

Engaging Milwaukee around WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE



Lucía Lozano & Sheri Williams Pannell

CITY OF MILWAUKEE OVERVIEW

Demographics

POPULATION

600,154

MEDIAN AGE

31.6

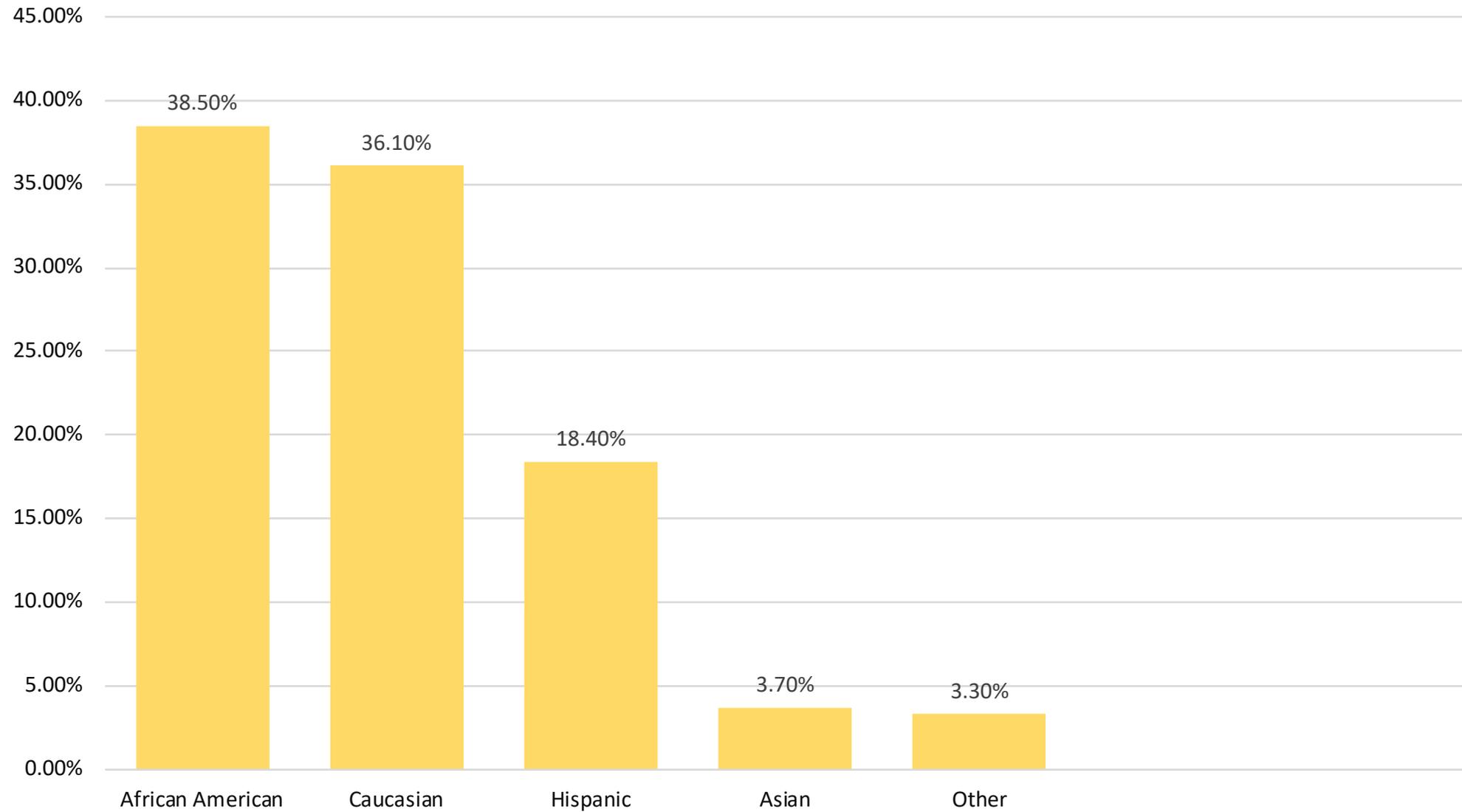
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$37,495

