Profiles in Education: Eugene C. Hunt
“We Pause to Salute” — Dr. M. Alpha Bah & Dr. Harry H. Wright
UPDATE: Race and Social Justice Initiative
Through the Multiple Lenses of “Da Visual Griot”
AVERY High School — Class of 1951
BLACK INK & More...
ON THE COVER

AVERY IN TRANSITION

The Avery Research Center continues to be closed to the public. Our renovation project reported in the last issue of The Avery Messenger was due to be completed by October 2017, with the Avery Research Center reopening by that date. Unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances have pushed the project’s tentative completion date to July 2018. The Avery Research Center will remain closed to the public until that time.
Hence, our empty parking lot, usually full with no visitor spaces to spare.

During our closure, there will be no public museum tours and archival access is by appointment only at least five business days in advance.
Call 843.953.7608 or email averyresearchcenter@cofc.edu for research inquiries.

For renovation project updates, visit the Avery Research Center website: http://avery.cofc.edu or our Facebook page: Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture.

The Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) at the Avery Research Center has a robust Fall and Winter programming schedule. A few events will be onsite at the Avery Research Center, but most are at various offsite locations. For information, visit: http://rsji.cofc.edu.
(Cover photo and “visitor” photo above, courtesy of Savannah Frierson)

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On behalf of my fellow Avery Institute board members, I bring hearty greetings to our valued contributors, members, and friends. It is hard to believe that we are already in the middle of summer and halfway through the year. By the time you read this letter, the annual meeting will have already occurred. I hope many of you were able to attend.

We all are firmly aware of how fortunate we are to have Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane as the executive director of the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, but how many of us know how lucky we are to have a truly accomplished and talented staff at the Avery Research Center?

I would like to thank the Avery Research staff for its tireless efforts in supporting the work of the Avery Institute Board and Avery Institute members. Many on this staff spend countless hours of their personal time working on Avery Institute projects (i.e. The Avery Messenger, The South Carolina Black History Bugle magazine, annual meetings, mailers, Facebook page updates, board meetings, etc.) with little acknowledgment. I could not write another letter to our members, contributors, and friends and not recognize the individuals in written form through this Avery Messenger. Without the work of the following individuals, it would difficult for us to function as a Board:

Barrye Brown—Reference and Outreach Archivist
Daron-Lee Calhoun II—Race and Social Justice Initiative Coordinator
Curtis J. Franks—Curator, Coordinator of Public Programs and Facilities Manager
Savannah Frierson—Administrative Assistant
Aaisha Haykal—Manager of Archival Services
Georgette Mayo—Processing Archivist
Deborah Wright—Associate Director

On behalf of the Avery Institute Board and Avery Institute members, I say many thanks to the Avery Research Center staff with much appreciation for all you do to help us fulfill our mission at the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture.
Profiles in Education: Eugene C. Hunt
by Aaisha N. Haykal

Every year since 1928, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) establishes a yearly Black History theme. The 2017 theme is “The Crisis in Black Education.” The founder of ASALH, Carter G. Woodson, considered the association’s mission an educational one. The Association noted, “Woodson understood well the implications associated with the denial of access to knowledge, and he called attention to the crisis that resulted from persistently imposed racial barriers to equal education.”

This year’s theme echoes past annual themes of ASALH, such as: “Great Negro Educators (Teachers)” (1952); “Strengthening America through Education in Negro History and African Culture” (1960); “Negro History in the Home, School, and the Community” (1967); “Afro-Americans and Education” (1987); “Seventy-Five Years of Scholarly Excellence: A Homage to Our Forbearers” (1990); “Educating America: Black Universities and Colleges, Strengths and Crisis” (1991); and “Before Brown, Beyond Boundaries: Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education” (2004). These themes reiterate the critical importance and necessity of a continued focus and discussion on education.

Despite the many obstacles and barriers faced by Black Charlestonians following the Civil War, the Avery Normal Institute, founded in 1865 as a school for Black Charlestonians, stands a testament and shining exemplar of Black perseverance in the pursuit of attaining a formal education. The Avery Normal Institute, during its time as a school and in its current iteration as the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, has helped shape the minds of countless educators, activists, and civic leaders. As a result of continued racial discrimination and oppression, Avery has always embodied a philosophy of social uplift through education and grassroots activism.

