

**VISUAL
ARTS**

**JULES
ALLEN**

**C. MICHAEL
NORTON**

**JOHN
PINDERHUGHES**

**LEZLEY
SAAR**

Black Renaissance

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 2 FALL 2014

NON-FICTION

CHINWEIZU

PAUL CARTER
HARRISON

BARBARA
LEWIS

ETHELBERT
MILLER

KOFI
NATAMBU

BRENDA MARIE
OSBEY

EUGENE B.
REDMOND

ISHMAEL
REED

FICTION

HENRY
DUMAS

HERMINE
PINSON

DRAMA

NINA ANGELA
MERCER

POETRY

ALLISON
HEDGE COKE

COLLEEN
McELROY

ARACELIS
GIRMAY

TYEHIMBA
JESS

YUSEF
KOMUNYAKAA

STERLING
PLUMPP

MATTHEW
SHENODA

DEREK
WALCOTT

\$15.00US \$14.70CAN





COVER ART BY
LEZLEY SAAR,
Lady Calantha, 2012
 (from Glenavron by Lady Caroline Lamb)
 Acrylic and digital photographs on
 fabric on board
 36 x 27 inches

BACK COVER ART BY
C. MICHAEL NORTON,
Split Kick, 2009-2010
 Diptych acrylic on linen
 103 x 126 inches

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Black Renaissance/ Renaissance Noire

is edited and published
 by the Institute of
 African-American Affairs
 at New York University.

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 New York University Institute
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 itself. Manuscripts in English,
 should be sent in double-
 spaced format, in a Microsoft
 Word-compatible electronic
 file to the main e-mail address;
 manuscripts in African
 language, French or Spanish
 will be considered if
 accompanied by an English
 translation.

Black Renaissance/ Renaissance Noire

is published three times
 a year.

2014 SUBSCRIPTION RATES
 The following is subscription
 information for
Black Renaissance Noire

Preferred Payment Method
 and Currency:
 CHECK/US DOLLARS

MEMBERSHIP RATES:
 Yearly Individual
 Domestic/Int'l (3 issues):
 \$35 (DOM)/\$42 (INT'L)USD

Yearly Institutional
 Domestic/Int'l
 Subscription (3 issues):
 \$60 (DOM)/\$67(INT'L) USD
 Individual Issue Purchase:
 \$15 USD

International
 Shipping Charge:
 \$12.50 (IND)/\$28 (INST)

