

Black Women
of Print

B L a c k
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Educate & Empower

A pioneering group of Black women in the US are seeking to rewrite the history of printmaking – through education, workshops, community engagement – and some brilliantly creative work. We meet *Black Women of Print*.

It's no secret that throughout history the role of women of the African Diaspora has been obscured, often hidden away. Today, these same women are cast as 'hidden figures'. Printmaker and artist Tanekeya Word believes we are still in an age of rediscovery, especially when it comes to these women's achievements and advances in the artistic fields. "As a Black woman, an African American, a visual artist, printmaker, art educator and doctoral fellow, I've spent thousands of hours committed to rigorous research in the visual arts – throughout my life, I've encountered the erasure and/or censorship of Black feminist/womanist thought in visual art and so have many Black women before me," she says.

More importantly, the way art history has overlooked such creators distorts the

issue. "The exclusion of Black women narratives creates a false history – and when we believe that history generation after generation after generation, it becomes society's truth," Tanekeya says. "As a student entering into printmaking, I read a contemporary art text, referencing American women printmakers from 1910 to 1960 – so many Black women were excluded. 400 women were listed in the book, and 83 women were highlighted. Out of those, only two women of colour were exclusively highlighted – so where were all the Black women printmakers?"

Tanekeya's knowledge of printmaking history is immense, but she says she is indebted to those who printed before her. "Elizabeth Catlett is the foremother, for me, so I have to give honour to her. She embodied making art for the people.





JENNIFER MACK-WATKINS
 @mack_jennifer_prints



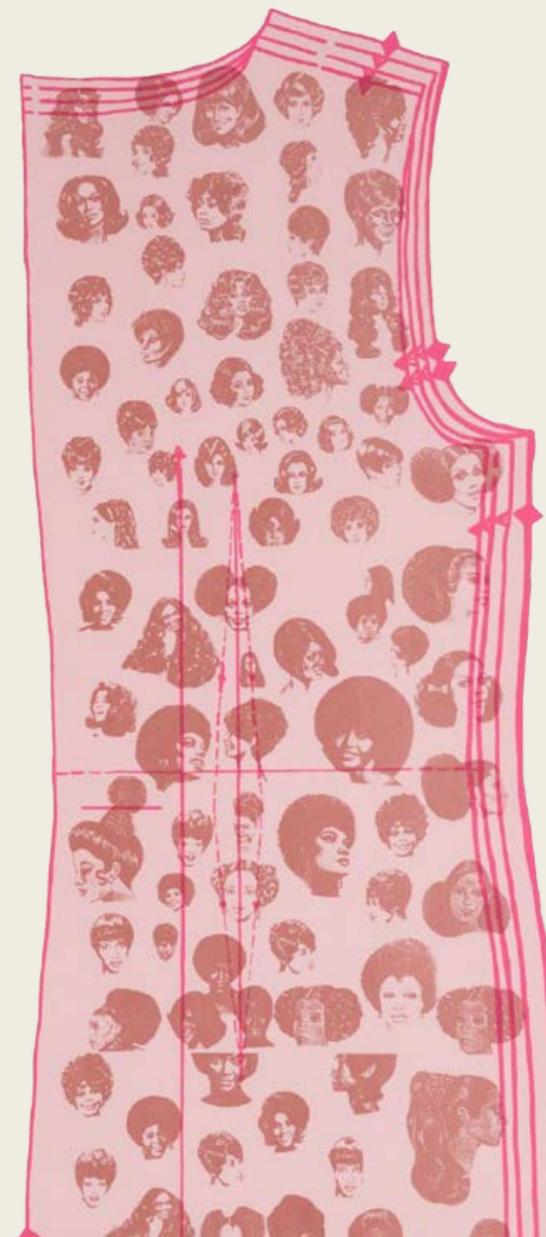
“The legacy that I wish to leave for future generations is my love for the medium of printmaking and a willingness to share my practice as a printmaker with communities.”