In light of Avery’s history and the 2017 ASALH theme, this article spotlights Avery alumnus Mr. Eugene C. Hunt, whose career as a local educator embodies the spirit and educational philosophy of Avery. The Eugene C. Hunt Papers are housed at the Avery Research Center. Thanks to a generous grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), entitled “Digitizing Twentieth Century Civil Rights Collections,” a significant portion of this collection has been digitized and is now accessible on the Lowcountry Digital Library’s (LCDL) website.

Eugene C. Hunt
Eugene Clayton Hunt was born in Charleston on April 9, 1916, the son of Albert W. and Irene Murray Hunt. After graduating from Avery Institute in 1935, he attended Talladega College, receiving his undergraduate degree in 1940. He then enrolled at the University of Chicago before transferring to Northwestern University where he eventually received his master’s degree in Theatre in 1954. Afterward, he pursued post-graduate study in Speech Education.

He returned to Charleston to teach English at Burke Industrial (later High) School from 1941 to 1972. There, he was also involved in student theatre, music, and debate productions. In a July 1958 letter to Mr. Young, Hunt discusses the importance of students having direct and purposeful experiences with out-of-class activities, specifically with the Dramatic Guild. He stated, “I feel that in dramatics, students ought to be allowed to assume as many responsibilities, with the proper guidance, as they proved [sic] themselves capable of carrying. Dramatics, possibly more than any other activity[,] offers a variety of opportunities for student participation.” The letter then goes on to outline the ways in which hands-on experiences allow students to develop integrity and other valuable skills that will help them in their lives, whether they pursue careers in theatre or elsewhere. Hunt’s educational philosophy denotes he believed students should not just repeat knowledge provided by teachers, but should also benefit from experiential learning. Furthermore, due to his personal experiences in the theatre at Avery, he was an immediate example of the value of such endeavors.
Hunt also thought it extremely important to support his students. In an unnamed letter from one of his students at Burke, we get a perspective of Mr. Hunt being passionate about this charge: “I can still feel the support that he gave me that night as I sang[,] I can still see him as he kept his eyes on me[,] stretching his eyes[,] raising his eyebrows…lip-singing with me and helping to bring me through.” This letter and others in the collection clearly show Hunt saw potential in his students and wanted them to succeed.

Hunt began his career at the College of Charleston as a visiting lecturer in Public Speaking in 1972 and became the first tenured African American professor at the College in 1979. Dr. Norman Olsen Jr., upon reflecting on when he first met Professor Hunt, stated that it was hard work to convince him to teach full time at the College because Hunt was reluctant to leave Burke. While it is unknown what made Hunt change his mind, his subsequent activities at the College around minority recruitment illustrate he was interested in helping Black and other minority students obtain a four-year degree. At the College, he taught Public Speaking and Afro-American Literature, which was a survey class of African American writing from the eighteenth century to the present.

When he retired in 1989, he was bestowed the honor of Associate Professor of English Emeritus by College President Harry Lightsey Jr. The certificate notes “[Hunt’s] faithful and conscientious service to the College and to the community at large has been remarkable in bringing both immediate and long-lasting benefits.” He was also awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in 1993 from the College.

Hunt was very community oriented as demonstrated by his leadership in the founding of the Martin Luther King Jr. Interdenominational Choir; the key role he played in helping to establish Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture and the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture; and his commitment to Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

The reasons for “The Crisis in Black Education” have been debated and theorized. The letters and documents in Hunt’s collection contextualize this discussion by representing all aspects of Black education, including the importance and lack of Black educators; the restriction of access to education for Black students, specifically within Charleston County and the College of Charleston; and struggles Black students and faculty face at predominately White institutions. Although the records in the collection do not provide the definitive solution, they do allow one to see the important role of educators in shaping curriculum, which traditionally has sharpened students’ creative thinking, inspired them to exercise intellectual thought, and encouraged students to consider their next steps in life.

