

Celebrating Food, Art & Culture

# African American Heritage

Diary of Jay-Z: Water for Life

West Coast Soul Surfing

The Robinson Tradition Lives

Chef Abdullah Is Stuck on Sweets

The Morgan Library Reopens  
With a Stellar Review



"On Stage" by Marie Johnson Calloway

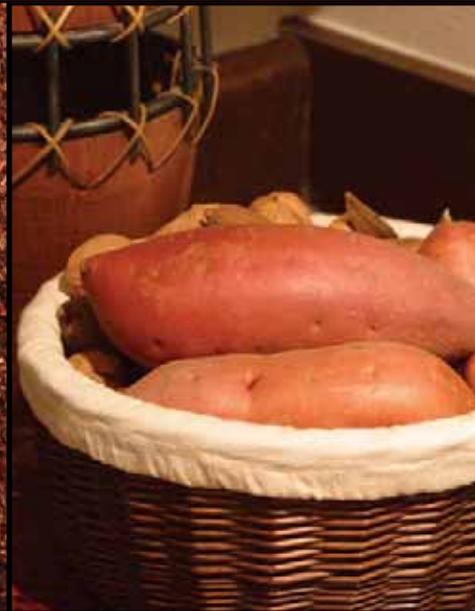


Photo by Paula Stratton



UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras

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## World Water Day 2007

On Thursday, March 22, will you take a moment to think about water? Not the bottled water you'll be putting in your refrigerator or runner's flask after the next trip to the market, but the millions of people who are seriously affected



Jay-Z talks about his concern for safe water resources at a United Nations press conference.

each day by water scarcity, water-borne diseases, and water-related natural disasters. "Millions of people around the world face water shortages and a daily struggle to secure safe water for their basic needs," stated Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan. "Millions of children continue to die every year from preventable water-borne diseases ... and all too regularly, drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, exacerbating hunger and malnutrition."

March 22 is World Water Day, an event that is part of the United Nations' Millennium

Declaration and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The goals of the declaration, agreed to by all 191 member states, are the world wide reduction of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. The effort aims to reduce, by half, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by the year 2015.

In the struggle to manage the world's water resources, African Americans are taking leadership positions, a fact demonstrated by a recent collaboration of the United Nations, MTV and Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter, president of Def Jam Records. Last November, MTV broadcast *Diary of Jay-Z: Water for Life*, a documentary of Jay-Z's international concert tour throughout water-critical regions. As he was followed by MTV cameras, Jay-Z walked the streets



In Zambia, children drink and play with water from a Mark II handpump financed by UNICEF at Nthombimbi Primary School, a community school 40 km from the eastern town of Chipata. © UNICEF/HQ96-1166/GIACOMO PIROZZI

and met hundreds of people who have little access to safe drinking water. "After hearing and reading some of the startling statistics about the lack of clean water, I realized that I needed to bring attention to this issue," Jay-Z stated before the tour. "How could I be out there and not do anything?" The documentary part of the MTV network's yearlong campaign to engage young people in the prevention of global warming.

On *Unity's* cover is Jay-Z (left), Annan (center), and MTV President Christina Norman (right).

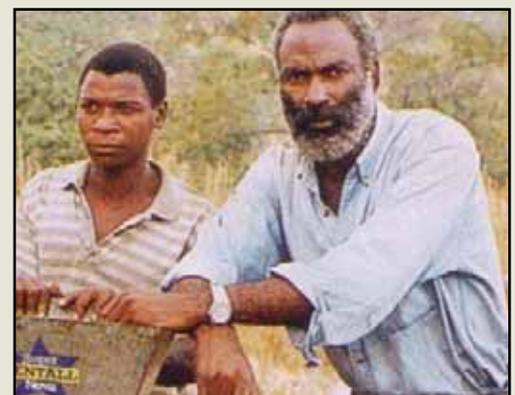
## I'll Have What He's Drinking

What does it take for someone to find the courage to forgo every known comfort in life and pursue what is in their heart? For David Robinson, the answer might be in the coffee he drinks. Robinson's home in Tanzania, a 280-acre farm near Mount Kilimanjaro, is in every way removed from the home of his youth — the 'burbs of Stamford, Conn. He is the only surviving son of baseball's Jackie Robinson, but his journey to advance the lives of African Americans and Africans isn't anything like his dad's. Some would say, however, that his intense passion bears amazing similarities.

