



Portraits of Purpose:
A Tribute to Leadership

Boston, 1980-2013

Don West | photojournalist

PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE

THE EXHIBIT



PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE by photographer Don West is a collection of portraits with accompanying oral histories that give visual presence and authentic voice to an impressive period of African American leadership in Boston. Their achievements were often over-shadowed by the racial violence that erupted in 1975 as a result of court-ordered busing and the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools.

Representing all facets of community life, the exhibit portraits reflect a mix of newly emerging and veteran leaders, unsung heroes, and internationally renowned figures, and includes individuals from all races who worked to secure the human and civil rights of African Americans. Local leaders are blended with those of national and international influence, linking the civil rights movement to the struggle for social justice and human rights globally.

In the context of the 21st century, this leadership champions a vision of inclusion that moves beyond the polarities of black and white to embrace Boston's ascending diversity. This shift lays the foundation to build new and empowered alliances across the division race, and ethnicity to advance access and opportunity.

PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE THE PHOTOGRAPHER



GIVING WITNESS

Likened to a *griot*, a community historian and praise singer of West African storytelling origins, photojournalist Don West uses his camera to provide visual witness to a people's history. His portraits are quietly compelling, providing access to the heart and soul of his subjects as he captures them at work, with their families, and engaged in the struggle for what they believe.

In turn, those portrayed in PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE have the opportunity to share their experiences and stories in their own words, presented in a life sketch that distills **the** guiding principles upon which they live and lead.

COMMUNITY CHRONICLE

In 1997, the Museum of African American History commissioned this work to frame a spirited community dialogue on the progress and challenges of African Americans in a new century. Several individuals portrayed in the exhibit participated as panelists in a candid discussion of the issues of race and economic equity moderated by Charles J. Ogletree Jr Professor of Law at Harvard University.

Since then the exhibit has traveled to a variety of venues including the Boston Public Library, UMASS Boston, Eastern Bank and Northeastern University. In 2011, the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts commissioned the exhibits' update and expansion for the historic National Urban League's Conference hosted at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center.

As there are many notable individuals that deserve recognition, it is the photographer's intention to rotate and expand this collection over time, as an evolving community chronicle and visual record of the legacy of the civil rights movement and Boston's dynamic leadership for progressive action and change.

PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE COMMUNITY FORUMS

PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE animates a people's history, providing a natural platform for storytelling and dialogue about the legacy of the civil rights movement and its relevance to urban politics of inclusion and diversity today.



SHARING EXPERIENCES

Persons portrayed in the Portraits of Purpose exhibit are invited to share their experiences and stories, distilling the guiding principles upon which they live and lead. Q & A with the audience.

PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE participants/sro (partial listing):

Mel King, Community organizer, activist, and MIT Fellow
Jose Masso, Educator, Founder and Producer, Con Salsa Productions
Darnell Williams, President & CEO; The Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts
Gail Snowden, CEO & President, Freedom House
Frieda Garcia, community activist and former Director, United South End Settlements
Reverend Cheng Imm Tan, Director, Office of the New Bostonians
Marie St. Fleur, first Haitian State Representative; Currently Strategic Advisor to the Mayor.
Darryl Settles, founder D'Ventures Inc.
Derrick Lumpkins, Executive Director, Discover Roxbury
Jackie Jenkins-Scott; President, Wheelock College
Keith Motley, Chancellor, UMASS Boston
Joe Cooke and Angela Paige. Founders and Co-Directors, Paige Academy
Edmund Barry Gaither, Director and Curator, Nat'l Center of Afro-American Artists (NCAAA);
Paul Goodnight, artist and founder, ColorCircle
Akiba Abaka, Founder and Artistic Director, Up You Mighty Race Theatre Co.
Lisa Simmons; The Color of Film and the Roxbury International Film Festival
Ayanna Pressley, First African -American woman elected to the Boston City Council



TOPICAL ROUNDTABLES:

Moderated topical discussions focused on key community challenges of the 21st century including POP leaders across generations, representing different fields, and enlivened with the arts and culture.



SUGGESTED TOPICS:

❖ **Going “Glocal” (local + global)**

The contributions of immigrants in Boston’s history are a significant and a proud tradition. How can Boston lead the way to ensure that immigrants are welcomed and encouraged to participate fully in city life, contributing to community and economic revitalization?

❖ **The Color of Democracy**

Voting is the most basic way citizens can participate in civic affairs and strengthen America’s democracy. In the context of this year’s presidential election how do we ensure that underrepresented communities fully participate in the electoral process?

❖ **Next Generation Learning**

Defining today's students as 'new learners' suggest a fundamental difference in the way to approach knowledge acquisition, problem solving, and moving into the workforce. What is the new educational paradigm for 21st century learning that recasts what "success" is and what being "educated" means in today's world.

❖ **Building Community in the Era of Technology**

How do we create a sense of common "community" today? How does technology help and hinder work for social change?

❖ **Wrestling with Race and Opportunity in the Boston Public Schools**

Candid conversation about racial and class dynamics and politics in Boston as a newly emerging minority majority city. How this should inform today's debate about what and how educational reform can actually succeed.

❖ **A Way Out of No Way!**

African American musician and cultural worker Jane Sapp in collaboration with Dr. Cynthia Cohen of Brandeis University, offers a useful and inspiring set of cultural resources that taps into diverse racial/ethnic communities for resilience, for wisdom and for community and human development.



PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE

THE BOOK



Currently a book manuscript is being developed to accompany the images from this groundbreaking exhibit. The book launch of PORTRAITS OF PURPOSE (working title) is projected for 2014.

Charles Ogletree, Director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute at Harvard University is writing the foreword, and Kenneth J. Cooper, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist is interviewing those portrayed to narrate the history of these times in their own words. Collaborating partner in this endeavor is Eastern Bank, whose mission of community, economic development and social justice is well matched.

It is the photographer's greatest wish that the book in concert with the exhibit and related educational forums will continue to spark vital storytelling, dialogue and a new generation of leaders for social change.

WEBSITE & BLOG



September, 2013 Portraits of Purpose Website will be launched, a dynamic as interactive forum to connect people, ideas, and common cause actions towards making Boston an equitable city for *all* of its citizens.

- ❖ **Portraits of Purpose**
 - Vision/Background
 - Exhibit
 - Forums
 - Book
 - Dramatic Vignettes
 - Related products
- ❖ **Visuals and Voices**
 - Where people and images speak out!

Photo captions | credits.

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Portraits of Purpose (POP) exhibit hosted at the Museum of African American History, 2011

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POP exhibit artist reception hosted at Gallery 360 and co sponsored by John D. O'Bryant African American Institute, at Northeastern University, 2013

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University of Massachusetts, Artist reception hosted by Chancellor J. Keith Motley and sponsored by UMASS Boston Black Faculty and Student Association, 2013

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POP Special Forum with special guest speaker, Jose Masso, Announcer/Producer Con Salsa; Photojournalist Don West talking with Northeastern students, 2013

Community Roundtable hosted by Darryl Settles, DVentures LC at Darryl's Corner Bar with POP participants, State Representative Byron Rushing and community activist Mel King

Jane Sapp, renown African American musician and cultural worker in performance for Peacebuilding and the Arts Program at Brandeis University, 2012

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POP participants Barry Gaither, National Center of Afro-American Artists, Jose Masso and Don West, with Northeastern Students