POVERTY RATE

26.8%

Racial/Ethnic Diversity



Sneak Peek event

April 12, 2016

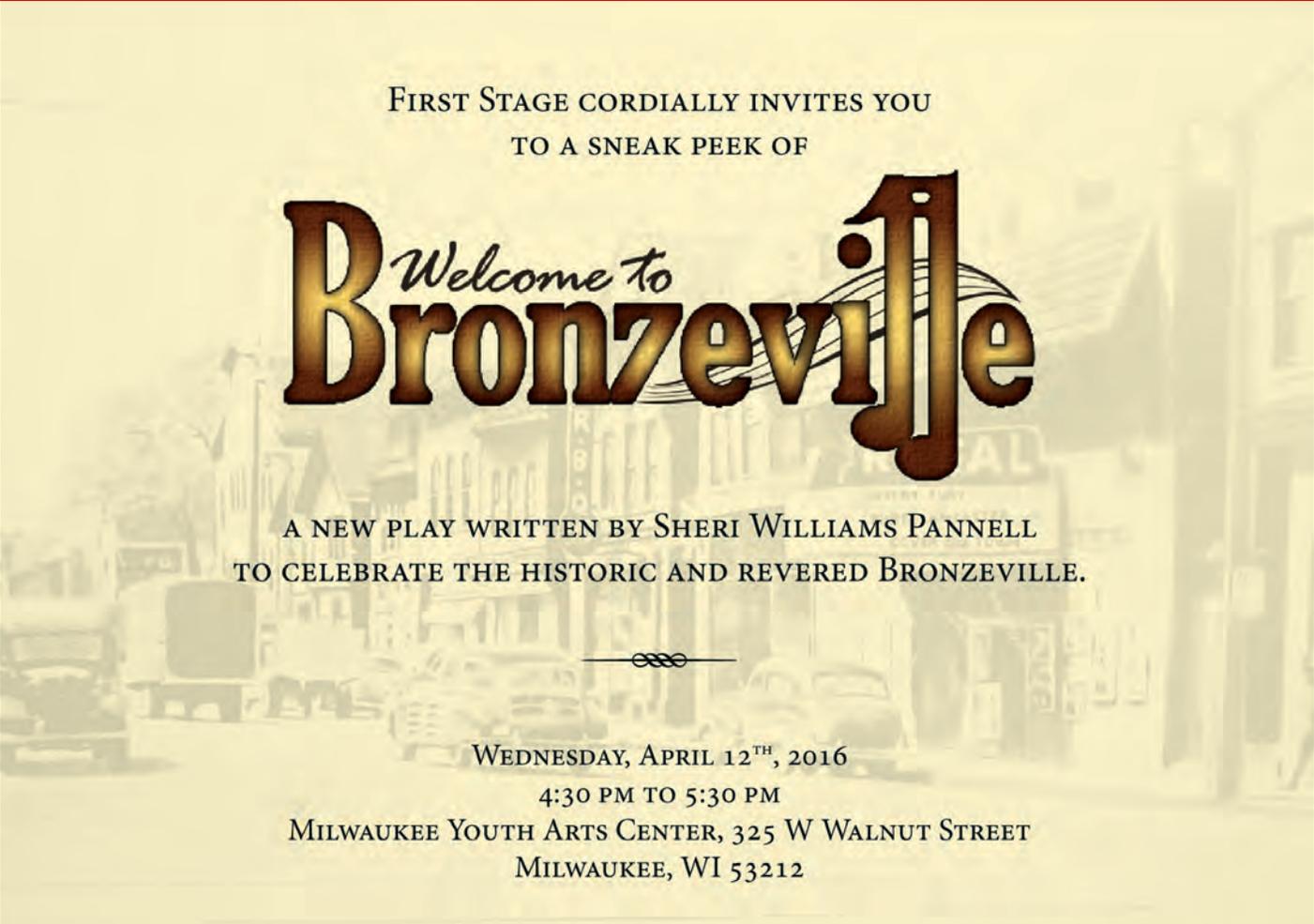
FIRST STAGE CORDIALLY INVITES YOU
TO A SNEAK PEEK OF

Welcome to
Bronzeville

A NEW PLAY WRITTEN BY SHERI WILLIAMS PANNELL
TO CELEBRATE THE HISTORIC AND REVERED BRONZEVILLE.