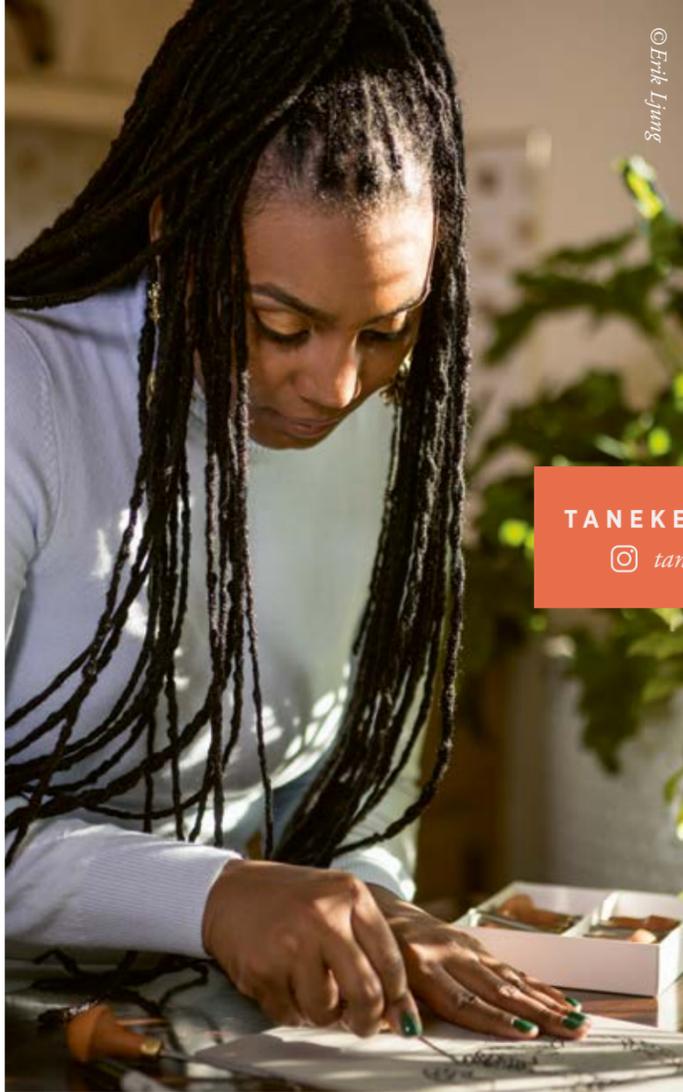
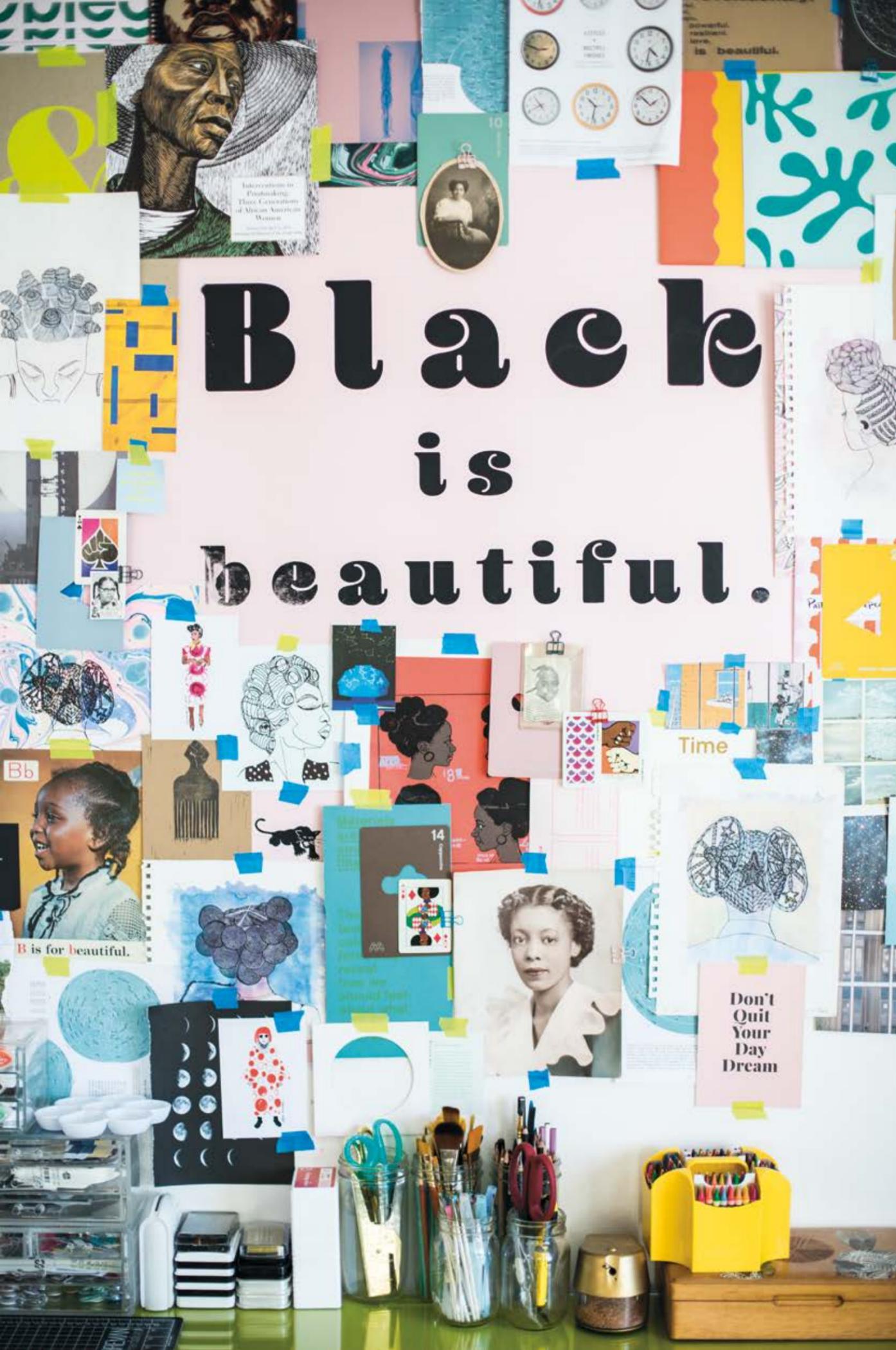
JENNIFER MACK-WATKINS

Yet I’m particularly drawn to relationships cultivated by Black women printmakers, such as Elizabeth Catlett and Margaret Taylor Goss and their associated works. The intersections of race and womanhood are narratives that interest me. In the words of the painter and printmaker Emma Amos, ‘For me, a Black woman artist, to walk into the studio, is a political act.’”

Speaking as an American, Tanekeya explains that the education system is also failing when it comes to telling the story of Black women in art history. “This has trickled into areas like printmaking and rendered Black women printmakers invisible, yet throughout history, we were always there,” she attests.