Writers visiting Robinson's home (called Sweet Unity Farms) can't escape writing about the long, difficult trip to the bush country, or the fact that Robinson lives with no running water and only solar electricity. What makes no sense to them or their readers makes perfect sense to Robinson. "We are a people that have been 500 years in America, but we have been 10,000 years in a society in Africa. The vast majority

of my ancestral bones are in Africa," explained Robinson during an interview with Bob Costas. He took an African wife in a traditionally arranged marriage and now speaks Swahili, the kind that negotiates easily with stubborn street vendors at the local fish market.

Regaining touch with his heritage is only a part of Robinson's story. Sweet Unity is also about African farmers regaining equity in the second-most traded commodity behind oil. In a multi-billion dollar industry where the end product is often delivered in pricey, upscale, WiFi'd coffee houses, farmers growing the beans often squeak by from one harvest to the next, and they live in some of the world's poorest countries. To return equity to the farmers, Robinson has talked 300 independent coffee farmers into forming a co-op, refusing to sell to behemoth multinationals, and marketing their coffee directly in the United States. Not fair trade, but direct trade — a pipeline to the market that eliminates layers of middlemen.



As for the coffee, you don't have to travel to Africa to enjoy it. Robinson's product is distributed in the United States by Up Country International Products Inc. (UCI), which strives to provide the highest return to coffee farmers while improving their living conditions. "By drinking this coffee, you are contributing to improving healthcare, education, and the water supplies of impoverished African farming families," says Barry Williams, UCI President. Order your own at [www.sweetunityfarmscoffee.com](http://www.sweetunityfarmscoffee.com).



Big Chief Larry Bannock, by Paula Stratton

## Mardi Gras Indians in Peril

Before Hurricane Katrina and broken levees nearly destroyed the city, New Orleans placed great importance on its culture and traditions — many now in jeopardy. One endangered tradition is that of the Mardi Gras Indians, or Masking Indians, as its main participants suffer from increasing poverty, dislocation, and negligence to support their nearly 200-year-old tradition. Their annual walk through the streets of New Orleans is “the parade most white people don’t see,” as one of its most ubiquitous figures, Big Chief Larry Bannock, once said.

Some say the tradition started as homage to the days when runaway slaves fled into the swamps and formed alliances with the Creeks, Cherokee, and Seminoles. More certainly, Mardi Gras Day would later offer an opportunity for rival Mardi Gras Indian tribes to disguise themselves and settle scores across town. Uptown Indians fought with Downtown Indians, and the result was sometimes bloodshed. Eventually, actual fighting became stylized mock battles: Thread and needle replaced guns and knives.

Someone once said that New Orleans is the antidote to minimalism: everything in excess. Mardi Gras Indians took this to heart. Their participation in Carnival evolved into a display of public art and outstanding craftsmanship, but a certain amount of rebelliousness was kept alive. Nobody tells a Mardi Gras Indian what to do on Mardi Gras morning. Their culture became a self-evolving folk art and a wellspring of New Orleans music. The wanderings of the tribes took on a celebratory aspect with battle chants becoming popular street-music rhythms.

The parade of the Mardi Gras Indians is now a ritual of dance, song, and elaborate dress, with the Chief’s “suit” being the most important. When tribes meet on the street, a confrontation between socially ranked participants precedes the arrival of each tribe’s Chief. They dance, sing, and boast about their suits’ finer qualities. Indians will spend an entire year making a new suit, some which can weigh up to 150 pounds, and everything is handmade. To wear one twice is a disgrace.

Bannock comes from Gert Town, one of the poor neighborhoods. He used to sew all day and night to meet that dawn on Mardi Gras. Living at subsistence level now, he’s determined to keep the tradition alive, and he needs help. To help preserve a vitally important African American tradition, visit this Web link: [www.underconsideration.com/speakup/archives/002801.html](http://www.underconsideration.com/speakup/archives/002801.html).

