She breaks ground on Everest but still hasn't peaked

Sophia Danenberg

Many people's knowledge of Mount Everest is fundamental. They know it's the tallest mountain in the world and, particularly if they've read Jon Krakauer's "Into Thin Air" about the 1996 Everest disaster, they know that there's a significant degree of danger involved in climbing it.

That's all one needs to know to realize how extraordinary it is that Sophia Danenberg not only climbed to the summit of Mount Everest in 2006, but that she is also the first African-American and the first black woman to do so.

The daughter of a black father and Japanese mother, Danenberg spent her childhood in the Midwest and then went on to study at Harvard, graduating magna cum laude with degrees in environmental science and public policy. She then went on to Keio University in Tokyo as a Fulbright Fellow, later moving back to the states and launching her career in the area of green technology.

She joined the local Appalachian Mountain Club in her then-hometown of Hartford, Conn., and took up rock climbing, which she soon followed with major mountain climbs. She has stood at the top of Mount McKinley in Alaska, Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and the Matterhorn in Switzerland, and has scaled other major peaks across six continents.

She has called her decision to climb Everest, surprisingly, a "last-minute" one, made only a few weeks before she began the ascent in Nepal. Age 34 at the time, Danenberg was already in excellent physical condition and thus focused mainly on logistics in the weeks leading up to her climb. She also researched the food and gear she'd need to climb what's known as "the rooftop of the world."

She had company once she arrived – she climbed with a group of others – as well as the assistance of a couple of Sherpas, or trekking guides. The obstacles were plentiful. Danenberg faced bad weather, as well as a bout of bronchitis and frostbite. She also had a perpetually clogged oxygen mask, a difficulty that persisted even as she reached the top. She's said that the mask became such an issue that she almost forgot to take a photo at the summit, as she was singularly focused on fixing the mask, until one of the Sherpas reminded her to take a picture. Despite all of this, Danenberg called her climb to the world's rooftop not so much difficult as dangerous. Indeed, fatalities are commonplace on Everest, underscoring once again just how formidable Danenberg's task was.

Formed about 60 million years ago, Mount Everest is part of the Himalaya mountain range along the border of Nepal and Tibet.

She embraces life in other areas beyond climbing, of course. A surfer, snowboarder and theater buff, she also volunteers with community service groups that promote healthy lifestyles, including cycling and running groups, inner city and environmental groups, and the Special Olympics. She's also passionate about Democratic causes, most notably the Obama campaign during the 2008 presidential election. She served as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, which curtailed her climbing during that time.

But she's an avid mountaineer again today, with visions of future climbs in mind, including other mountains in the Himalayas besides Everest. She climbed Washington state's Mount Rainier almost a decade ago, so that's not on her list, despite her move to Seattle to take a job with Boeing, the world's largest aerospace company. Undoubtedly, however, Danenberg will aim high in whatever she does, which is a message she often shares with others. She has said that anyone can climb – in fact, anyone can climb Everest – and that people just need to believe that dreams aren't out of reach but in fact are attainable. After all, she's living proof.

Cover photos: Top: Dr. Keith Black; center: Ethiopian cuisine; bottom right: Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial; bottom left: "The Great Conductor" by David Wilson. *Unity* is a celebration of food, art and culture. Published six times per year, *Unity* is exclusively distributed to clients of Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group, both world leaders in foodservice. To contact us, send an e-mail to unity@thompsonhospitalityjv.com.

philatás

EDITION NO. 56

unity

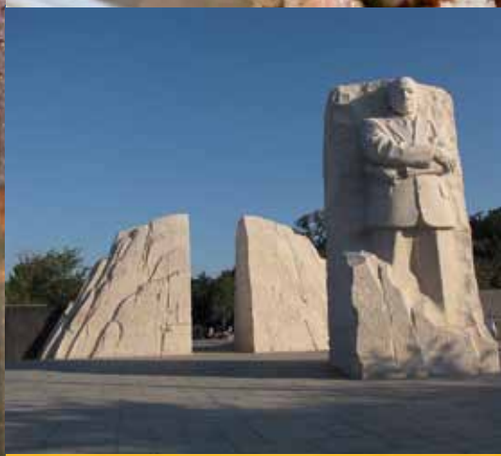
Celebrating Food, Art & Culture

A textbook example of medical excellence

Designer genes run in architectural firm's family

Chef molds new generation of protégés

Symbols of solidarity, strength and survival



This publication brought to you by:

THOMPSON HOSPITALITY

COMPASS GROUP®

A textbook example of medical excellence

Dr. Keith Black
Photo by Mark Harmel

You might say he's able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. Dr. Keith Black is, after all, a superhero within the medical world.