Motivated by this attitude, Tanekeya created *Black Women of Print*, a society of Black women printmakers. “I wanted to create a space where intergenerational Black women printmakers, from novice to masters of printmaking, can learn from one another, support one another and also have a home so that the world can get to know our work and creative processes,”





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TANEKEYA WORD
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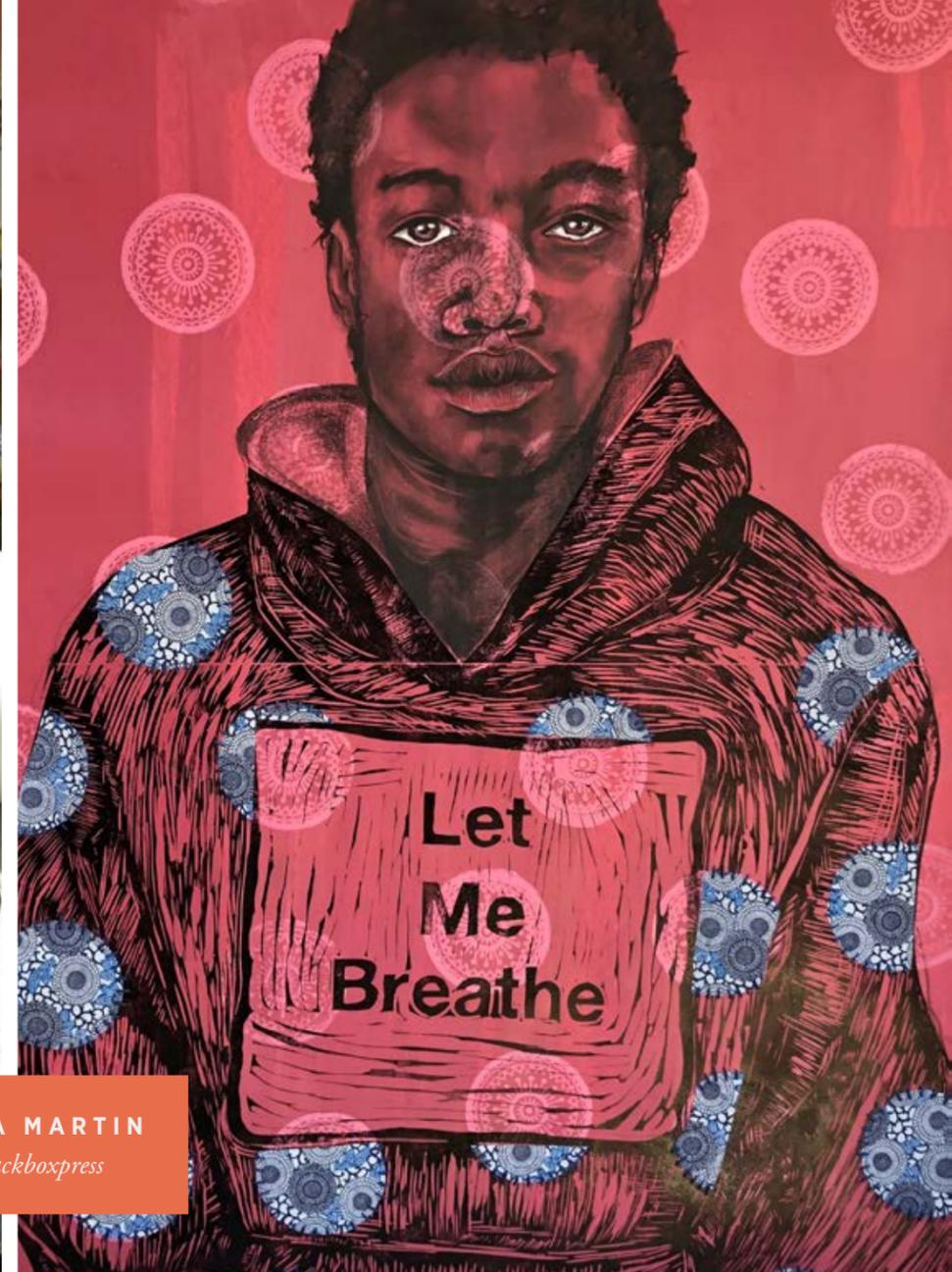
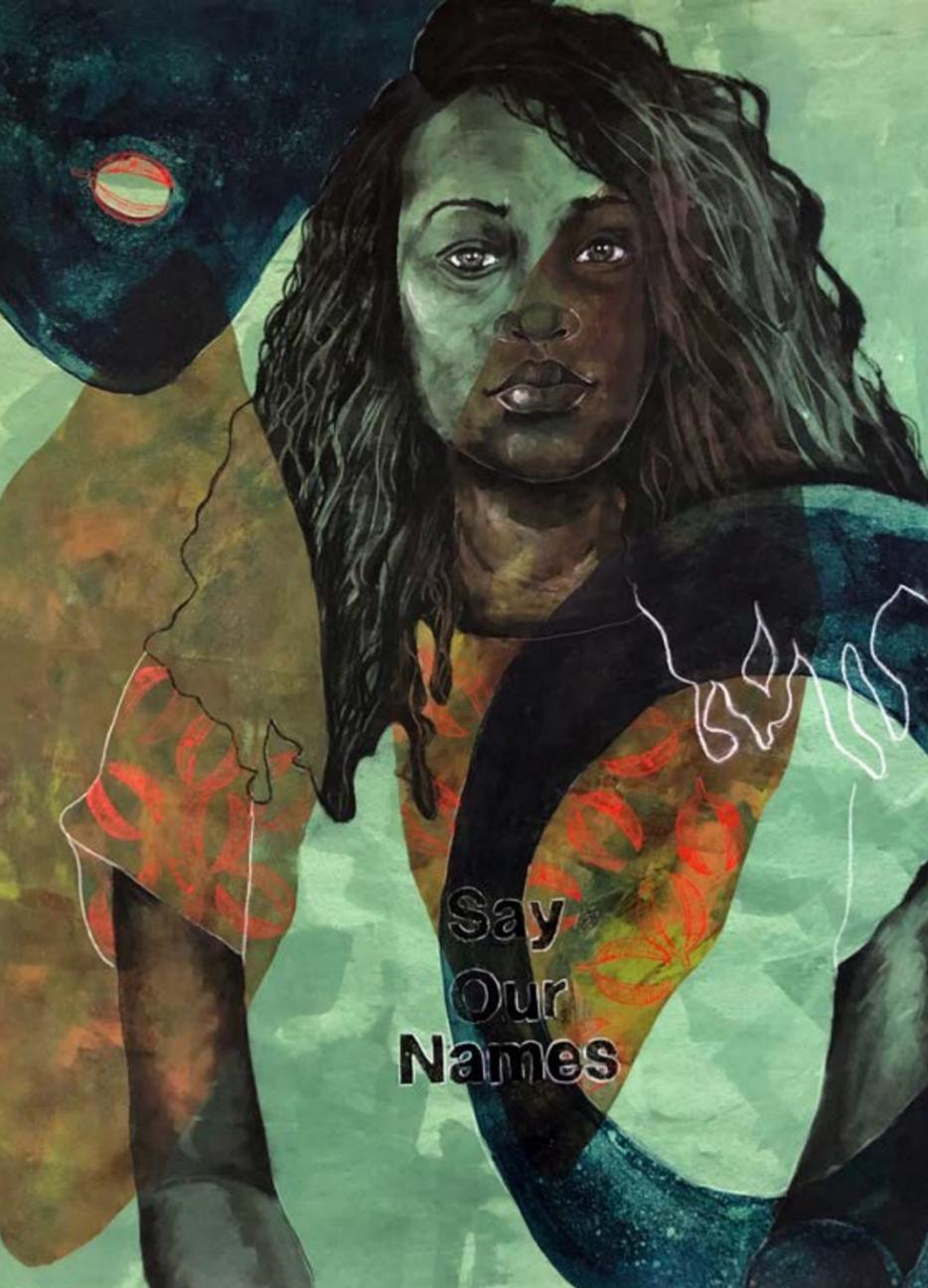
“The political, social, and cultural experience of Black women is as vital to printmaking as it is to society and when we make these narratives visible, we can begin to understand one another, to mend our broken past and create a vibrant future”

