69643@aol.com

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