And if we lose the metaphor, it's still apt to say that his accolades and awards could fill a medical textbook. He currently serves as chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery and director of the Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, and indeed, the list of his editorial boards, committees, professional societies and prestigious appointments is innumerable. He is one of a few neurosurgeons specializing in brain-tumor removal, and one of a few dozen American neurosurgeons of African-American descent.

But the international acclaim surrounding him is perhaps most rooted in the fact that he specializes in extractions of those most challenging of malignancies – often those that reside in seemingly untouchable areas of the brain. With all these distinctions, of which professional accomplishment is Black most proud?

"The creation of the neurosurgical institute at Cedars-Sinai," he says. "It allows us to accelerate the discovery of new treatments from the lab into clinical practice. Bringing together the best and brightest scientists with the best and brightest clinicians can change the paradigm of how we treat disorders of the human brain."

He references several examples of how his team is leading the charge in treating said brain disorders, including the development of a groundbreaking vaccine to strengthen the body's own immune response to brain tumors, resulting in increased survival rates for those with the most aggressive forms of brain cancer.

As a child growing up in Alabama, Black had a preternatural interest in science, an aptitude that his parents nurtured through the years and that resulted in the publication of his first scientific paper at age 17. The paper earned him a prestigious award, and from there, things continued to look up for the young whiz. He was accepted into the University of Michigan medical school's accelerated program, completing his undergraduate and medical degrees in six years. He went on to the University of Michigan Medical Center for an internship in general surgery and residency in neurological surgery. Today, Black performs upward of 300 surgeries per year, far above the national average. All told, he has performed more than 5,000 operations for the resection of brain tumors.

Asked how he has time to perform so many operations on top of his cutting-edge research, he replies, "Primarily because of the passion I have for what I do and the fact that I love getting up every day and having an opportunity to try and help my patients. When you love what you do, you make time for it. You don't mind being up at two or three in the morning."

He also makes time for his other passions, particularly his family. He and his 23-year-old daughter completed a five-day hiking trip on the Inca trail to Machu Picchu. The affinity for adventure is nothing new for Black. He has hiked Mount Kilimanjaro, been skydiving more times than he can count and rafted down mighty rivers. "I love the water. My family and I have sailed all over the world," he says.

In 1997, Black was blazing a different kind of trail around the world, appearing on the cover of Time magazine and in its special "Heroes of Medicine" edition. He sees heroism somewhat differently, however. "I feel very blessed because I get to work with patients and their families that are my heroes," he says. "They are the ones that truly inspire, and I want to do whatever I can to make sure they live the best possible life."

Chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, Dr. Keith Black is one of few neurosurgeons specializing in brain-tumor removal. Photo by Mark Harmel

Designer genes run in architectural firm's family

Deryl McKissack

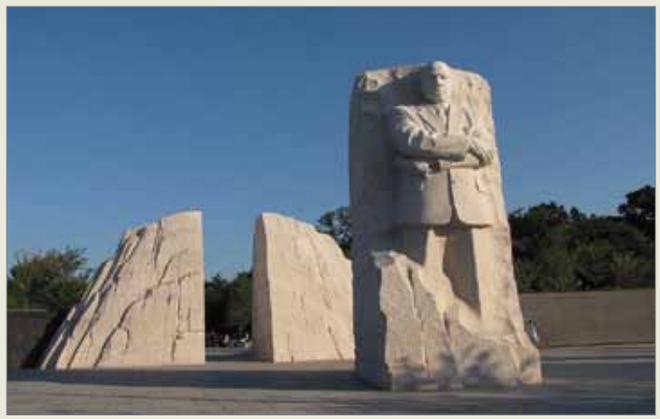
When greatness runs in your family, lofty expectations for the next generation are unavoidable. Some view these expectations as a burden, or a curse. Others use them to fuel their ambition. Deryl McKissack, 50, is a prime example of how embracing these expectations can yield remarkable accomplishments. Her architectural firm, McKissack & McKissack, is a product of a family history in architecture that predates the Civil War.