——

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12TH, 2016
4:30 PM TO 5:30 PM
MILWAUKEE YOUTH ARTS CENTER, 325 W WALNUT STREET
MILWAUKEE, WI 53212



Attendees: 76



BRONZEVILLE WEEK

August 6, 2016



THE POLICE IN OUR COMMUNITY

Panel Conversation

MYAC – August 8, 2016



Partners:

- Alderwoman Milele Coggs
- Friends of Bronzeville development organization
- Fire and Police Commission
- City of Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention
- League of Martin – African American police officers
- Artist Mutope Johnson

Attendees: 70

WHAT MAKES A STRONG COMMUNITY

Spoken Word workshop

MLK Library – November 12, 2016



Attendees: 16

WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE opening night

January 13, 2017



Brown Street on the



Brown Street on the



Brown Street on the



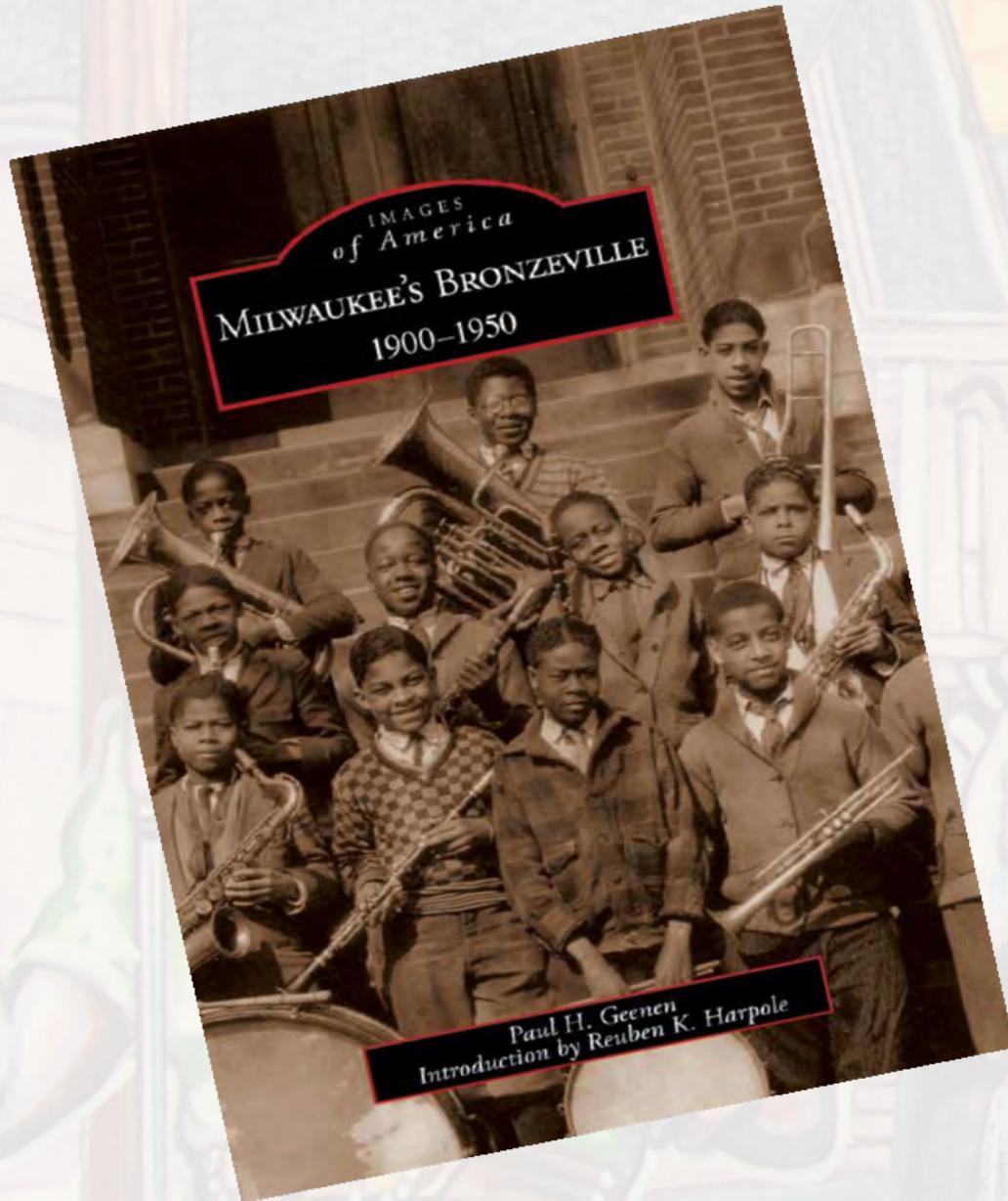
MILWAUKEE'S BRONZEVILLE, 1900-1950

Historic photo exhibit

On view at the Theater January 13-February 5

Goals:

- To set the stage for WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE
- To honor Milwaukee's African American rich history
- To enhance the audience's theater experience



The photographs in this exhibit were carefully chosen by Paul Geenen for his book *Milwaukee's Bronzeville, 1900-1950*.

There is a lot of beauty in this community. By telling the Bronzeville story, I hope to inspire young people and families of all races to forge their own journey of self-discovery, re-examine the choices they make, be more thoughtful to one another, and find ways to connect with and celebrate their unique cultural heritages.

~Sheri Williams Pannell
playwright and director of *Welcome to Bronzeville*







BRONZEVILLE –
A CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY
Gallery Exhibit

On view January 13 – February 5, 2017