In addition to Hunt’s collection, the Avery Research Center has other collections that represent the breadth and impact educators have had on students. The Avery Research Center holds approximately forty collections from Charleston educators (i.e., Albertha Murray, Bernice Robinson, F. A. DeCosta, Lois Simms, Lonnie Hamilton III, James Campbell, and Millicent E. Brown), schools (yearbooks [i.e., Charles A. Brown, Burke, Avery, Bonds-Wilson, Charleston Southern University], Laing School, Shaw), and related individuals (J. A. Brown, Judge J. Waties and Elizabeth Waring, and Dart Family). Through the donation of these records, scholars, students, and researchers from diverse disciplines have the opportunity to learn about this history and about the roles Charleston educators have had in making education equitable and accessible to all students no matter the racial, gender, or socioeconomic status.
The [College of Charleston’s Race and Social Justice Initiative] RSJI is uniquely positioned in Charleston, South Carolina, to lead advocacy efforts and establish collaborative partner networks that promote equality in the Lowcountry region and beyond. RSJI programming, outreach, and educational resources will empower local leaders and community organizations to establish strategies for long-term, systematic transformation with historic and ongoing race and social justice issues. Ultimately, RSJI will serve as a groundbreaking model for changing the narrative at a critical time in the history of Charleston and the nation.

—Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, Coprincipal Investigator of RSJI

The mission of the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) at the College of Charleston is to promote public awareness and dialogue about race and social justice issues in Charleston, the state of South Carolina, and beyond. In June 2015, the College of Charleston received its first major grant from Google to launch RSJI in response to tragic events in the Charleston area, including the shooting death of Walter Scott and the mass shooting at Emanuel AME Church. In 2017, the College of Charleston received an additional grant to continue the work.

RSJI has had very successful programs in 2017, including: “A Deeper Black: Race in America” with award-winning journalist and author Ta-Nehisi Coates; I Am Not Your Negro film screening; RSJI Equal Employment Workshop; faculty lecture series; “Transforming Public History from Charleston to the Atlantic World” public history conference featuring a keynote address by Dr. Lonnie G. Bunch III, founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture; and Detroit film screening featuring opening remarks by Ed Vaughn, former Michigan state legislator, activist, and business owner.

Below is an abbreviated list of RSJI’s upcoming programs.

September 2017
• Public release of the Charleston County Racial Disparities Report written by Dr. Stacey Patton
• Film screening of 13th by filmmaker Ava DuVernay. The documentary explores the prison system and the history of racial inequality in the United States. Following the film will be a panel discussion on the prison system cosponsored by the Leagues of Women Voters.

October 2017
• Film screening of An Outrage: A Documentary Film about Lynching in the American South. This event is cosponsored by the Avery Institute.
• “Insight, Impact & Inclusion Summit: Campus and Community Organizing in the Twenty-First Century” featuring RSJI Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Lisa Brock (Arcus Center at Kalamazoo College) and Mia Henry (Executive Director, Arcus Center at Kalamazoo College)

November 2017
• Black Liberation and Protest Music featuring Todd Mayfield, Kwame Steve Cobb & Chavunduka

February 2018
• “Interrogating the First 365 of 45” featuring MSNBC host, national correspondent, and political commentator Joy-Ann Reid.

For dates, times, and locations of these programs, as well as additional RSJI information, visit: http://rsji.cofc.edu/.

Journalist, author Ta-Nehsi Coates (back center) surrounded by Google team members led by Lilyn Hester (front center) and the RSJI team.

Dr. Lonnie G. Bunch III delivering the keynote speech at Emanuel AME Church during the “Transforming Public History” Conference, Charleston, SC.
The Second Annual Black Ink: A Charleston African-American Book Festival will occur on Saturday, September 23, 2017, from 11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Charleston County Public Library at 68 Calhoun Street in Charleston, South Carolina. The event is free and open to the public.

Black Ink: A Charleston African-American Book Festival is a celebration of local and regional African American authors and their work. Conceived by local African American author Barbara Gathers, whose work includes 2015’s From Back Da Green, and in partnership with sponsors that include Charleston County Public Library, Black Ink connects African American authors with current and potential fans in the area and even beyond. During its inaugural festival on September 17, 2016, hundreds of festival attendees streamed through the Burke High School corridors to learn about what Charleston’s African American literary community had to offer and purchase books. The patrons ranged from students to teachers who wanted to introduce more diverse readings to their classes and aspiring authors who wanted to know how to get started in writing and publishing. The festival hosted nearly forty authors and its main sponsors were the YWCA of Greater Charleston, the Cannon Street YMCA, the Tri-County Women’s Project, Inc., and the Charleston Friends of the Library.

While most of the festival was free-flowing with attendees visiting authors at their tables, it also featured a keynote by Charleston’s poet laureate Marcus Amaker, poetry slams, workshops for young writers, and panelists featuring local authors about their publishing journeys. There were also raffles with prizes donated by the Black Ink Festival’s sponsors.

