



A CONVERSATION
WITH THE WORLD:
EATONVILLE

SEPTEMBER 13 –
DECEMBER 20, 2008

ZORA NEALE HURSTON
NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF FINE ARTS

MUSEUM SPONSOR

Incorporated in 1988 as a non-profit/tax exempt historic preservation organization, the Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc.(P.E.C.) presents year-round, multi-disciplinary arts and humanities programs. P.E.C.'s mission is to enhance the considerable cultural resources of Eatonville, Florida, which is “ the oldest incorporated African American municipality in the United States” and the home town of writer, folklorist, and anthropologist, Zora Neale Hurston; to educate the public about Eatonville's historic and cultural significance; and to use the community's heritage and cultural vibrancy for its economic development.

From its founding, P.E.C. has recognized that the cultural arts are key to a community's revitalization. Established in 1990, the Zora Neale Hurston National Museum of Fine Arts(The Hurston)is a place “in the heart of the community” where the public can view the work of artists of African ancestry, living in the United States and/or throughout the Diaspora. Now in its 19th year as a visual arts museum, The Hurston represents one of P.E.C.'s major initiatives as the organization seeks to develop Historic Eatonville into one of America's premier heritage communities.

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EXHIBITION CREDITS

GALLERY ASSISTANTS

Jimmy Scott
Benjamin Tyson

RECEPTION HOSPITALITY –SEPTEMBER 13, 2008

Darden Restaurants
JR International Enterprises
Maye St. Julien, “All Things Beautiful”

CATALOG CREDITS

FRONT COVER: Ernestine E. McWhite
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

TEXT: Excerpts from interviews edited by
Lonnie Graham.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Lonnie Graham with
Beth H. Douglas

A CONVERSATION WITH THE WORLD: EATONVILLE

AN EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHY

LONNIE GRAHAM

SEPTEMBER 13 – DECEMBER 20, 2008

RECEPTION: SEPTEMBER 13, 6:00–8:00 P.M.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON NATIONAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
227 EAST KENNEDY BOULEVARD
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 32751

GALLERY HOURS: 9 A.M.–4 P.M. MONDAY – FRIDAY
GROUP TOURS AVAILABLE BY RESERVATION

ACKNOWLEDEMENTS

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc.(P.E.C.), I want to express our organization's heartfelt thanks to Lonnie Graham. A "visual anthropologist," he brings to the Zora Neale Hurston National Museum of Fine Arts(The Hurston) compelling photographs which speak to us all about the intrinsic beauty and strength which reside in the people of the historic Eatonville community. Certainly, his work will capture the attention of the discerning eye.

As a member of the National Planners for the annual Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities(ZORA! Festival), Lonnie Graham volunteers considerable time and energy. How generous of him to include Eatonville residents in his "conversations with the world."

In addition to our expression of appreciation to the artist, we also acknowledge the support of two area businesses – Don Reid Ford(Maitland) and Spirit Printing(Orlando). Oftentimes, "logistics" are critical to the mounting of a successful exhibition; and Rusty Reid has been a good neighbor, providing courtesy transportation each time Lonnie Graham has been in residence for this project. Similarly, the Cowart Family at Spirit Printing have "gone the extra mile" to ensure we would have this beautiful catalog ready for The Hurston's opening reception.

Finally, we extend our thanks to Darden Restaurants, JR International Enterprises, and to Maye St. Julien of "All Things Beautiful." Their contributions help us to provide our guests with really warm hospitality.

N. Y. Nathiri, Executive Director

Activities at The Hurston are sponsored, in part, by United Arts of Central Florida, Inc. with additional support by Darden Restaurants Foundation and JR International Enterprises

United Arts
OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



A CONVERSATION WITH THE WORLD: EATONVILLE

This portion of the ongoing project, A Conversation with the World was commissioned by the Zora Neal Hurston National Museum in Eatonville, Florida.