Based on its stellar track record, McKissack & McKissack was chosen to be the lead design builder and architect of record for the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial. The memorial, located in the National Mall in Washington, D.C., is on a 4-acre site along the Tidal Basin. On Oct. 16, 2011, the memorial was dedicated, culminating a campaign for its construction that began in the mid-1980s.

Construction and architecture have defined the McKissack family for five generations. This legacy began with Moses McKissack, a slave who learned the trade from his owner. His grandson, Moses III, launched the first McKissack & McKissack in Memphis, Tenn., in 1905. The firm's landmark achievement came when it was awarded the contract to design and build the 99th Pursuit Squadron Airbase in Tuskegee, Ala. The $5.7 million contract was then the largest federal contract ever awarded to an African-American firm.

William DeBerry, Deryl's father and the youngest son of Moses III, took the helm as president of the firm in 1968. Having two other daughters along with Deryl and no sons, DeBerry hadn't initially planned for a woman to continue the family business. "He told us to go to school and marry someone to come run his business," McKissack recalls in an interview with Smithsonian Magazine. However, the women in the family would ultimately be the ones to elevate the firm.

Upon DeBerry's retirement in 1975, his wife, Leatrice DeBerry, became CEO of McKissack & McKissack. With encouragement from her mother, Deryl McKissack set out to continue the family legacy. "We have a strong mother who told us to go to school and become great architects. She said being a woman was a plus," McKissack recalls. In 1990, McKissack started her own branch of McKissack & McKissack, in Washington, D.C. As a sole entrepreneur, McKissack had limited financial resources. What McKissack lacked in capital, however, she made up for with determination. McKissack's first contract came from Georgetown University to oversee smaller projects on campus. Continued work at educational institutions led McKissack & McKissack to the firm's first major renovation. When the U.S. Treasury building caught fire in 1996, McKissack's firm was contracted to oversee the recovery efforts. It was later tapped to provide management services for the entire 500,000-square-foot building. Success at the U.S. Treasury building led to other government contracts and solidified McKissack & McKissack's status as one of the top architectural firms in the nation.



The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial was dedicated in October 2011. McKissack & McKissack was its lead design builder and architect of record.

In the 20th-anniversary video for the firm, McKissack reflects on the significance of being chosen to work on the Martin Luther King Jr. project. "The MLK memorial is so inspirational because it (comes) full circle for me and my family. I think about my ancestors and what obstacles and challenges they went through for me to stand here today and for our company to be here today. To be able to work on a project like this is just amazing."

For more information, visit www.mckissackdc.com and www.mlkmemorial.org.

Symbols of solidarity, strength and survival

The three artists featured in this edition of *Unity* provide glimpses of history embedded in their works. From the use of quilts that tell stories of history to the use of historical figures, these works depict the strength and resolve of the African Diaspora community.

"Front Porch Blues" by David Wilson

"Madonna With Onions" by David Wilson

DAVID WILSON

David Wilson has had a strong interest in the arts since early childhood. He spent many hours after school researching the artists of the Harlem Renaissance as well as Mexican muralists. When Wilson embarked on a college education at Hampton University, he had the opportunity to study under the tutelage of renowned artist/muralist John Biggers. He credits Biggers for helping him to "discover a deeper connection with black art heritage."

In "Front Porch Blues," Wilson's collage of a man and his guitar portrays power in the man's hands. The bluesman's one hand of rough stone, symbolic of hard times, "can still create beautiful music," Wilson explains.

The name "Madonna" is usually associated with an artistic depiction of the Virgin Mary. "Madonna With Onions" is no different with its slight show of soft light illuminating her face, the halo adorning the back of her head, and the gentle draping of cloth that doubles as headdress and shawl. One would expect to see the baby Jesus in her arms or maybe a basket of amorous flowers or luscious fruit. Yet, Wilson presents his use of onions as a metaphor, stating, "Onions by their nature are used for purification just as the image of the Madonna symbolizes the same."

Wilson proudly states, "There's a pure beauty within the African-American experience that is manifested outwardly in our characteristic hues, features and mannerisms." The image on the cover of this edition of *Unity*, "The Great Conductor," illustrates Wilson's quote as the woman confidence, boldness and a certainty of her path. The background quilt of browns and pumpkin meshes well with her profile and patterned, oversize jacket and skirt. The listed names fused in the quilt are from an actual ledger of slaves who gained freedom through the Underground Railroad.

Wilson has exhibited at notable galleries throughout the United States. His 500-square-foot glass mural, "Divergent Threads, Lucent Memories" is showcased at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts & Culture in Charlotte, N.C.