TANEKEYA WORD

she explains. “The political, social, and cultural experience of Black women is as vital to printmaking as it is to society and when we make these narratives visible, we can begin to understand one another, to mend our broken past and create a vibrant future,” she adds.

Texan printer and *Black Women of Print* member Delita Martin says artist Elizabeth Catlett was also a key influence to her artistic growth, as with many of the members of the group. “She has definitely been the inspiration and motivation for me to achieve all that I am as a printmaker. She used her art to advocate for social change in both the US and Mexico for over 70 years, with her express purpose to ‘present Black people in their beauty and dignity, for ourselves and for others to understand and enjoy,’” she explains. “My work deals

BLACK IS _____. SCREENPRINT, 2018 / SUPERNOVA STUDY NO. 6, LETTERPRESS, MIXED MEDIA AND COLLAGE, 2020



DELITA MARTIN
@blackboxpress

with the reconstruction of the identity of Black women by piecing together the signs, symbols and language used in everyday life from the times of slavery in America through to today,” Delita says in reference to her prints. “My goal is to create a visual language, to tell the story of women that have often been marginalised.”

Over in San Francisco, surface designer Jen Hewett believes that it is printmaking itself, the very artform, that can build bridges and redress historical inaccuracies. “I think printmakers are the best artists at fostering community. This is partly because we find ourselves in shared studio spaces a lot – presses and exposure units can be large and expensive, and many of us don’t have space for wash out stations, so we have to rely on communal studios where we can share these tools. These spaces become places where we can have informal conversations about

LET ME BREATHE, RELIEF PRINTING, CHARCOAL, DECORATIVE PAPERS, HAND STITCHING, 30W X 44H, 2020 & SAY OUR NAMES, GELATIN PRINTING, RELIEF PRINTING, CHARCOAL, 47.5W X 52H, 2020 (AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOX PRESS STUDIO'S SITE SOON) THE MOON AND THE LITTLE BIRD, 2018; ACRYLIC, CHARCOAL, GELATIN PRINTING, COLLAGRAPH PRINTING, RELIEF PRINTING, DECORATIVE PAPERS, HAND-STITCHING, AND LIQUID GOLD LEAF ON PAPER, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GALERIE MYRTIS; PHOTO BY JOSHUA ASANTE



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DELITA MARTIN





“It’s important to promote women printmakers of colour and inspire the next generation of artists and creatives.”

LATOYA M. HOBBS

our work, troubleshoot each other’s problems, share resources...” Jen says her motivation – or one of them at least – is to inspire others. “I hope to be someone the generation coming up can point to and say, ‘I can do that. There is a living in this for me.’”

Working across letterpress and screenprint, Newark’s Angela Pilgrim says she was searching for something organic when she initially started working in the medium. “I searched for what felt natural to me, a narrative I could relate to and in return I found my own voice. I wanted to articulate what resonated – which was representation, individuality and advocacy of Black women,” she recalls. “I hope to continue to create imagery and stories that will impact people of colour to not only create the world they wish to see, but share what they have learnt with others on their life paths. I also think the more vocal this society can be through art, it will create a domino effect that inspires the masses – in politics, environmental issues and individuality to name a few,” she adds.

Interestingly, Angela draws a meditative process from printmaking which could benefit wider society. “The ability to teach and support someone while they learn a new skill is a great service,” she says. “This intimate form of art requires, and also teaches, so much patience and that could help the community as a whole. I’d love to see more people of colour owning and running these spaces, to have faces that reflect a growing community.”