ARTWORK BY MUTOPÉ J. JOHNSON

Welcome to Bronzeville!

A CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY

This exhibition hopes to give the viewer a small glimpse into the many stories that reflect the history of Milwaukee's African American community, and to inspire many conversations. The artists invited to this exhibition are African American, live in Milwaukee, and span different ages. Each of them explored the community from their own perspective.

-Della Wells, curator

ARTISTS

Blanche Brown • Corey Fells • Ben Higgins • Vedale Hill
Mutópe J. Johnson • Christopher McIntyre Perceptions • William Muhammad
Mikal Floyd-Pruitt • Willie Weaver-Bey • Jeanette Wright-Claus

GOOD NEIGHBOR DAY EVENT

January 14, 2017

An event for children around being a good neighbor, one of the main themes in WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE. Organized in partnership with PBS Kids and the Marcus Center. Activities provided by PBS Kids, the Fire and Police Departments, Children's Hospital and First Stage.

Attendees: 40



FIRST STAGE
Introducing Arts Through Stories

MILWAUKEE PBS

Marcus Center
for the Performing Arts

Good Neighbor Day

Good neighbors watch out for each other and take care of each other. Meet the people that make your community better, and learn through fun activities what you can do to be a good neighbor and make a difference in your community. Join us in this special event!

First Stage, the Marcus Center and Milwaukee PBS KIDS are proud to host Good Neighbor Day!

January 14, 2017
2:00 - 3:00 pm
Bradley Pavilion
Marcus Center for the Performing Arts
929 N Water Street

RSVP! Go to MilwaukeePBS.org to reserve your spots. Space is limited.

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
with chances to win prizes (no purchase necessary)
Recommended for children ages 7 and up