*(Excerpted with permission from an article by Mark Andersen)*

## The Art of Diversity

Is it possible to explore diversity and create dialogue among diverse groups through art? Can a company effectively use art to foster cultural appreciation and understanding among employees? Valerie Cooper thinks so. As founder of Picture That LLC, a Stamford, Conn. based fine arts consultancy that promotes cultural awareness through art, she has



*Picture That LLC offer clients turnkey solutions from exhibits to rewards programs to marketing support for cultural events.*

taken her passion for art and turned it into a viable business. Starting in 1987 as an art collector, Cooper developed a personal connection to the works of African American artists and their reflection of African American history in the United States. “Learning about my culture was totally unexpected,” explains Cooper. “I learned about the temperament of our people by examining the works of Joshua Johnson, Jacob Lawrence, and Elizabeth Catlett,” she recalls with enthusiasm.

By 1992, she had gained a solid reputation and began lecturing about art at the University of Connecticut and at classes sponsored by the city of Stamford. She booked art shows and established relationships with organizations, such as the National Black MBA Association and 100 Black Men of America, Inc. In 2001, she resigned her position as vice president of global diversity for Goldman Sach’s technology division to formally launch Picture That, borrowing the expression she and her sister use when a seemingly improbable event actually occurs.

Now certified as a minority business enterprise (MBE), Picture That supplies fine art for companies by renowned artists, curates rotating art exhibits, sells cultural products, and is a consultant to a wide range of clients, including DIAGEO North America, Cartus, GE and Thompson Hospitality. Margaret Gibson, director of workplace diversity for Cartus, met Cooper at a minority supplier event and decided that her firm’s diversity outreach would be enhanced by using the services of Picture That. “It helps us to reach out to minority suppliers. The artwork used in our exhibits represents the population of our employees and those with whom we do business,” says Gibson.

Cooper has provided the art for *Unity* since 2003, including the collection on the following page. Visit the Picture That Web site for more information.



*Valerie Cooper accepts the Supplier of the Year Award from Dr. Fred McKinney, president of the Connecticut Minority Supplier Development Council, Inc.*

*By Tonia Shakespeare, excerpted and reprinted with permission from The Network Journal.*

## Morgan State University's James E. Lewis Museum of Art

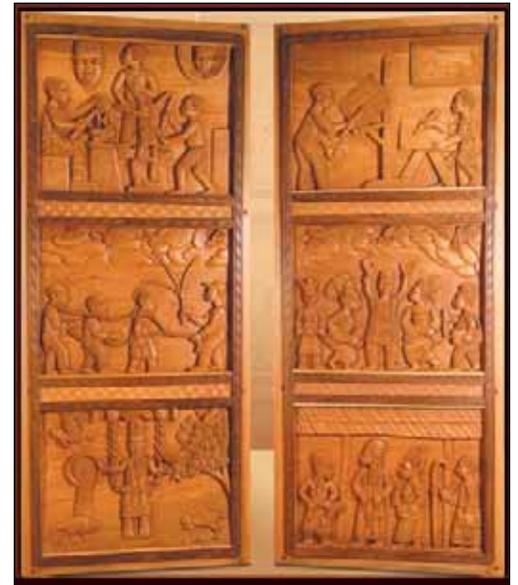
Morgan State University was founded in 1867 and originally named the Centenary Biblical Institute. Today, nearly 6,000 students attend the coeducational institution, occupying more than 143 acres in a residential section of Baltimore. Morgan offers graduate and undergraduate programs of study, and it surpasses almost every other college in the country in the number of application it receives from African American high school graduates.

Located in Morgan's Carl J. Murphy Fine Arts Center is the James E. Lewis Museum of Art (JELMA), the home of more than 4,000 works of art valued at more than \$10 million. The museum was established in 1951 and renamed in 1990 after James E. Lewis, a former Morgan State professor and acclaimed artist. When it was founded as The Gallery of Art in 1951, the

museum was the only showplace devoted primarily to African American art. Today JELMA exhibits a variety of 19th and 20th century American, Asian, European, African, and Oceanic art. The museum's director and curator is Gabriel Tenabe.

Professor Lewis was international renown as a sculptor, archaeologist and art historian. His works include the Frederick Douglass Statue that is a Morgan State icon as well as several pieces displayed in downtown Baltimore. Lewis spent 37 years putting together the museum's exquisite collection with the help of philanthropists and corporate contributors.