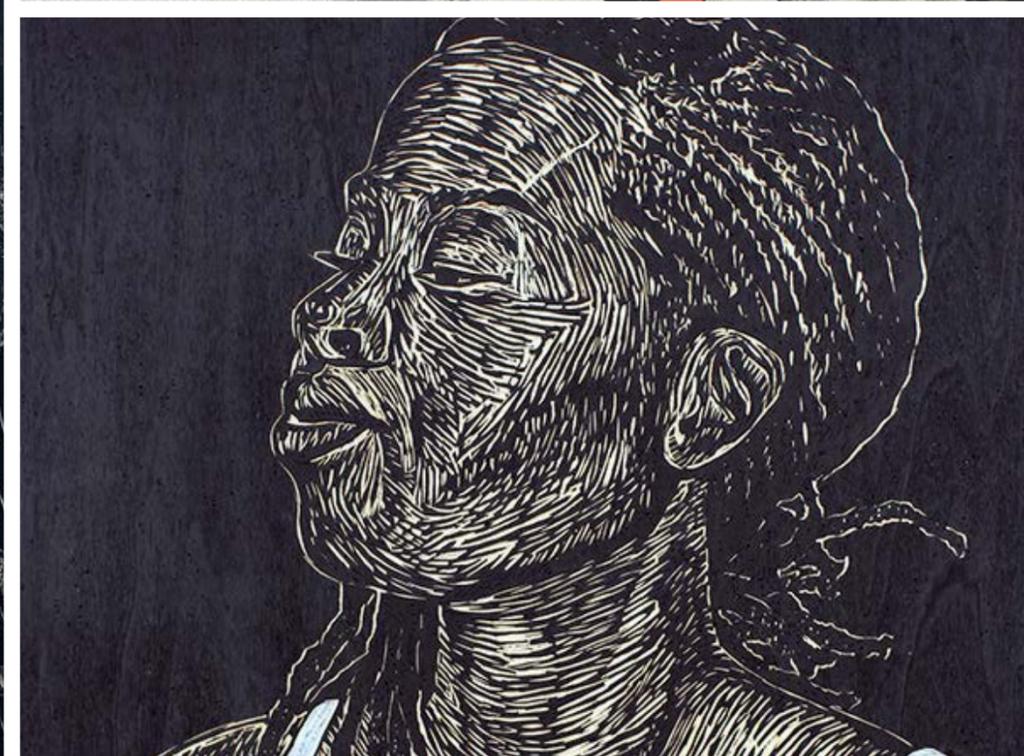
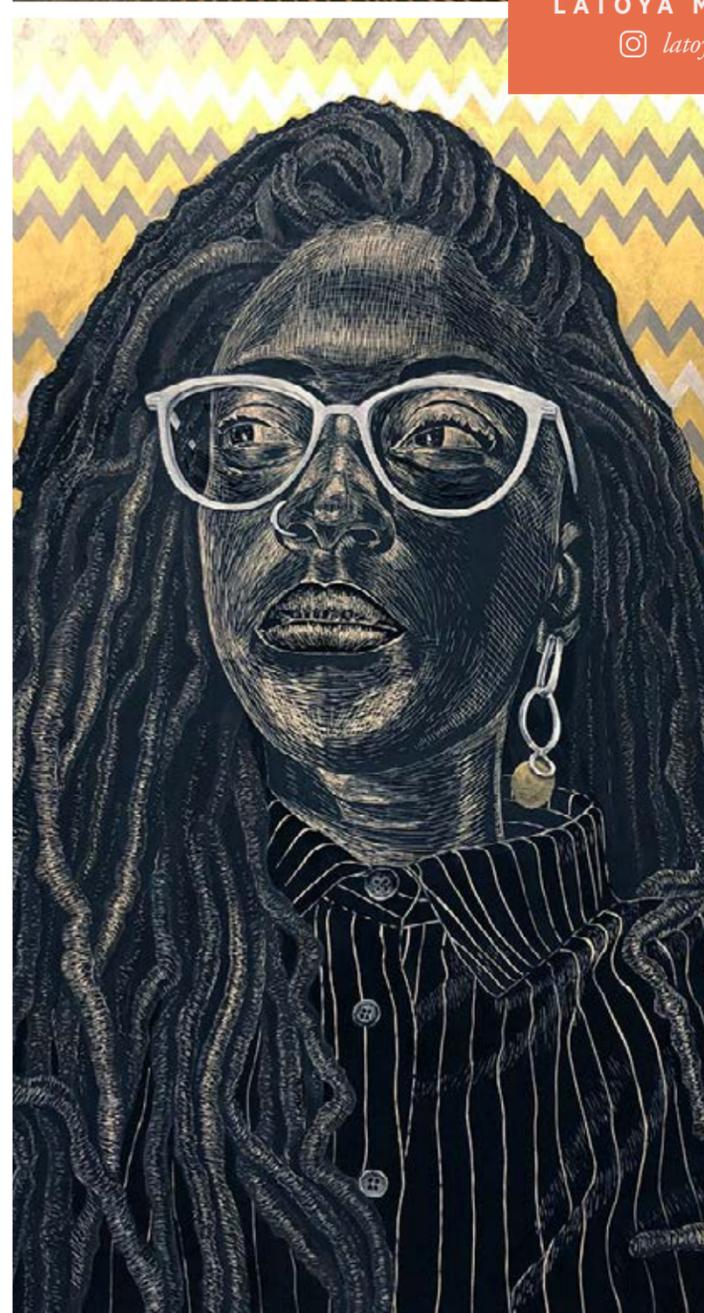
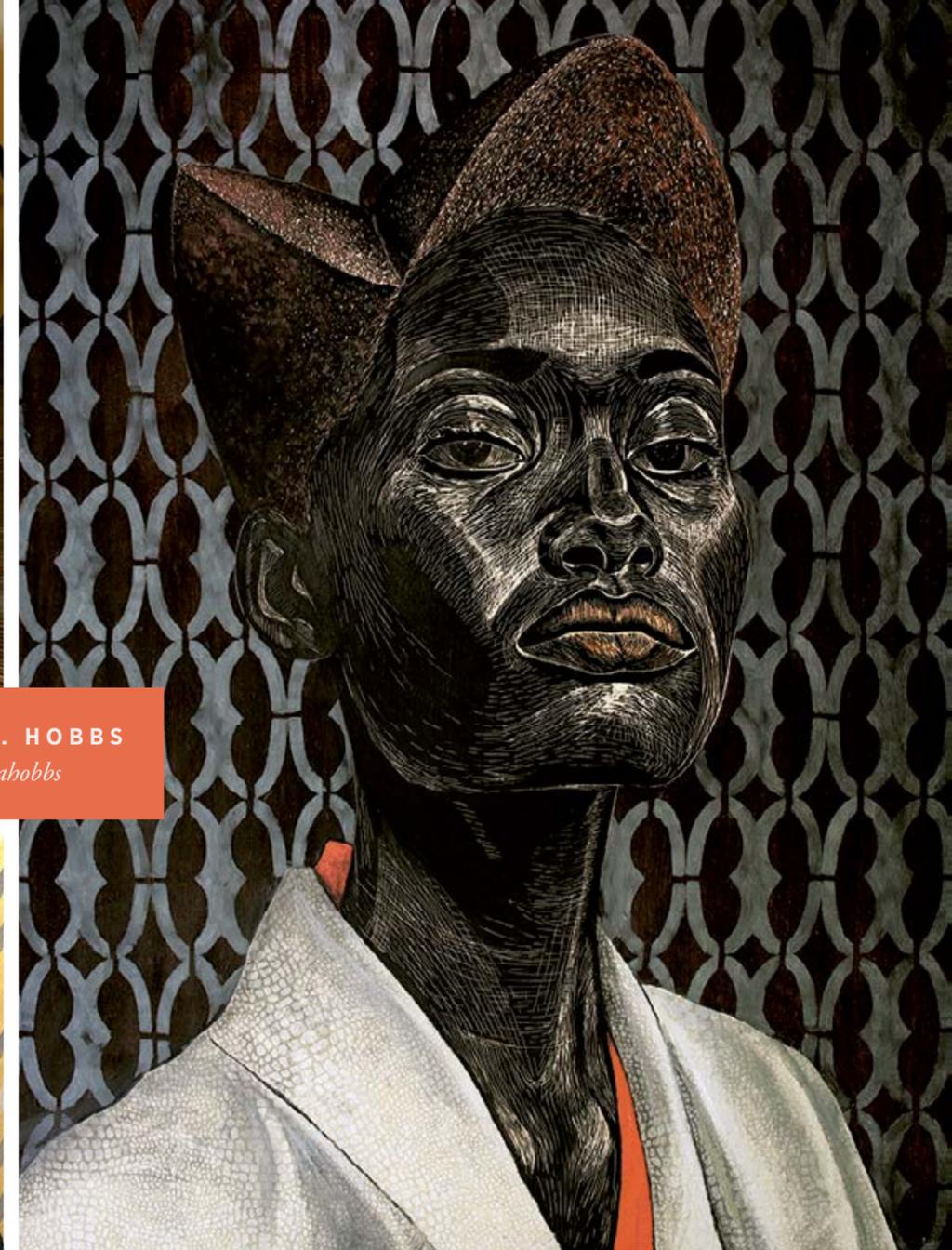
Hoboken-based multi-disciplinary printer Jennifer Mack-Watkins echoes the importance of community and how it inspires her to create and share. “The legacy that I wish to leave for future generations is my love for the