ROUNDY'S

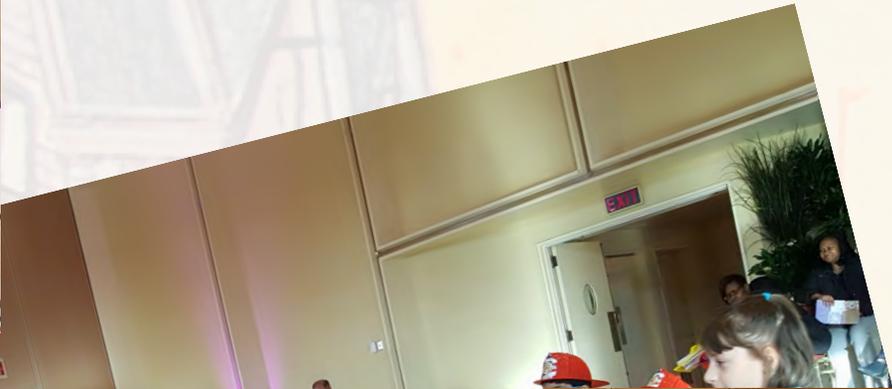
Welcome to Bronzeville

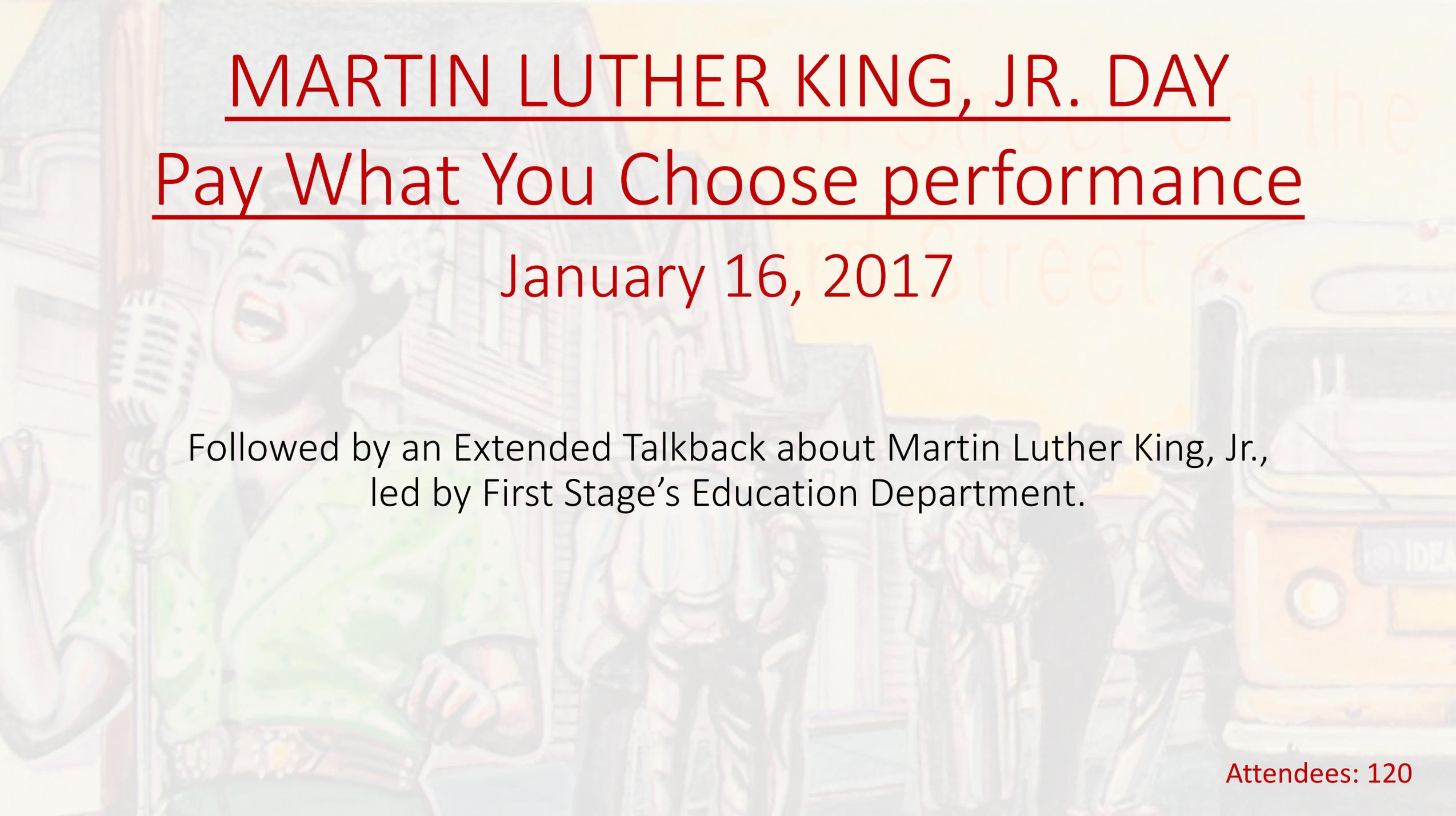
Milwaukee PBS KIDS
Launches 1/16/17
Channel 10.3