The artists presented on these pages have works on display at JELMA.



*These doors to the James E. Lewis Museum of art, located on the campus of Morgan State University in Baltimore were carved by Nigerian artist Lamidi Fakeye from the hard wood of the Iroko tree.*

### Marie Johnson Calloway

Marie Johnson Calloway was born Marie Edwards on April 10, 1920 in Pimlico, Md. She attended high school in Baltimore and received a teaching certificate from Coppin Teachers College in Baltimore in 1939. She earned her B.A. from Morgan State University in 1952 and her M.F.A. degree from San Jose State University in California. In 1975, Calloway received her doctoral equivalency degree from San Francisco State University.

During the early 1950s, she traveled with her first husband, U.S. Air Force doctor Arthur Johnson. It was while Johnson was stationed in Alaska that Calloway held her first art exhibit. After her husband left the service, the family moved to San Jose, Calif., where she was hired as the first African American public school teacher in the city. She continued to paint while running San Jose's Mecca Art Gallery, and she later became an art teacher for the Santa Clara School District. In 1969, she became an assistant professor at the California College of

Arts and Crafts in Oakland and San Jose State University. From 1973-1983, she worked as an associate professor in the art department of the San Francisco State University.

Calloway's paintings, which are based on her memories of life in the South, have been exhibited throughout the United States and Japan. Some of her exhibits include *Hope Street: Church Mothers*, *Mama's Room*, *Passages* and *Marie Johnson Calloway — On Stage A Retrospective, 1950-1999*. Many of her creations are part of permanent museum collections as well as private collections.

A sought after presenter and lecturer, Calloway has won awards from the Women's Caucus for the Arts of Northern California, the San Francisco Library Foundation, the Pioneers of African American Art, and the National Women's Caucus for the Arts. Calloway is married to Dr. Charles Calloway, and has two children: April Watkins and Art Johnson.



### Beauford Delaney

Beauford Delaney (1901-1979) was born in Knoxville, Tenn., and pursued a career in art at an early age. His father, a minister, and his mother, a former slave, taught Delaney and his brother Joseph a love for art and music. In 1924, he was accepted at the Massachusetts Normal School in Boston and, while there,

**Left to right, by Marie Calloway:**  
*Earl's Hair Odyssey — Bus Stop, Flower*

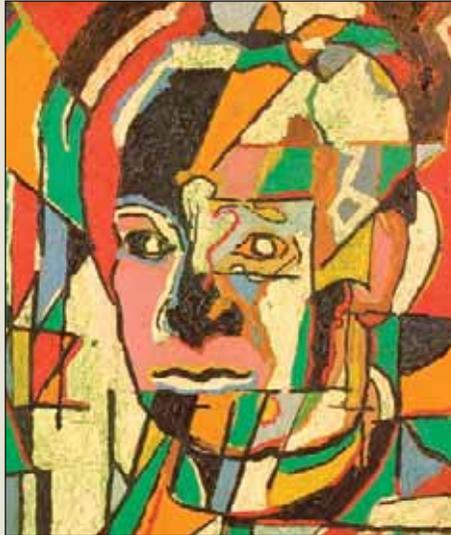
received formal training and notable artists of the time took notice of his work. In 1929, Delaney moved to Harlem, N.Y., where he met notables such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Marian Anderson, Duke Ellington, James Baldwin, and Ella Fitzgerald. Soon, those “celebrities” were admiring and funding Delaney’s work. While in New York, Delaney mostly painted portraits, but he also painted landscapes of downtown Manhattan, including one of his most famous pieces, Washington Square.

An interesting turn of events occurred in 1953 when Delaney received a grant to study in France. He ended up spending the rest of his life in Paris. While there, Delaney’s paintings became much more abstract and were in stark contrast to his earlier works. There were many reasons for this change. To start, Delaney was away from his family, who was never accepting of abstract art. Also, he struggled with addictions and was eventually diagnosed with mental illness. He died in 1979 alone and impoverished.