This year’s keynote speaker will be New York Times best-selling author and 2015 Newbery Medal recipient Kwame Alexander.

Black Ink 2017 is hosted by the Charleston County Public Library in partnership with the Charleston Friends of the Library and the South Carolina Humanities Council. Sponsoring organizations include the YWCA, the YMCA of Greater Charleston, CharlestonGOOD, and the College of Charleston’s Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture.

For more information about Black Ink, please visit the Charleston Friends of the Library website at https://www.CharlestonLibraryFriends.org.

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THE AVERY RESEARCH CENTER THANKS SUNTRUST BANK FOR ITS CONTINUED SUPPORT!

The Avery Research Center-SunTrust Bank relationship was formed in 2011. SunTrust Bank was a founding supporter of RSJI and are committed to advancing social advocacy initiatives. This current donation will help underwrite the inaugural RSJI Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Lisa Brock.

Special thank you to SunTrust Bank representatives Omar Ramberan and Mark Lattanzio.

Image: SunTrust Bank Foundation presenting the Avery Research Center (ARC) with a donation check. (l–r) ARC Graduate Assistant David Rothmund; RSJI Coordinator Daron-Lee Calhoun II; SunTrust Bank representative Omar Ramberan; ARC Executive Director Patricia Williams Lessane; ARC Reference and Outreach Archivist Barhye Brown; and ARC Manager of Archival Services Aaisha Haykal. (Photo courtesy of Savannah Frierson)
Former College of Charleston professor Dr. Mohamed Alpha Bah died April 25, 2017, in the Washington D.C. area. Dr. Bah was a scholar and an Africanist in the College of Charleston’s History Department for close to twenty-five years. He was an advocate for educational travel, taking colleagues and students to Africa, and promoted the study of West Africa and its connection to the Lowcountry.

“Our ranks have been thinned by the passing of Dr. Alpha Bah,” notes fellow Liberian colleague Dr. Elwood Dunn, indicating Bah was “one of the very few Liberians trained as a professional historian.”

Bah joined the College of Charleston’s Department of History faculty in 1986 where he remained for over twenty years. He attained the rank of full professor before his retirement and return to Liberia, West Africa. While at the College of Charleston, he introduced thousands of people, especially in the Lowcountry, to the Africanisms present in many aspects of Southern life and culture, and the Lowcountry’s historical connections to West Africa.

Dr. Myrtle Glascoe, former executive director of the College of Charleston’s Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture, states, “Alpha’s ideas and knowledge of Sierra Leone were central to the early work of the Avery [Research Center] on the South Carolina/West African connection. I have many so many good memories of Dr. Bah’s energy and work on the connection between South Carolina African Americans and their unique familial and cultural connections to the region of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea in West Africa. I am grateful to have had an opportunity to know and work with him.”

Dunn also extols Dr. Bah’s professionalism and scholarship. “A gentle and soft-spoken man, [Bah] was a teacher at heart[,] captivating the admiration of his many students in Liberia and the United States [as he] labored throughout his professional career unearthing the history of the African peoples, especially the peoples of the Mano River Basin—Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. In his passing, we pause to salute him for his contributions to scholarship and to global education.”

College of Charleston history professor Rebecca Shumway asserts Dr. Bah laid the groundwork in African and African Diaspora Studies at the College of Charleston, particularly with the Carolina Lowcountry and Atlantic World (CLAW) program. Dr. Jack Parson, who was Dr. Bah's longest-serving fellow Africanist at College of Charleston agrees, stating, “During his twenty-five years of service to the College, Alpha Bah was instrumental in establishing the African Studies Program and Minor.” Dr. Bah also codirected a US Department of Education grant to strengthen the program in the mid-1990s. Additionally, Dr. Bah hosted a joint meeting of the Liberian Studies Association and the Sierra Leone Studies Association in 1994, as well as the 33rd Annual Liberian Studies Association Conference in 2001. Both events took place in Charleston.

Trident Technical Institute professor Donald West reminds that Dr. Bah “was an active member in several African organizations, including the Model African Union Conference held at Howard University annually.” Elaborating on this, Dr. Dunn states, “At Charleston[,] he exposed his students to model Organization of African Unity to African Union (OAU/AU) simulations at Howard University, as well as study-abroad programs to which he led his students to Africa and the Middle East. Of his students he once said, ‘I am shy talking about it, but my biggest joy, what is most important to me, is my students. This is my love.’”