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

SPECIAL OFFER: Extend your family's experience by attending the 3:30 pm performance of First Stage's WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE, at the Todd Wehr Theater in the Marcus Center, following this event. This First Stage production is a coming-of-age story in 1950s Milwaukee that highlights the importance of being a good neighbor. SPECIAL COMMUNITY PRICING available. Advance ticket purchase is encouraged. Go to www.firststage.org/bronzeville for more information and to purchase your tickets.

Visit MilwaukeePBS.org to RSVP for Good Neighbor Day



The background features a stylized illustration. On the left, a woman with her mouth open as if singing into a vintage microphone. She is wearing a green patterned jacket. To her right, a group of people is depicted in a protest or march, with some raising their fists. In the background, there are buildings and a yellow bus. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century social realist art.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

Pay What You Choose performance

January 16, 2017

Followed by an Extended Talkback about Martin Luther King, Jr.,
led by First Stage's Education Department.

Attendees: 120

GALLERY NIGHT & ARTIST MARKET

January 20, 2017, 5:00 to 9:00 pm





MILWAUKEE JAZZ – THEN AND NOW

Panel Conversation

January 21, 2017, 5:30 to 7:30 pm

In collaboration with **First Stage**, the **Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra**, and the **Milwaukee Historical Society**, a lively presentation and panel discussion to explore the importance of jazz in building community. Moderated by Ben Barbera, Milwaukee County Historical Society curator, with music by Sheri Williams Pannell and **MYSO's Bronzeville Jazz Quartet**. Panelists and special guests included legends Manty Ellis, Carl Allen, Cliff Gribble and Billy Johnson.

Attendees: 30

Brown Street on the

MKEJazz January 21, 2017 DAY

January 21, 2017



BLACK–JEWISH RELATIONS IN MILWAUKEE

Extended Talkback

January 21, 2017

Facilitated conversation on the Jewish and African American common history in Bronzeville and how these two communities can work together to help solve Milwaukee's racism and segregation. Presented by the **African Heritage Jewish Community Dialogue, First Stage**, and the **Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation**, in partnership with **Congregation Sinai, Jewish Museum Milwaukee**, and the **NAACP-Milwaukee Branch**.

Attendees: 110



OUR MKE COMMUNITY THEN AND NOW Intergenerational Talkback

January 25, 2017

immediately followed school performance

Moderated by **Sheri Williams Pannell**. Special guests included local community leaders Fred Reed and Dr. Harry Oden, and Milwaukee native and jazz artist Cliff Gribble.