Although Delaney was gone, the future of his paintings was hardly over. Delaney’s brother paid to have his work returned to the United States, and, upon arrival, the University of Tennessee expressed interest in displaying the paintings. It set up a small exhibit that facilitated others in larger venues. Lately, Delaney’s work has been the subject of several major exhibitions including “Beauford Delaney: From New York to Paris,” which was hosted by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in 2004, and “Beauford Delaney in Context” which was mounted at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2006. Thanks to increased exposure, Delaney is now celebrated as an important American modernist painter. *(by Joseph Huttner, excerpted and reprinted with permission)*



Above, by William H. Johnson: *Aunt Alice*



Left to right, by Beauford Delaney: *The Face, Figure in the Landscape*

### William H. Johnson

William H. Johnson (1901-1970), a great American artist of the 20th century, was known primarily for his majestic Scandinavian landscapes and his witty and poignant scenes of African American daily life. Yet he is one of those artists whose influence can be felt beyond his art, as his dramatic life story is inspiring and encouraging to those familiar with it.

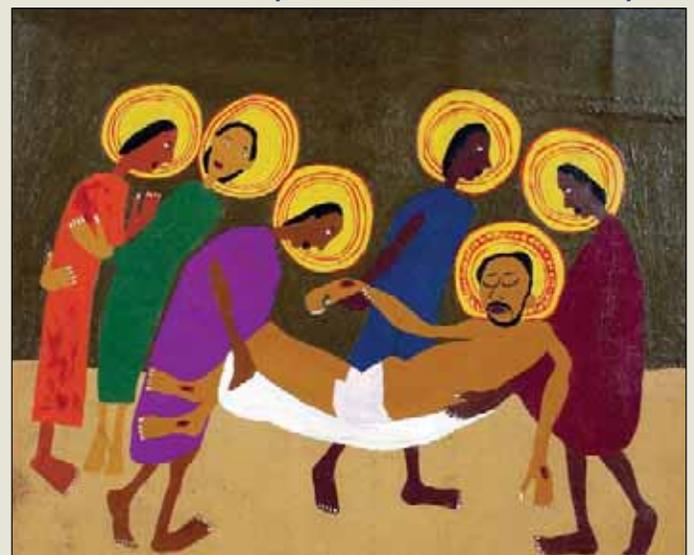
Born African American in the rural South, Johnson overcame poverty, racial prejudice and a grade-school education to become one of the country’s leading artists. Through the force of his personality and with a steadfast belief in himself, Johnson created an art entirely his own, original and fresh.

He left his native South Carolina in 1918 to study at the National Academy of Design in New York. Although he was acknowledged as the most talented artist in his class of 1926, he was passed over for a traveling scholarship, most likely because of his race. Rather than see Johnson flounder in the United States, his teacher, Charles Hawthorne, gave Johnson \$1,000 so that Johnson could travel to Europe. This act of faith and generosity was

pivotal in Johnson’s life, for it provided the seed from which his career flourished. Johnson remained in Europe for 12 years, during which time he created hundreds of exhibited works.

He returned to New York in 1938 with his Danish wife, artist Holcha Krake, and continued to paint and exhibit. After Holcha’s death in 1944 and with the end of World War II, he returned to Europe, only to fall seriously ill and return to the United States where he spent the rest of his life at the Central Islip State Hospital. Johnson’s persistence, talent, and achievement have been the force behind the creation of the William H. Johnson Foundation for the Arts.

Below, by William H. Johnson: *Mount Calvary I*



**Promoting Cultural Awareness and Diversity through the Arts:** Diversity, as it is represented through art, provides a personal and visual expression of our valuable cultural differences. *Unity* and the artwork it showcases can supplement your diversity program. It is the perfect way to discover the vibrancy of new cultures and lifestyles.

For more information on our cultural fine art collection, visit [www.picture-that.com](http://www.picture-that.com)

Picture That, LLC





## This Chef Is Stuck on Sweets

A spoonful of sugar has never been enough

Sadrudin Abdullah has been stuck on sweets ever since his 1988 trip to an Anchorage, Alaska mall. He had already tried his hand at several businesses and spent a few years in the Air Force, but nothing appealed to his passion for the arts, nor was the work particularly helpful in raising his six kids. The trip to the mall began ordinarily enough, but when he passed a pulled and blown sugar exhibition by Claude Monque, something ignited his imagination. Listening to him tell the story nearly 20 years later, he sounds like he should be on tour with professional motivators such as Tony Robbins or Zig Ziglar.