Despite his very busy professional life, Dr. Bah still found time to share his expertise with colleagues and institutions in the United States and abroad. “As a senior scholar, Dr. Bah provided valuable long-term mentorship in my understanding of Fula history and that of the Sierra Leonean diaspora in America,” remembers fellow Liberian colleague Dr. Alusine Jalloh, founding director of the Africa Program at the University of Texas–Arlington. For example, documentary Family across the Sea documents Dr. Bah's numerous contributions in exploring the United States/West Africa connection, and Dr. Jalloh credits this documentary with informing his teaching of the African Diaspora. Dr. Bah was also instrumental in organizing the 1988 visit of then-President Joseph S. Momoh of Sierra Leone to South Carolina and meeting with African Americans of Sierra Leonean ancestry, as well as for this group to return to its West African homeland.
Dr. Mohamed Alpha Bah was born in the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea on May 25, 1943, and was raised in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at Howard University, earning his PhD in History in 1983 under renowned Howard University professor Joseph E. Harris. He joined the College of Charleston faculty in 1986 and remained there until his retirement in 2008, whereupon he returned to Liberia to head the Confucius Institute at the University of Liberia. Among Dr. Bah’s many publications are his book *Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone: A Case History of Twentieth-Century Migration and Settlement among the Kissi of Koindu* (1998) and scores of articles.

Dr. Elwood Dunn is the Alfred Walter Negley Professor of Political Science Emeritus of Sewanee: The University of the South. He retired in 2012 after thirty-one years of teaching. He has served as Minister of State for Presidential Affairs/Chief of Office Staff to the President of his native Liberia. Portions of this article are from his tribute article, “Historian Mohammed Alpha Bah, 1943-2017: A Tribute” published in FrontPage Africa Newspaper, www.frontpageafricaonline.com on May 6, 2017.

Dr. Alusine Jollah is founding director of the Africa Program at the University of Texas–Arlington. His published monograph, “African Entrepreneurship: Muslim Fula Merchants in Sierra Leone” (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999) chronicles aspects of the Fula of Sierra Leone. Dr. Jollah’s article “Tribute to Dr. Mohamed Alpha Bah, Professor of History,” was published on the online Sierra Leone News Portal, www.thepatrioticvanguard.com.

Photos on page 8: Dr. Alpha Bah during his tenure at the College of Charleston (Courtesy College of Charleston); the cover of Dr. Bah’s publication, *Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone*. Page 9: Dr. Bah in later years. Photo courtesy Aissata Bah’s Facebook page.


Dr. Harry H. Wright

Dr. Harry H. Wright, former professor at the University of South Carolina (USC) School of Medicine in the Department of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Science, died on April 21, 2017. He was 69 years old.

Dr. Wright focused both his clinical and research efforts on developmental psychopathology, especially in very young children and in those with autism spectrum disorders. He retired in 2010 as distinguished professor emeritus from the USC School of Medicine. Dr. Wright earned his undergraduate degree from USC, his master’s degree from Brown University, his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and a master’s in business administration from the Wharton School of Business (MBA).

Dr. Wright has been described as a “quiet champion for change” by his friend and associate, attorney Luther Battiste. Dr. Valinda Littlefield, director of African American Studies at USC, offered some not widely known history about Wright:

Dr. Harry Wright was a student activist during his tenure at USC. He, along with Luther Battiste, were [sic] at the forefront of strategizing and bringing to fruition the African American Studies Program. They spent years researching, meeting, and planning. They interviewed and convinced the first director, Willie Hartford, to accept the directorship. In addition, Harry served as a member of the Committee on the Future and Direction of African American Studies in 1994 and later served on the Partnership Board for many years, providing financial support and advice to several directors. His legacy is a vibrant forty-six-year-old Program and we owe the Program’s inception to his and others’ vision and diligence. He is sorely missed.

Dr. Wright was born in Charleston, South Carolina and grew up in York, South Carolina.
One may have seen her around Charleston, an amiable woman dressed in white with an infectious smile and a joyous voice armed with cameras—video and still. Or one may have viewed her numerous and frequent Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter posts. Her videos are featured on YouTube and Vimeo with various channels relating to food and local musical events. Regardless where one sees Ms. Brenda Jennifer Peart, aka “Da Visual Griot,” know she is doing what she loves: documenting her life and ours. Through her lenses, strangers become friends. Friends become devoted fans.