PROSPER: TO DO WELL SUCCEED OR THRIVE / AND THEN, SHE REALIZED SHE WAS ENOUGH / THE SIDE EYE



LATOYA M. HOBBS

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ANGELA PILGRIM
@aplgrm



“I searched for what felt natural to me – a narrative I could relate to and in return I found my own voice.”

ANGELA PILGRIM

medium of printmaking and willingness to share my practice as a printmaker with communities. The process, paper, tools, pigment, techniques, and the connection with the print communities all fuel me to continue to make work. I love learning from others by reading, taking classes, attending artists talks, viewing artworks in galleries or museums, and interacting with artists locally and internationally.”

Based in Baltimore, MD, printmaker Latoya M. Hobbs says that she creates “images that reflect our beauty, spirituality, and offer a more balanced perception of Black womanhood.” As well as this, she is a keen advocate for the medium of print in all forms. “I’d like to educate people about printmaking as an artistic practice and highlight its versatility. I also think it’s important to educate the public on the





notion of editioned prints being original fine art and using them as a way to ease into collecting art,” she adds.

The recurring theme of a lack of representation crops up again when speaking with Latoya. “I feel that Black women are not as readily associated with printmaking at large. That visibility is something I want *Black Women Of Print* to cultivate. It’s important to promote women printmakers of colour so that we can continue to inspire the next generation of artists and creatives,” she says.

Brooklyn-based textile designer Stephanie Santana says there is also something empowering about being a printer. “To be able to reproduce a message or an image independently means we can spread ideas more quickly – we can preserve what’s meaningful to us, in our own voice,” she says. Education too, she believes, is a key aspect