It wasn't long before he was helping Claude with the exhibitions and taking culinary classes at the University of Alaska. It wasn't his first time trying to earn a degree. He had started and dropped out of a number of schools already. This effort was different, and it showed in his work. The school's faculty recognized his talent and asked if he would teach the year following his graduation. In light of so many previous

setbacks, it was an astonishing offer, and one he couldn't refuse.

After a year of teaching, Abdullah still wasn't satisfied with his skills. He left Alaska for the Providence Campus of Johnson & Wales

University, a premier culinary school with locations throughout the United States. He studied under the watchful eye of Chef Ciril Hitz, and in three years never missed a Friday lecture by Chef Jean-Luc Derron. One valuable lesson came on an ice-cold New York day as his school team prepared for an important competition. Walking to the bus, his sugar sculpture exploded in the frigid air, and there was no time to create another. Without his entry, the team couldn't compete. When the team arrived at the competition, everyone jumped in to join the tiny pieces back together with hot sugar. They didn't win first place, but they learned how teams can work together to solve impossible problems.

He is Chef Abdullah now, and an assistant professor at Johnson & Wales University on its Charlotte Campus. He teaches the fine points of creating breads, pastries, and chocolates at the school's International Baking & Pastry Institute.

Chef Abdullah won Best in Show at the 2004 National Bread & Pastry Team Championship; was a finalist for the 2004, 2002 and 2000 PatisFrance competitions; and winner of the 2006 James Lewis Award, which honors individuals whose persistence and fortitude overcome the obstacles that confront persons of color in foodservice. Chef Abdullah holds an associate's degree in culinary arts from the University of Alaska, and a bachelor's degree in pastry arts and master's degree in marketing from Johnson & Wales University.

Above: Chef Abdullah is like a drill sergeant when it comes to teaching timeliness to his students. "I love teaching because it is a great way to learn and work with other top-flight chefs, and I can play some role in helping aspiring chefs accomplish their dreams," he says. The lesson for today: Poached Pear in White Wine Gelee a la Pomm, pictured left.

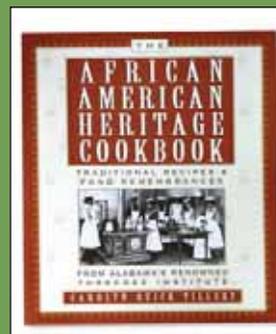


## Yams or Sweet Potatoes?

In the United States, yams and sweet potatoes are one in the same — colorful, red-toned potatoes with a sweet, orange filling — but scientifically they are unrelated. Yams are a dietary staple throughout Africa and Asia: Some are reported to grow seven feet in length and weigh almost 150 pounds. The word "yam" can be traced to the ancient African word "nyami."

Sweet potatoes aren't nearly so intimidating. They are relatively small and easily grown worldwide. They provide a very healthy starch on the menu: A single-cup serving has 180 calories, no fat, 41 grams of carbs and 4 grams of protein.

In the United States, sweet potatoes are firmly rooted in Southern cuisine. *The African American Heritage Cookbook: Traditional Recipes & Fond Remembrances From Alabama's Renowned Tuskegee Institute* (Citadel Press, © 1996), lists 20 sweet potato recipes, including the mouth-watering concoction below.



### Twice Baked Sweet Potato Delight

Serves 4

- 4 small sweet potatoes, unpeeled
- 2 ½ tablespoons butter
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 2 ½ tablespoons brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 8-ounce can unsweetened pineapple pieces, drained
- 2 tablespoons chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Wash and dry potatoes. Cut off the small tip from the ends of each potato to allow steam to escape while cooking; then lightly butter the outside of each potato. Place potatoes on a baking sheet. Bake for one hour or until done.

Let cool 15 minutes. Cut each potato in half lengthwise; scoop pulp into a bowl, leaving shells intact. Mash pulp and remaining butter together. Stir in remaining ingredients except pecans. Spoon into potato shells and sprinkle with pecans. Return to oven and bake for 15 minutes longer or until fork tender.

## For New York City Museum Buffs, The Best Meal Is Served by Charlene Shade



Charlene Shade, executive chef of both the Morgan Dining Room and the Morgan Café in Manhattan.