The purpose of this project is to establish a rudimentary template by which to measure humanity. The essential questions used to establish the assessment seem to evoke a universal response as the questions address universal issues relative to culture, heritage, faith, creativity, and our inevitable future.

The privilege of conducting an in depth conversation in this community addresses the openness and depth of the citizens who comprise this community. Although the people of Eatonville themselves are varied, the essential quality that seems to prevail are a resolute integrity and commitment to their personal ideals.

The bond that these individuals share is one that resonates universally, as the essential aspects of our humanity are described again and again through each conversation. Through the course of this interaction, Eatonville has proven once again that the members of its community are insightful, resolute, sensitive, and welcoming.

As the conversation continues and Mr. Thomas in San Francisco answers similarly to Mrs. McWhite in Eatonville, who answers similarly to Mr. Hadj in Senegal, it reinforces the essential nature that is common to all humanity.

As we begin to understand common aspects of our cultures and societies we accept our essential selves and celebrate our superficial differences.

If we are to break the bonds of a repetitious and impulsive nature we must accept the responsibility of our roles in the community and the world. Our pathway is clear. We can continue to remain victims of human nature, bound to repeat our mistakes of the past, or advance the culture as we continue to respond in an informed manner to what we have learned and understand about one another in order to dispel fear and misunderstanding.

L: So, then, are you dependent on your family, and what's the nature that relationship?

S: I'm dependent upon my family because that's—my family established in me goals—not goals, but what is right and what is wrong. My character was established from my family. My mother always said, "I will wade in my own blood for my children." I always knew that there was nothing that she would not do for me, and for my sister and my brother.



*STEPHANIE Y. STAGGERS
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008*

L: What, in your opinion, is the meaning of life in relation to death?

M: Life is what you make it. Death is guaranteed, so you don't focus on it. Dying. You're supposed to, you know that you're going to die. But you don't focus yourself on "when I gone die," or "how am I gonna die." We just let that be.

L: What is your opinion of Western culture in terms of its spirituality?

M: Some people are being taught spiritually. And some people are in it for the M-O-N-E-Y, that's it. Some people better in the church than others, and those that think they're better because they can give a little more money. God taught the poor people. He didn't have exclusive people that he taught.



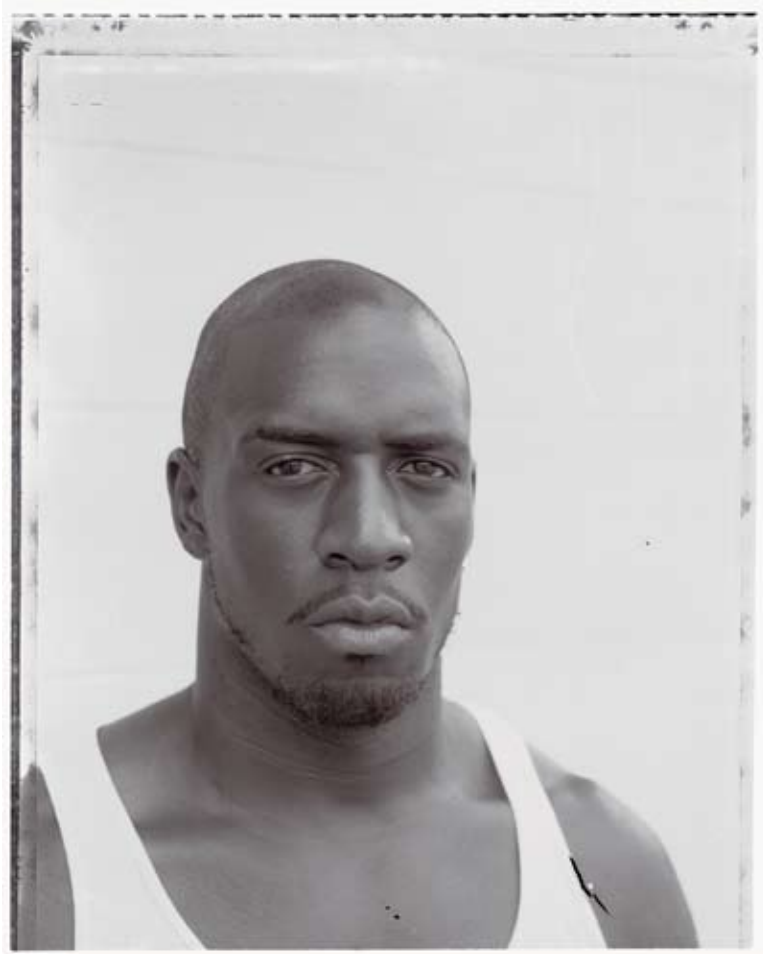
*ELLA J. DINKINS
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008*