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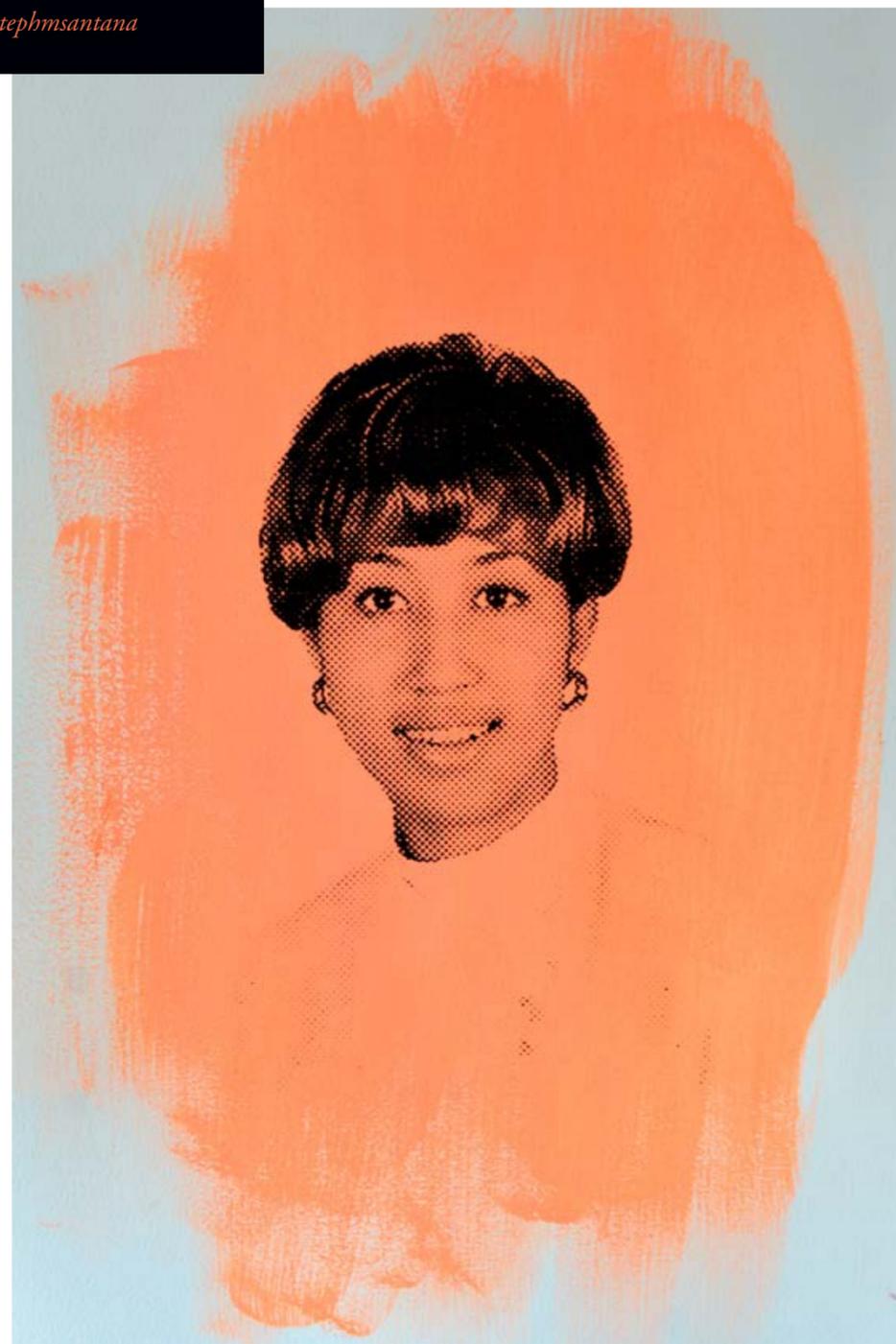


JEN HEWETT
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STEPHANIE SANTANA

Instagram icon [stephmsantana](#)



“I’d love for our collective to preserve the legacy and tradition of our foremothers, while pushing the medium forward through experimentation.”

STEPHANIE SANTANA

of the endeavours of those involved in *Black Women of Print*. “I’d like the group to continue sharing the skill of printmaking so that it’s more accessible. We’re living in a moment where there’s a renewed interest in traditional craft, yet there’s an increasing number of ways to apply an image to a surface. I’d love for our collective to preserve the legacy and tradition of our foremothers, while pushing the medium forward through experimentation. I’d love to see us working on a piece or series together, planning group shows and workshops – who knows, maybe even a printmaking retreat!”

The final word on *Black Women of Print* should of course go to Tanekeya. When speaking of her motivation for starting the group, she says it was a question of archiving the whole story that drove her. “I want to expand on the presence of Black women entering into spaces like the arts and have our narratives join the stage, becoming part of the story,” she explains. “As for the present, I look forward to our members producing printed matter exploring Black identity and creating a space for the exchange of our artistic production within contemporary culture. For the future, I’m excited to see our re-imagining of Blackness being realised,” she concludes. **T**

www.blackwomenofprint.com

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Watch.

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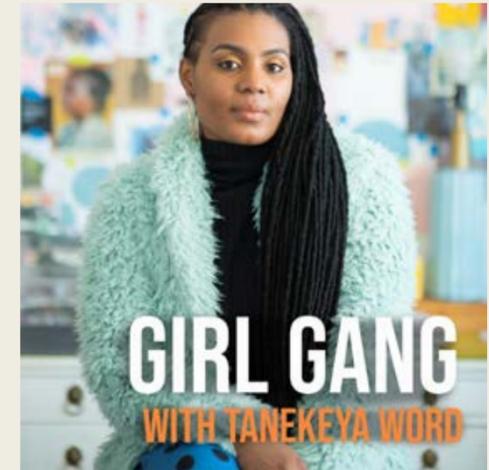
**JENNIFER
MACK-WATKINS**
'MOKUHANGA'



DELITA MARTIN
FOR NATIONAL
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Behind the scenes.

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LATOYA HOBBS

JUNE 2019



JENNIFER
MACK-WATKINS

JULY 2019



Update.

CATCHING UP WITH TANEKEYA WORD • JUNE 2020

What have you been up to since we spoke to you for Issue 6?

Wow, I'm sitting here waiting for Issue 11 to arrive in the mail to the US and cannot believe so much time has passed since we spoke in early 2019.

One of the biggest milestones is that I completed my doctoral course load in pursuit of a PhD in Urban Education with a specialization in Art Education and I am at the half way mark of research and writing for my dissertation. It has been a real journey.

The second milestone is at being 90% completed with the assembling of the inaugural biannual Black Women of Print portfolio. It's been a labour of love and we only have one element left to complete. The women involved have really amazed me with their prints.

The third milestone is that after years of research, I finally wrote a proposal for my first book.

How has lockdown affected your own work?

Well, my screenprinting supplies and relief printing ink are locked up in my University's printing facility, so that wasn't a happy moment. Due to accessibility, I have picked up painting and illustrating again and found that I really missed it. Also, I have fallen in love with watercolor after experimenting with Case for Making's single pigment colours. Now, I am thinking of ways to merge my love of painting and drawing into my printmaking practice more.