All Available Versions:
 Print

**Black Renaissance/
 Renaissance Noire**
 is indexed in Humanities
 International Complete

PRINTED BY
 Offset Impressions, Inc.
 PRINTED IN THE USA

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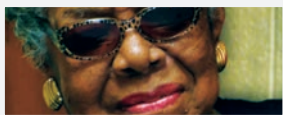
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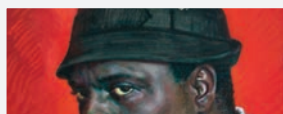
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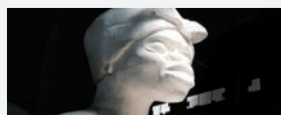
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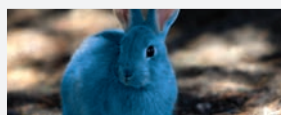
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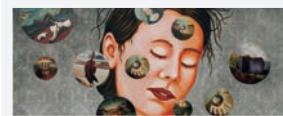
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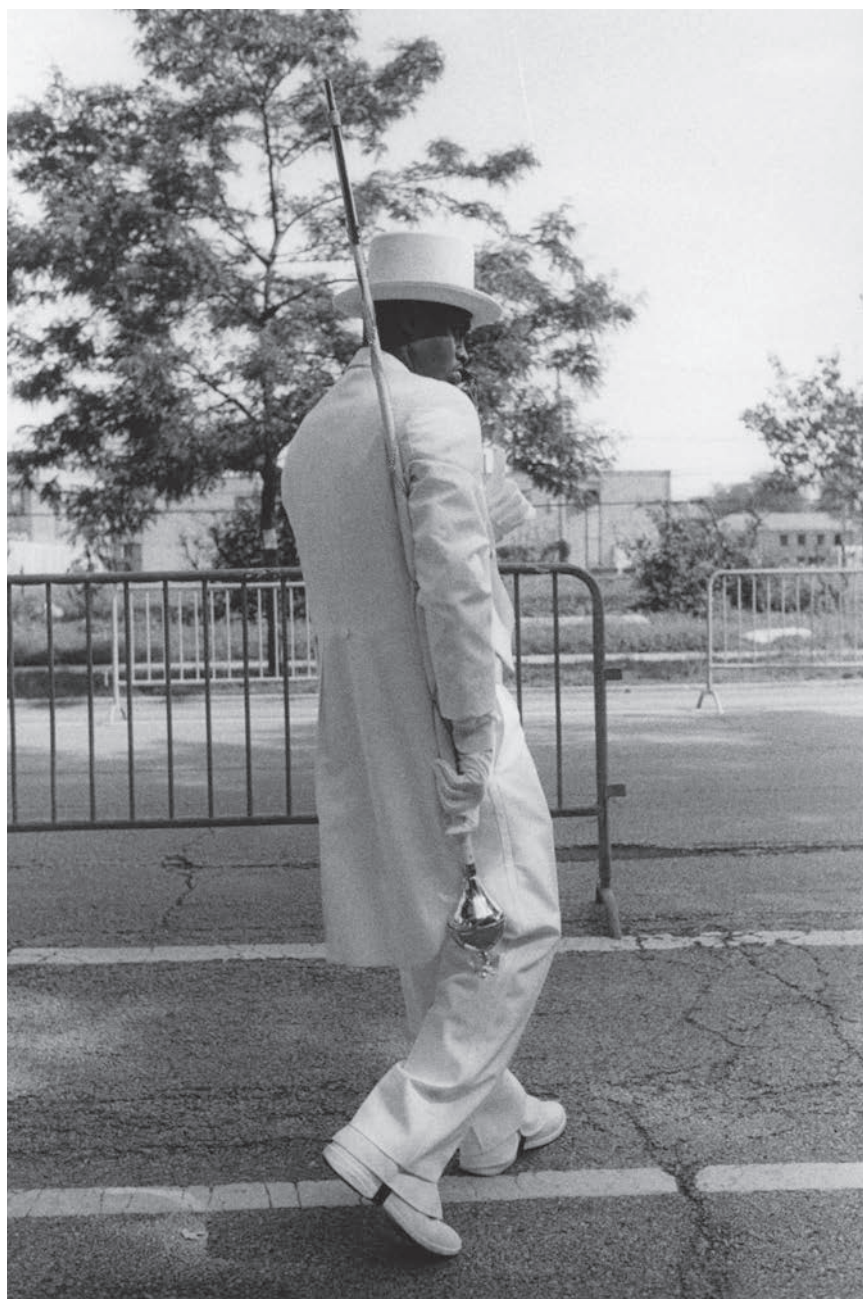
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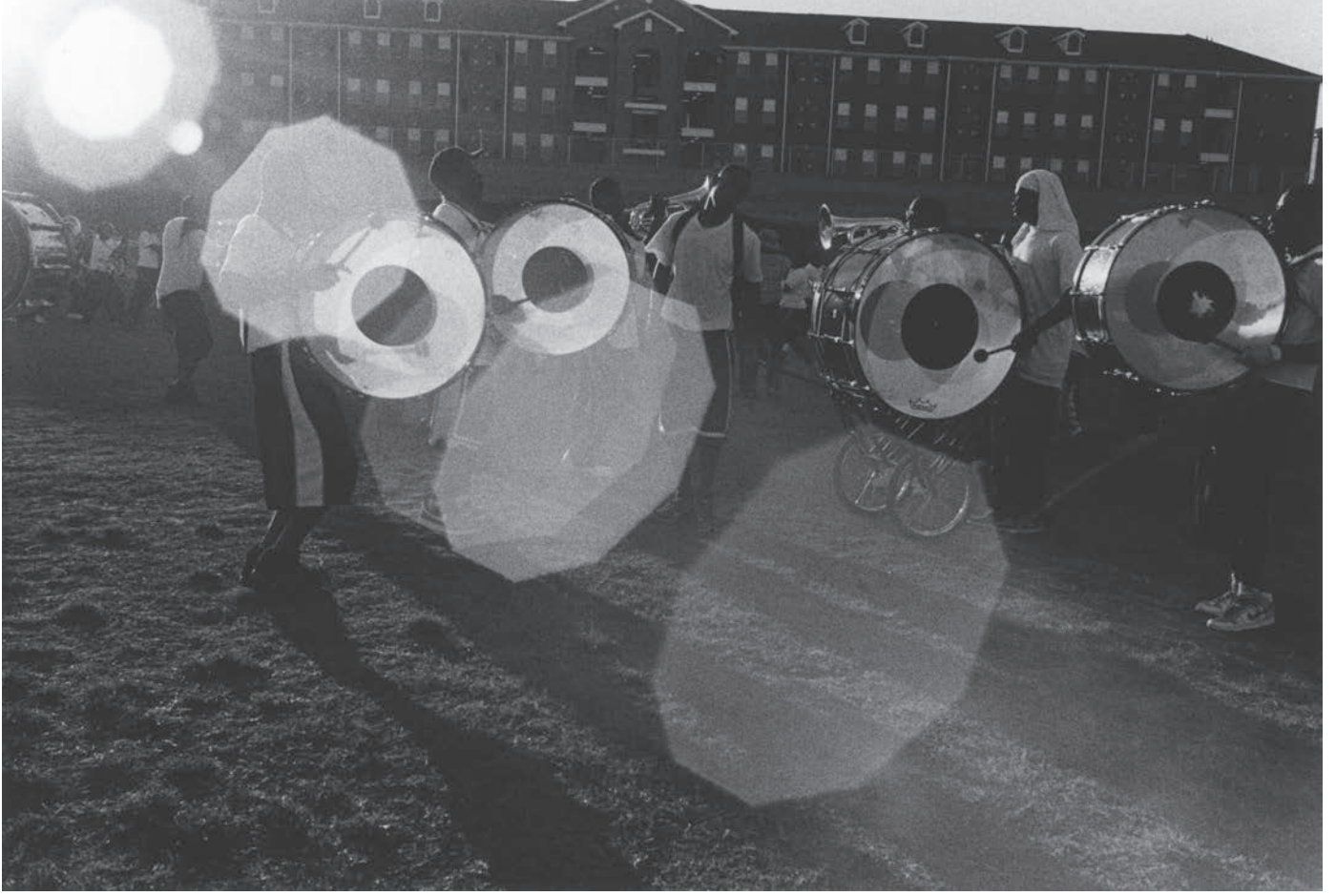