Peart lives her passions through her camera and her passions are many! Through her lenses, she provides a panoramic view of Charleston—its people, places, and events—along with sharing her personal interests in Lowcountry and Jamaican cuisine, technology, and music.

Peart films the ordinary, mundane, unusual, and unknown. In doing so, she creates a kaleidoscope of mishmash snippets and candid vignettes, all informative to view. Viewers will never know what they will find on any of her social media platforms from day to day. She considers social media as a major component in making her work visually accessible as she focuses on events mainstream media is either not interested in covering or tends to neglect.

“They keep missing it!”

Peart considers her documentation work as her “life of service.” Seeking a place in the Charleston community where people can “meet and greet” each other motivates her. Peart experienced a youth in Jamaica filled with intergenerational interactions between young people, middle-aged adults, and elders who learned from each other in an organic fashion. The drumming circle (#WeBeDrummin) is the closest weekly event in the Charleston area that brings a diverse group of people together.

Documenting Charleston life on social media is Peart’s “community center.” She contributes to numerous Facebook pages, including “Humans of Charleston, South Carolina” (which is loosely based on the original “Humans of New York,” a photography project blog that began in 2010). Rather than “interviewing” her participants, Peart takes live-action clips. But unlike the New York site where one never sees the photographer, Peart frequently turns the lens on herself. Many of her videos are self-reflections that are filled with motivational wisdom and positivity. Feeling down? Check out her YouTube video, “Suck It Up and LIVE YOUR LIFE!!!” Ms. Peart will make you laugh, cry, and think!

Peart possesses an unwavering devotion for the Lowcountry. She considers her time in Charleston as “visiting with my cousins in the diaspora” and the closest thing to her time in Jamaica. Charleston gives her the elders she no longer has since most of her family members have passed. “You connect with who [sic] you can connect with. I am in the original place where African[s] came.”

Many of Peart’s “videos are made with raw emotions.” During the funeral of Reverend Clementa Pinckney, (one of the slain Mother Emanuel Nine) at TD Arena, national news outlets used parts of Peart’s video footage. Her advantage of being a Charleston resident was she knew the ins and outs of the TD Arena, enabling her to “scout out the place for a good angle.” Her YouTube video of former President Barack Obama singing “Amazing Grace” is proof of her strategy. Peart has additional video footage of Reverend Pinckney and scenes of “Mother Emanuel” Church throughout her various social media platforms.
Through her various social media platforms, Peart frequently assists others with promoting their small businesses “to help them get their word out.” Her sites frequently showcase the talents of local African American chefs, including Benjamin “B. J.” Dennis and Christopher Hyatt (Gravy Waltz). And on occasion, Peart shows off her culinary skills.

Currently, Peart is staying busy, keeping up with the constant and increasing change of the Charleston landscape. While landmark businesses are closing due to rising rental costs; newer, trendy businesses—along with hotels and apartments—are suddenly appearing throughout the peninsula.

Ms. Peart is fully present, taking numerous snapshots for posterity. “I don’t do one or two pictures. I do at least 150! It’s like play for me, like taking attendance.” For the most part, people are familiar with Peart’s documentary work and do not mind being captured on film. Charleston’s chapter of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) is the only entity that has given Peart slight objections. With deep admiration, she contends the members are “the crème de la crème of elders because they are educated and worldly. I want to grow up to be like them.” In addition to filming ASALH’s monthly meetings for preservation, Peart desires to “sit at their feet to learn and absorb their knowledge.”

The significance of Peart’s documentary work cannot be understated. Through her many lenses, personal and public, Peart provides the viewer with an inclusive narrative of Charleston. She reveals the numerous layers of Charleston, a different version from what is featured in brochures, advertisements, and websites declaring the “#1 City in the United States and World!”

Peart boldly goes into transparently segregated public spaces, audaciously entering socioeconomic divides. Peart captures social interactions, a wide-ranging, soulful, quirky contradiction of a popular historic city in transition. Juxtaposing Southern gentility (e.g. #TheHatLadiesofCharleston) one day, with an ongoing social commentary of local issues (gentrification, public transportation, and underrepresented communities), intermixed with her loves of food, music, and nature is Peart’s modus operandi. Peart makes the unknown, known and the ordinary, intriguing. Her work engages her viewers and brings awareness of our various communities and intersections on the peninsula. Filming provides Peart with a voice that is heard and seen worldwide.