In terms of printmaking, I began mapping a 14 print linocut series onto 17"x17" linoleum blocks, that's actually the largest size I have ever carved. Currently, I am teaching myself non-toxic intaglio and monoprinting via reading tons of books and

DM'ing experienced printmakers too. All in all, the lockdown has given me room to experiment and play without worrying about sticking to strictly one medium, I can love all media the same and even have them collaborate in my practice.

How has the Black Women Of Print project developed?

We are very clear in our mission and vision and so united with our voice. Building with the founding members: Angela, Delita, Jennifer, LaToya, Leslie and Stephanie is such a true sisterhood. We are one another's biggest supporters and we want to expand the organization more than ever with members. So, we decided that taking it a step further as a non-profit is the best way to assist more Black women printmakers in the present and the future. We're currently fundraising to reach our goals for non-profit status, programming and having the ability to assist individual Black women printmakers with their needs and goals.

Black Women of Print is building a sustainable model – we plan on being around long after this generation.

Have you met as a group, exhibited together, etc?

We have not met as a group yet. We are so eager to meet in person as a group and had plans to do so, the COVID-19 pandemic cancelled those immediate face to face plans.

As of now, we text, call, email, and Zoom one another to stay in touch, have meetings and just to laugh out loud as an act of self-care – we're also pen pals and mail one another gifts to put a smile on one another's face.

We have had a few organisations reach out to chat about exhibitions, so we shall see where it goes. We will have lots of wonderful work to show when the time comes.

How has the visibility of Black Women printmakers changed in recent years?

The visibility is still the same – underrepresented. This week, in the United States of America, there were protests in all 50 states – at the same time for the murder of several Black men, women and children and really it has been brewing for decades. Global citizens have joined in support of the United States protest as colonialism has oppressed so many Black bodies and bodies of colour.

Being underrepresented is an effect of being minoritized, this must be understood in order for change, for visibility to take place. I educate from this perspective as to why the discipline of printmaking is a byproduct of colonialism and the need for equity.

Can you tell us about your new member Leslie Diuguid of Du-Good Press and how she came to be a member of the group?

Leslie is actually a founding member that slightly missed the deadline for Issue 6 with her entrance into Black Women of Print. She's a force! We love her energy, her Do Good personality – her last name is befitting – and she is an absolutely skilled master screenprinter and has printed for your favorite artist's favorite artist.

Not many Black women printmakers own their own printmaking studio with the equipment and supplies needed to produce work on their own time. Leslie Diuguid does and so does Delita Martin.



Update.

CATCHING UP WITH TANEKEYA WORD • JUNE 2020

Your instagram feed has lots of great clips of many Black Women printmakers past and present, can you share some of your favourite quotes or stories from these and a link to where people can find out more about these artists?

My favorite stories from Black women printmakers are often the ones that have nothing to do with their Black creative labor. I like to see the intersections of Black women – not just one angle. Then, we can learn to appreciate them as layered women and see how their lived experiences are interwoven within their works of art and not only see them for labour.

For instance Ann Johnson ([@solesisterart on Instagram](#)) is a brilliant printmaker and art educator – but she's also hilarious! I have joked with her that she should have been a comedian.

Where can people find out more about currently practicing Black Women printmakers?

If you'd like to check out our instagram – [@blackwomenofprint](#) – there are also contemporary Black women printmakers featured there. We're always updating with more content that is authentic to the voices of Black women from an emic perspective.

In these changing times of protest and pandemics, do you feel that printmaking and creativity can be a voice for good/change?

I am directly reflecting on Emory Douglas, the Black Arts Movement, AfriCobra and various Black people and Black movements who have used art in times of protest. What we're seeing isn't new for Black people – there has always been protest and we understand that systemic oppression is a pandemic. It is one of the longest diseases brought on by colonialism that has permeated the globe. So, my question is, are the people upholding systemic oppression ready to change? Because we won't stop fighting for equity.

FUNDRAISING

Designed by Tanekeya and printed by Leslie, all proceeds from sales of this poster will assist with Black Women of Print becoming a non-profit organization and to implement programming and individual support to Black women printmakers.

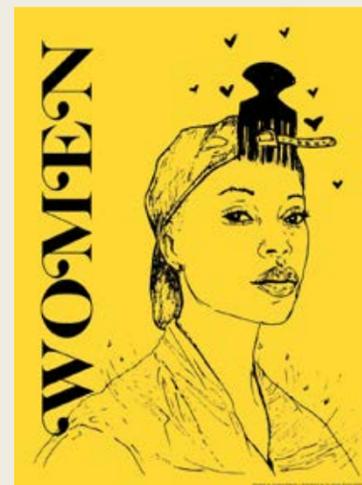
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Artwork by Tanekeya Word



LESLIE DIUGUID
[@dugoodpress](#)

Proceeds from these posters will go to other non-profits in conjunction with Du-Good in Unity, where the founders are Leslie Diuguid and Erin Lynn Welsh.



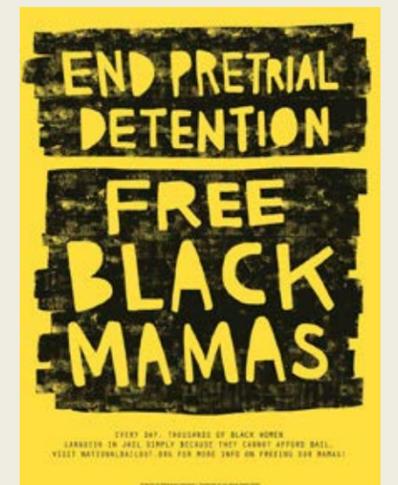
Artwork by Angela Pilgrim



Artwork by LaToya Hobbs



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