WAYNE LAWRENCE

When Wayne Lawrence discovered the works of Gordon Parks and Eli Reed at a local public library, he knew he wanted to be part of that documentary tradition. He enrolled in photojournalism classes at Santa Monica College and later in the Visual Journalism program at Brooks. The intricacies of Lawrence's photographs reveal his knack to connect with his subjects. His focus is on "individuals and rituals within communities otherwise overlooked by mainstream media." His piece, "Boy With Bucket Drum," was taken during J'ouvert festivities held in Brooklyn every Labor Day. Participants take to the streets covered in oil, dirt and paint, and dressed in ragtag outfits. The Viking-like hat with large horns is a popular headdress worn during this celebration of carnival.

Lawrence is able to encapsulate the spirit of survival in his photo, "Jean, The Bateyes," a striking photo of an elderly Haitian man existing in lonely solace amongst towering sugar cane

"Boy With Bucket Drum" by Wayne Lawrence

"Jean, The Bateyes" by Wayne Lawrence

plants. "Bateyes" (pronounced BAH-tays) are shantytown camps where sugarcane cutters live. Bateyes are found only in Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

Lawrence's photographs have been exhibited at The African American Museum of Philadelphia; included in the permanent collection of the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago; and have appeared in notable publications such as The New York Times Magazine, Mother Jones, Essence and Vibe.

TAMARA NATALIE MADDEN

Tamara Natalie Madden spent her early years living with her grandmother in Manchester, Jamaica. In the year 2000, Madden revisited her grandmother in Manchester and searched for a long-lost brother. Suffering with a rare, genetic kidney disease, she successfully reunited with her brother. A year later, after she received one of her brother's kidneys during a transplant, Madden participated in her first art exhibit and received a second chance at life.

Madden explains that her Jamaican family, neighbors and friends were the essence of warmth she felt during her formative years and her paintings are fond representations and interpretations of them. Madden remarks that the piece titled "One" was inspired by the idea that we are all interconnected. The circles in the background and clothing are symbols of that link. "The adorned crown and quilt patches in "Earth Queen" presents the intrinsic/internal beauty and royalty as well as history of a people that many times is overlooked by ordinary dress. The egg represents life and new beginnings," she explains.

Madden adds, "The birds in my work represent a sense of freedom. They are a true and personal representation of how I feel now." She wants to continue to use her gift to "give voice to the voiceless and empower the powerless, by focusing on their inherent beauty."

Madden has exhibited in a number of group and solo exhibitions and her work can be found in private and public collections including Vanderbilt University in Tennessee and Alverno College in Milwaukee. Her work has been featured in The New York Times and Upscale Magazine and has been added to the Bridgeman Art Library in London.

> *"They are a true and personal representation of how I feel now."* — *Tamara Natalie Madden*

"Earth Queen" by Tamara Natalie Madden

"One" by Tamara Natalie Madden

Say 'wat'?
Add Ethiopian food to your culinary vocabulary

"Where do you want to go eat tonight?" This seemingly innocent question perplexes men and women alike. Eager to fill their empty bellies, many load up on generic eats at the nearest chain restaurant or fast-food joint.

But those who are truly ready to diversify their palates should consider Ethiopian fare. The cuisine from this country in Eastern Africa offers a dining experience that your family, friends or a new date are likely to remember for quite some time.

Ethiopian cuisine features a few signature dishes that have been served on family tables for generations.

The signature dish in Ethiopian cuisine is a large sourdough, pancake-like bread called "injera." A hand-woven basket accompanies the main course, featuring several pieces of injera rolled up like silverware napkins. Diners simply break off a piece of the injera, grab a piece of food from the spread and eat.

Another popular dish is a chicken stew called "doro wat." The dish comprises a whole chicken (doro) and thick stew (wat) consisting of red onions, garlic and "balbadem" (the main spice blend in Ethiopia). Cooks complete the dish by adding a hard-boiled egg. In Ethiopian culture, doro wat is a special dish. It is usually served at weddings, during holidays or when special guests come calling.

Vegetarian dishes are also a staple of Ethiopian cuisine, especially during Lent. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are prohibited from eating all meat and meat byproducts such as milk, cheese and butter until Easter. Yet the variety of dishes made of peas and other vegetables are just as exotic and tasty as those containing meats.