Manhattan residents and visitors alike waited patiently for the reopening of The Morgan Library & Museum on Madison Avenue at 36th Street. Three years they waited while the former personal library of Pierpont Morgan was enlarged and redesigned by renowned architect Renzo Piano. The Morgan is home to one of the world's greatest collections of artistic, literary, musical, and historical works, including original scores by Mozart and Beethoven, drawings by Rembrandt and Rubens, medieval and Renaissance works, three Gutenberg Bibles, literary

manuscripts of Dickens and Twain, and 5,000-year-old Near Eastern carvings. You would have learned that by reading the museum's Web site, but what you would have missed is that the museum's main dining room is, "the best museum canteen in New York City."

That recent accolade was printed in *The New York Times'* two-star review (very good) of the dining room and the food created by Charlene Shade, executive chef of both the Morgan Dining Room and the Morgan Café. Her stellar performance in the kitchen isn't the only item of interest on Charlene's resume: She is also blazing a trail for both African Americans and women in the high-stakes game of high-profile foodservice.

Charlene's journey began in Trinidad, where she was born and raised. Her culinary career started with a cafeteria job at a Houston children's center. Once she understood she had a passion for food, she went to study at the New York Restaurant School, where her counselor landed her in the kitchen at JoJo, the famous French bistro created by up-and-

coming Alsatian chef Jean-Georges Vongrichien. Vongrichien later moved Charlene to Vong, his popular French-Thai restaurant, then his four-star restaurant Jean-Georges at Trump International Hotel, and finally the Dune restaurant at the Ocean Club on Paradise Island in the Bahamas. Seven years under the world-famous chef had a tremendous impact on Charlene's style of cooking. "I don't like heavy food," says Charlene. "I like things that appear to be simple but are very intricate. That is the influence of Jean-Georges."

These days, Charlene is employed by Restaurant Associates, a foodservice firm specializing in high-end cuisine delivered in prestigious locations such as museums and performing arts centers. At the Morgan, she is shaping seasonal menus reflective of turn-of-the-century appetites while including avant-garde dishes with organic and health-conscience ingredients. Menu staples include beef Wellington and chicken fricassee, but with a modern twist. "Back then food was heavy, so we are making the dishes lighter and more flavorful," Charlene says.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment of visitors to the Morgan Dining Room is that, due to security concerns, it is only open during museum hours. Lunch is served daily except Monday, but the only evening the restaurant is open is Friday, and then only to 9 p.m.

For a trail-blazing chef like Charlene, it's only a matter of time before she earns her own restaurant, and foodies in Manhattan will again find that worth the wait.



### The Morgan Dining Room's Lobster Salad

With Avocado, Ruby Grapefruit, Upland Cress, and Citrus Dressing

#### For the salad

(serves 2)

- 1½ pound lobster, cooked
- 1 whole ruby red grapefruit, segmented
- 6 ounces jicama, julienned
- 4 bunches of upland cress
- 1 head bibb lettuce
- 1 Hass avocado, peeled and cut into 1-inch sections

#### For the citrus dressing

- 2 ounces Yuzu juice
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 shallot, chopped
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 ounce sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 6 ounces blended oil

#### To prepare the citrus dressing

Place Yuzu, mustard, shallot, honey, vinegar, and salt in a blender. Blend at medium speed, slowly adding oil. Blend for 10 seconds.

#### To cook the lobster

- Cut 1 medium onion into fourths
- Slice 1 small carrot
- Slice 1 small celery stalk
- Zest 1 orange
- Zest 1 lemon
- ¼ cup kosher salt
- 1 gallon of water

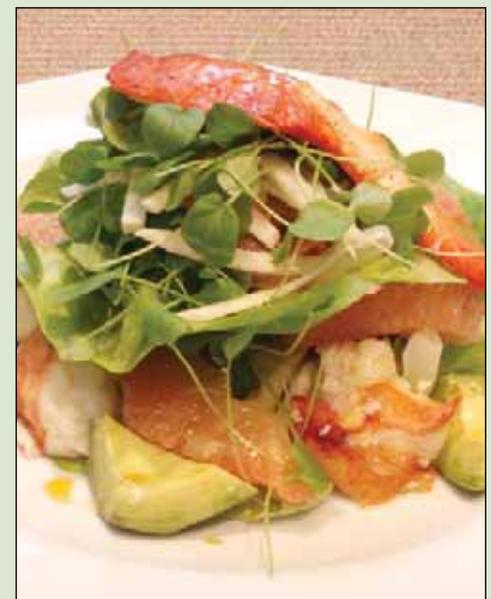
Place all above ingredients in stockpot with water. Bring to a rolling boil. Add whole lobster. Bring back to a boil and cook

for 12 minutes. Remove lobster to ice bath, let cool for 3-4 minutes.