Essentially, Brenda J. Peart embraces her life with joy and wonder, which is vividly displayed daily through her social media posts. Her life and her wisdom are simple and true:

“People should give back every day and spread that gratefulness every day like a holiday.”
“Playing is a part of LIVING no matter how old you are!!!”
Make sure you have LOTS OF LAUGHTER in your daily life!!!”

In the #1 city in the world, “Da Visual Griot” has found a way to be of service.

Photos
(left) Brenda J. Peart at the Avery Research Center surrounded by her “visual griot” equipment. Photo courtesy of Georgette Mayo.
(right) Brenda’s documentary photography, taken at the Charleston Middle Passage Remembrance Program 2016. Brenda established the Charleston Remembrance Facebook page and contributes regularly.
https://www.facebook.com/CHSRemembrance/.

Brenda’s Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/MsBJPeart
Brenda’s Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/msbjpeart/
Brenda’s YouTube: http://youtube.com/user/msbjpeart
Brenda’s website: http://msbjpeart.strikingly.com/
Avery Normal Institute was founded by the American Missionary Association (AMA) in 1865. The school, which included two years of early childhood education and two years of teacher training, was open to high school students across the Lowcountry. In 1947, the school became a part of the public Charleston County Schools and was renamed Avery High School.

Most of the Avery Class of 1951 had entered Avery Normal Institute and had been classmates for ten to twelve years. Several had also attended pre-primer and primer, thus being together for fourteen years. They were a very cohesive group who wholeheartedly welcomed those who joined the class through the years. While not especially competitive academically, honor students’ grade point averages were fractions of a point apart. J. Michael Graves, the biology teacher, said determining the academic ranking order of the class was difficult because the data kept changing.

Therefore, the honors students decided not to have a traditional commencement ceremony; instead, they would create a vehicle that highlighted all class members. First, they informed the class advisor, Mrs. Fannie Ella Frazier Hicklin, they wanted to write a play and perform it as the graduation ceremony. A play! For graduation! With no indication of shock, Mrs. Hicklin asked, “Have you gotten permission from [the principal] Mr. Potts?” Twelve fearless, determined teenagers marched straight into the principal’s office and requested to speak with him. The rest is history!

On the evening of June 5, 1951, Avery High School’s senior class presented *Avery—Past, Present, and Future*, a pageant written and staged by the honor graduates under the direction of Fannie Ella Frazier Hicklin.
Greetings!

We would like to thank you for your continued support. Remember that your support of the Avery Institute Board ensures that we can continue to supplement the Avery Research Center.

The membership committee is busy updating member information on our respective lists. We want to ensure that members receive all pertinent information.

And please do not forget to renew your membership today! Remember, it is tax deductible!

Thanks again for helping us to make sure the Avery Research Center remains the community jewel and national treasure it is.

Also, visit us online at: www.averyinstitute.us

Tony Bell, Membership Chairman

Hurrah, hurrah for Avery/
Our pride and joy you see/
Hurrah, hurrah for Avery/
Oh, may she ever be!

Refrain of the alma mater by Beulah Shecut (Class of 1928), mother of Elisabeth Haakmat (Class of 1951).
HONORARY LIFE
Vivienne E. Anderson
Elmore Brown
Wendell F. Cox Jr.
Herbert and Emily DeCosta
Judge Richard E. Fields
Philip Simmons
Los Simms
Honorable Lucille S. Whipper
Gretta Houray

LIFE
($)5,000+)
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BENEFACITOR
($)2,500-$4,000)
Charles E. McKenzie
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CONTRIBUTOR
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Frazier B. and Julia Baker were an African-American father and daughter who were burned alive in a house fire caused by a mob attack on February 22, 1898, in Lake City, Florence County, SC.

Frazier Baker was appointed postmaster of Lake City in 1897, but white locals objected and undertook a campaign to force his removal. When these efforts failed to dislodge Baker, a mob attacked his family while in the comfort of their home, killing him and his daughter in a tragic house fire. Baker’s wife and five other children survived.

Image above: “The Mob at the Lake City Post Office—An Artist’s Portrayal,” reproduced from the Boston Post, August 10, 1899.

Image below: Lavinia Baker and her five surviving children after a mob of white locals set fire to their home. (Images from Wikipedia)
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