L: How dependent are you on your family? And what's the nature of that relationship?

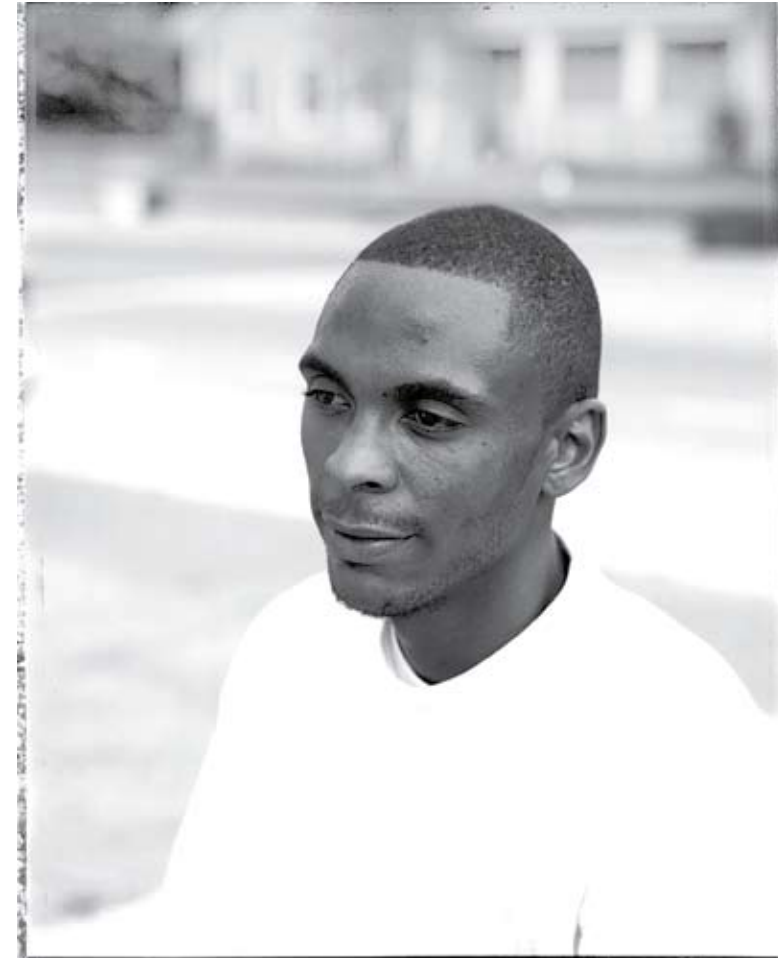
C: I'm very dependent on my family. That's all I have. My family believes in family. We do what we call Crawfish Bowls to bring family--we have a quilt, that goes back as far as my great grandmother's mother. When each child is being born, it's a patch you have to take back to who has the quilt, and each child that's born has a patch on it. When my cousins and uncles went to the military, they brought back a patch, and it's passed on to the first daughter of the family. Each piece has a story, at the Crawfish Bowl it's passed down. But you have to tell the story of the quilt and how it came about. You have to understand the responsibilities of that quilt. When you get that quilt, you actually get to enter into what we call womanhood. Now at this Crawfish Bowl it'll be passed down to me. It skipped my mother because, you know, my mother she passed away, so now I'll take the quilt and when my first daughter is born--she gets it. If you don't get a first daughter, it goes to the first son, so it keeps going. We believe strongly in keeping our history because our family came through a lot, and we have to know it, they want us to know the reason. Why we have this, the reason that land was for us, the reason why this house is for us, the importance of the house, the importance of the quilt, and the importance of this land and the tree that's on the land...