Remove claws, separate knuckles and slice tail in two lengthwise. Using a small fork, carefully remove the lobster meat in the largest pieces possible.

#### To prepare the salad

Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl. Add dressing to taste. Build onto a cold plate and serve.



## West Coast Soul Surfing

Two words buzzed in Andrea Kabwasa's head: "Why not?" She had watched surfers riding the ocean waves all her life, but it didn't seem like a sport for a woman or an African American. But at age 32, with a long relationship looking like a beached whale and a new sense of personal freedom fueling an adventurous spirit, Kabwasa took to the waves. Within a few lessons she knew she loved surfing, and now, surfing is in love with Kabwasa.

Not too long ago, she caught the eye of legendary surf photographer Art Brewer, and the photo he snapped of her caught the eye of Nissan USA. That's why Kabwasa's photo is a double-page ad for the carmaker, and people aren't looking at her just because she looks great on a surf board, but because she is also a natural leader. "She is a tremendous role model and serves as a positive attraction to women, but especially Black women all over the world. I knew almost immediately after first talking to her that she could be a surfing star," says Rick Blocker, founder of Blacksurfing.com. "Her experience, intelligence, creativity, and athleticism make her one of our most prominent Blacksurfing spokespersons and one of our hottest surfers."



Team Blacksurfing, Healthy and Free include: (left to right) Sharon Schaffer, Rick Blocker, Andrea Kabwasa, Solo Scott, Rusty White, Max McMullin.

Kabwasa is a bit more modest. During a recent interview with *Unity*, she said she is still shocked by all the attention. "There are essentially two kinds of surfers, soul surfers and competitive surfers," she explained, "and while I have entered a few competitions, I surf because moving within nature and the water feeds my soul."



Untitled painting, oil on canvas, by Andrea Kabwasa

Kabwasa is a member of the Black Surfing Association (BSA), which was founded by Tony Corley. Tony is pictured opposite Andrea in the Nissan ads. "Tony wrote a letter entitled *ATTENTION: Black Surfing Brothers* in the January 1974 issue of *SURFER Magazine*, and many of us who read it from various places around the world wrote to respond to him," says Rick. "He created the BSA to help bring us together."

When she isn't in the tube, Kabwasa teaches at Peter Burnett Elementary School in Los Angeles. She is also an accomplished painter, holding a bachelor's in fine arts and a master's in both painting and cultural studies. Pictured left is one of her paintings.

## Curling Up With A Good Book

One writer sees best market ever for African American books

LaTonya Mason just quit her day job. The former mental health therapist works from home now, writing novels for a growing audience that is hungry for new genres of African-American-focused fiction. Years ago her career change would have seemed unthinkable, as publishers wouldn't take the risk of bringing new writers to new markets, particularly an African American with a cultural story to tell. The demand just wasn't there — or so they thought.

*Good To Me* is Mason's latest work written to fill an untapped and lucrative niche in the marketplace — African American Christian fiction. "Publishers caught onto the market's craving for Christian fiction some time ago," says Mason, "but only recently discovered that readers in the African American community are



also eager to read these stories, but from a perspective they can better relate to." Another literary genre Mason hopes to create with success is wholesome fiction geared to teenage African American girls. "Our teen girls are reading more, but gravitate to books read by their parents, which often contain subjects that aren't conducive to positive personal development," Mason explains. "The books I hope to get on bookshelves will give our young readers more choices in the quality of books they can read."

Want to learn more about contemporary African American literary artists? Visit the Web sites for *Black Issues Book Review* or *Essence*, which both maintain a best-seller list.

Mason's latest book, *Good To Me*, taps a growing demand for Christian fiction with an African American perspective.

## Send Us Your Stories

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