For dessert, it is Ethiopian tradition to serve coffee. Even if their guests don't drink coffee, they expect the host to at least offer it. Coffee's origins are rooted in Ethiopia, so great pride is taken in preparing it. It is usually brewed in clay pots, which adds to its authentic taste.

With the largest concentration of people of Ethiopian descent (200,000) outside of the country itself, Washington, D.C., is home to some of the best Ethiopian restaurants in the country. Dukem Restaurant is the most well known of these. Not only does it specialize in Ethiopia's signature dishes, it also features a live band and a comfortable lounge-style atmosphere. While Dukem, Meskerem Ethiopian Restaurant and other Ethiopian establishments in D.C. are different, what unifies them is a cultural cuisine that is rich in flavor and spirit.

Ethiopian Cucumber Salad

2 cups ripe tomatoes, seeded and diced or 2 cups cherry tomatoes, diced
1 1/2 cups cucumbers, diced
1/4 cup sweet onion, diced
1 green hot pepper, seeded and finely diced
4 teaspoons lemon juice
2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar or 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
Toss together all ingredients except olive oil. Sprinkle with olive oil.

Seasoned by a legendary pro, chef molds new generation of protégés

Most people, even non-foodies, have heard of Emeril Lagasse. After all, the celebrated chef, television personality and author has a booming restaurant conglomerate.

Chef Bernard Carmouche

Many people, however, might not have heard of Bernard Carmouche, Lagasse's comrade and fellow chef, but that doesn't make Carmouche's story any less impressive. Chef Bernard, as he's known, is currently culinary director of Lagasse's Florida restaurants.

It's a culinary journey that started, modestly enough, with a car. Truth be told, it started with the desire for a car. As a teenager, Carmouche scrubbed dishes at the legendary Commander's Palace in New Orleans, where Lagasse served as executive chef. Carmouche was hoping to save enough to buy his own wheels, and when he wasn't washing dishes, he assisted with kitchen prep work.

His initiative got him noticed, and Lagasse pledged to teach Carmouche the tricks of the trade if he'd stay in school. Carmouche obliged and rose through the ranks of Lagasse's expanding empire. Carmouche learned much from his original mentor and also studied under Master French Chef Roger Verge, completing a prestigious internship while under the latter's tutelage.

Carmouche has said the opportunity Lagasse afforded him turned his life around, as he grew up in a neighborhood where such opportunities were lacking. "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Chef Emeril," he says. "He believes in his team and motivates his chefs to create their best. He's extremely dedicated to his craft and holds us to high standards, but also gives us the freedom to cook with our hearts."

Carmouche is mentoring the young chefs within his own sphere of influence and constantly scouring his kitchens for fresh young talent. "That I'm able to cook with love each day and also find ways to open the door for our next generation so they can find their place in the industry, that's what makes it all worthwhile," he says.

For his ingenuity and tenacity,

Chef Bernard Carmouche, left, is thrilled to be able to "open the door for our next generation."

Carmouche was honored in March 2011 at the 18th Annual Cultural Awareness Salute Dinner in New York City. Sponsored by the Black Culinary Association, the black-tie gala recognizes distinguished leaders of color within the culinary and hospitality industries.

Given his track record, there is no doubt that Carmouche will continue to make his mark on the culinary world and to inspire young people who need a real-life example of how hard work and a passion for your craft can make a difference.

Andouille Crusted Redfish With Meuniere Sauce

Recipe from Emeril's Restaurant by Emeril Lagasse

Olive oil
3/4 cup Worcestershire sauce
2 whole lemons, skin and pith removed
2 bay leaves
3/4 pound cold butter, cubed
3 ounces Andouille sausage, finely diced
1 cup bread crumbs
4 each (6 to 8 ounces) redfish fillets, seasoned with Creole seasoning

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.
Combine Worcestershire, lemons and bay leaves and bring to a simmer until it reduces by 2/3, about 4 minutes. Whisk butter cubes into sauce until incorporated and sauce thickens. Keep warm.

In a hot sauté pan, render the andouille sausage for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and cool completely. Turn the cooled sausage into a mixing bowl. Stir in the bread crumbs.

In a large, ovenproof sauté pan, heat olive oil and add the redfish, presentation side down. Sauté for 4 minutes and carefully flip over. Cover top of each fillet with a quarter of the andouille crust. Place sauté pan in the oven and cook for 5 minutes.

Spoon the sauce in the center and around the rim of each plate. Garnish with red and yellow peppers, chives and Parmesan cheese.

Yield: 4 servings