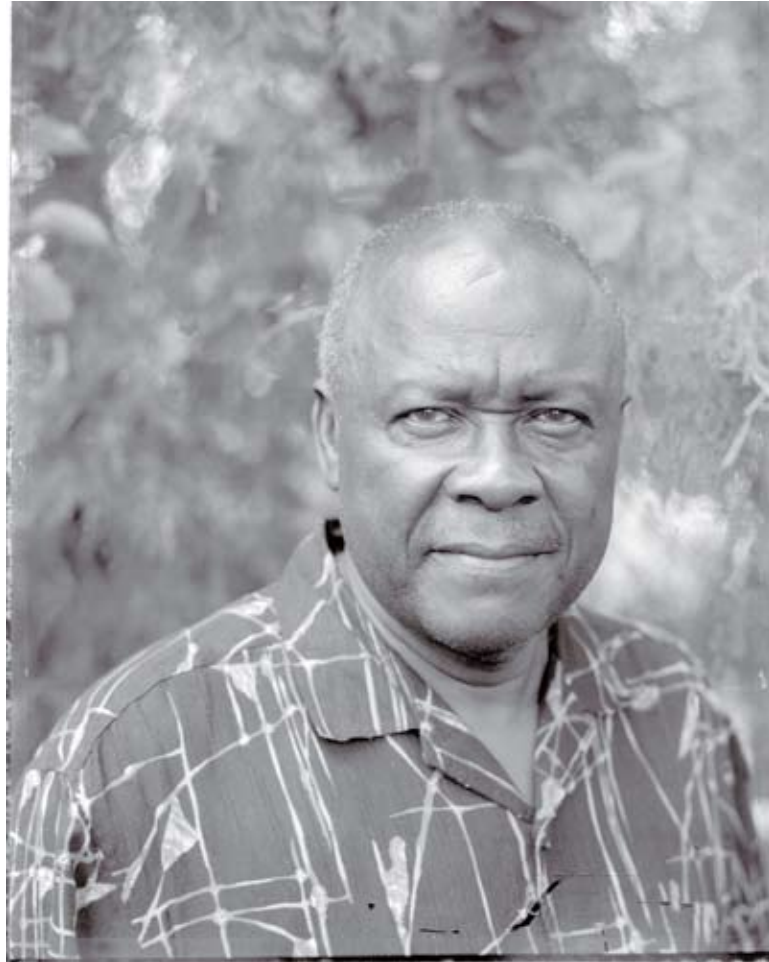
*CIARA ST. JULIEN
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008*



CARLOS V. WRIGHT
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008



REGINALD BALDWIN
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008



TED HOLLINS
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008



ABRAHAM GORDEN
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008

L: What do you think is the role of the ancestors?