By
GAIL REID

Black marching bands are a marching history book of culture, keeping alive our connections to the past, ennobling the struggles and triumphs of everyday life, inspiring us to adapt, succeed and celebrate cultural potency.

Every refined gesture and high step is spiritual magic in a black marching band. The bands are grounded in American military and African tradition. They are cultural pathfinders, which seize the public space, dramatically etching the inherited terrain with a transformational force, using archetypal metaphors of home. As an exemplary national institution of mythical dimension, founded and fueled by creative interchange, they link artists with a community vibrantly sensitive to the music and the ceremony. The rhythm and resistance of the bands is an essential American story. Black marching bands provoke us to demand everything they have to give: to mourn the dead, console the distressed, pay respects to our heroes and above all to celebrate victories!









Their rhythmic repetitions of form and tone are finely structured articulations of the black tradition, which transform the bands' creative fire and ignite a perfect response. The crowd triumphantly demands the whole story, the ancient story as a path to the future. It's fanfare, not a floor show. It's an elegant, ritualized, witty village pageant, a reminder that culture's song is something we carry with us all the time. The black marching band series' timing is crucial.

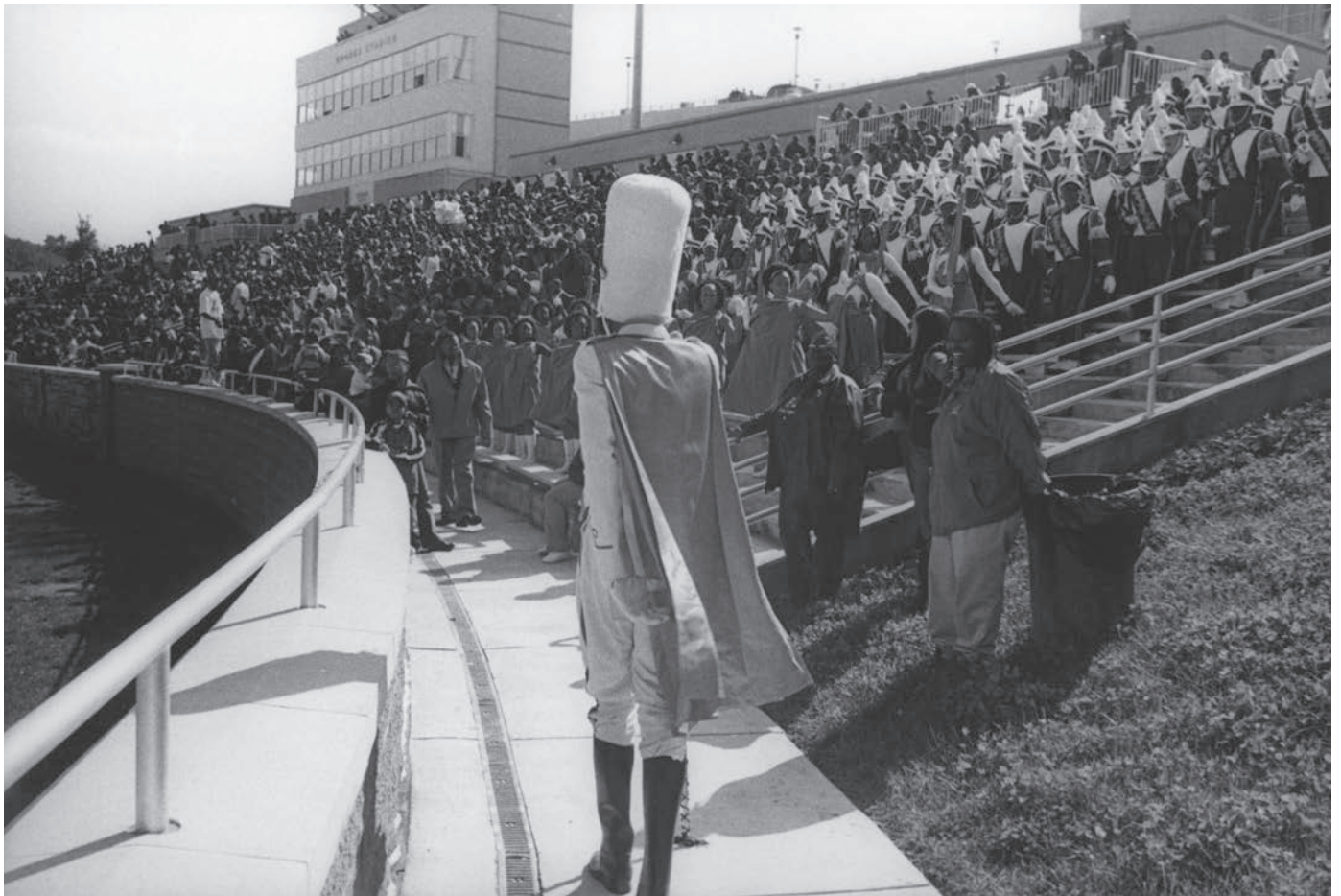
Today's soaring travel costs now severely curtail long-established bands' abilities to reach distant community parades. Diminishing public funding has disrupted and even eliminated respected school music programs, which have historically furnished a fertile ground for America's new musicians. Marching band numbers have plummeted from thousands to a few hundred in a decade. Continuity of this indispensable centuries-old musical heritage is gravely threatened.



Across the country, Professor Jules Allen's images connect with the bands' flourish and precision as explicit forms which embrace his signature style of photographing on the backbeat. In post-Katrina Second Lines, funeral parades, and regional festivals, Allen documents community and personal reconstruction as a process with a resonant visual aspect. Penetrating old boundaries, black marching bands offer geographic and culturally specific opportunities to erase barriers and celebrate heroism. The bands mark change. They also drive and clarify it. The music is important, expressing the inexpressible. It surrounds, perturbs, knows no borders. It crosses the tracks, disturbing the old social order. Within whirlwinds of incomprehensible assault and changes in besieged communities, the way to go on living is to recognize the familiar architecture carried within us: the warmth, the cultural anchors, liberating ideals, and the resilience to release old ways. Contemporary parades have a new urgency, openly political themes, direct and powerful messages. They help us build coherence within the disrupted world. Out of the rupture marches renewal.







Jules Allen's black marching band series pays tribute to the dignity and lasting legacy of black culture. It is a lens focused on the role that artists play in inspiring social change, in remembering and reflecting on human struggle and achievement. The photographs challenge our assumptions about what we see in a mutating landscape. This series reveals to us the powerful ways in which black marching bands offer us all a critical opportunity to invest new information and imagine new potential. The bands build community solidarity, identity and yearning as revelation, as investment, and as construction. ■