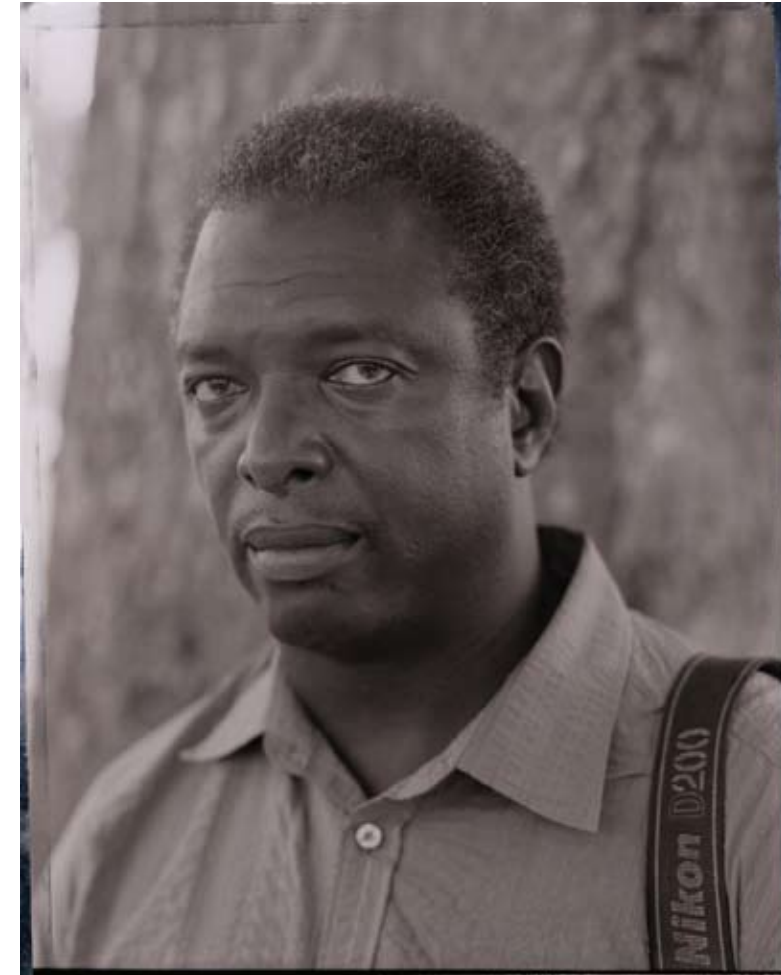
T: The role of the ancestors I guess is to help bring about the continuity between the generations in the strongest possible fashion. It is to prepare their children and grandchildren to face tomorrow with the highest dignity. The greatest pursuit is to make life better for their children.

L: How dependent are you on your family, and what's the nature of that relationship?

T: I am very dependent on my family for moral support.

L: How about in a spiritual sense?

T: Right, moral support and encouragement, bonding, advice and communication. I'm in touch with my family quite a bit. They've instilled in me a desire, or an instinct to do the best that I can do, to be as honest as possible and as hard-working as possible.



*TED HOLLINS
EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 2008*

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Reginald Baldwin
Eatonville, Florida 2008
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Ella J. Dinkins
Eatonville, Florida 2008
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Leroy Filmore Sr.
Eatonville, Florida 2008
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Abraham Gorden
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polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Ted Hollins
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polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Beulah R. Jones
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Vera L. King
Eatonville, Florida 2008
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Bernie Lee
Eatonville, Florida 2008
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Vincent McCall
Eatonville, Florida 2003
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Lee McKinney
Eatonville, Florida 2003
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Ernestine E. McWhite
Eatonville, Florida 2008
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Ciara St. Julien
Eatonville, Florida 2008
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Ruford Sheppard
Eatonville, Florida 2008
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Stephanie Y. Staggers
Eatonville, Florida 2008
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Carlos V. Wright
Eatonville, Florida 2008
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

Mosella Wells
Eatonville, Florida 2008
polaroid type 55 negative, digitally printed on arches cover

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lonnie Graham is presently a professor of visual art at Pennsylvania State University at University Park, Pennsylvania, as well as Acting associate Director at The Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

He studied fine art photography at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and recieved advanced degrees San Francisco Art Institute.

Graham has won major commissions and awards for travel to Papua New Guinea to document the harvest of the Woowoosi tree and is also the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts/ Pew Charitable Trust Travel Grant for travel to Ghana. Graham is a Pew Fellow having been recognized by the Pew Charitable Trust in Philadelphia Pennsylvania. In 2005, he was awarded the Hazlett Memorial Award and conferred the distinction of as Artist of the Year in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and presented the Governor's Award by Governor Edward Rendell.

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EATONVILLE, FLORIDA 32751