Attendees: 85



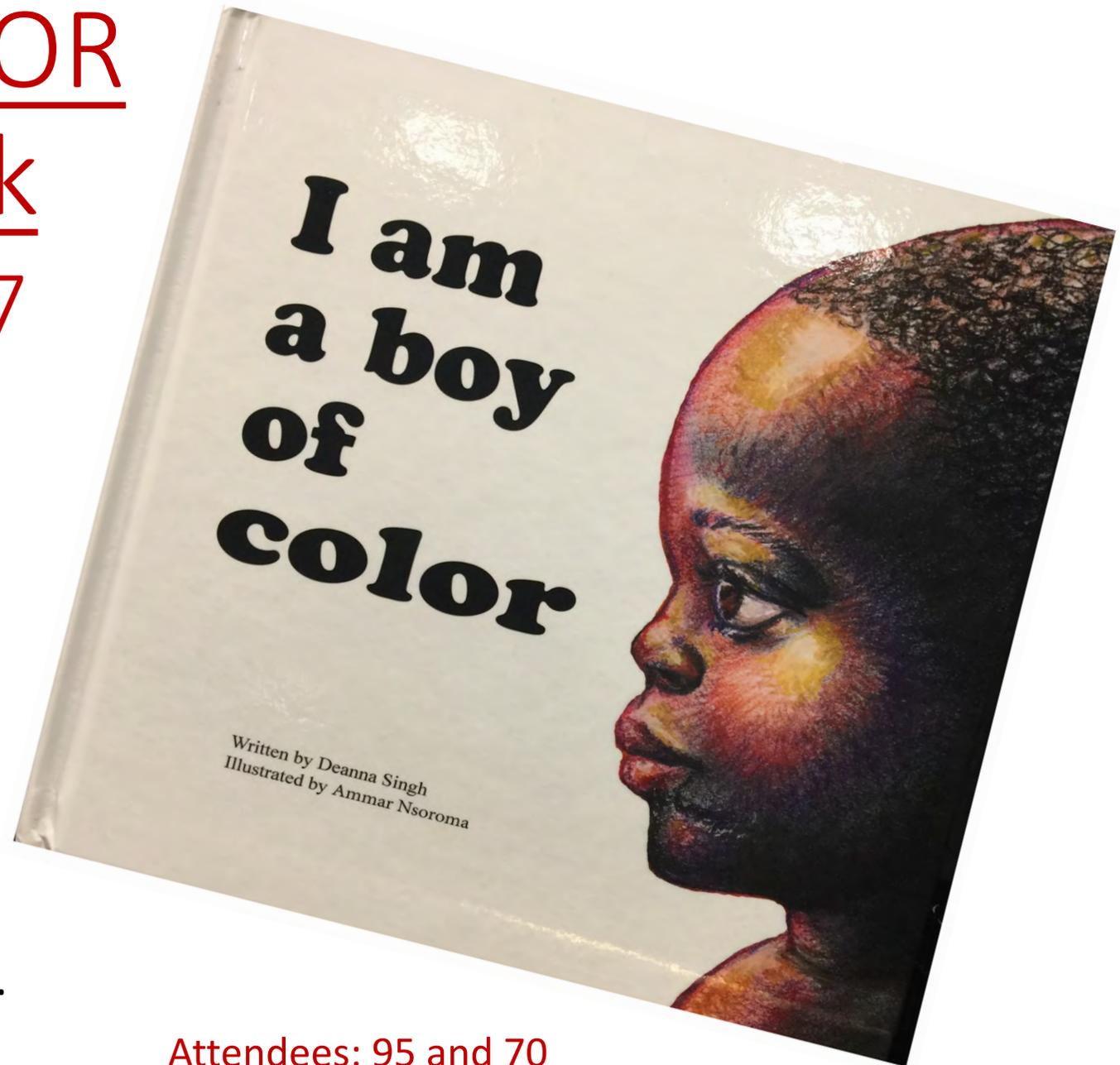
I AM A BOY OF COLOR

Extended Talkback

Jan. 28 & Feb. 4, 2017



Presented by local author and community leader Deanna Singh.



Attendees: 95 and 70



POLICE–COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Facilitated conversations
with youth and police officers

February 3, 2017

Performance immediately followed.

Attendees: 59 teens – 93 total, including facilitators and police officers. 8 Circles, 7-8 teens per circle.



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WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE

Tickets Sold

Sales Category	Percent to forecast	No. tickets sold
Single tickets	95.19%	2,008
Single Ticket Exchanges		81
Subscriptions	56.76%	832
Sub Ticket Exchanges		355
Public groups	282.49%	632
Public Comps		645
School Comps		472
Schools	95.94%	7,399
Totals	91.79%	12,424



WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE:
A guide to Bronzeville
and surrounding neighborhoods

Distributed to families who attended the public performances and to teachers who attended school performances

From the play to
the neighborhood,
Welcome to

A guide to **EXPLORE** the past,
present and future

Bronzeville!

of a quintessential
MILWAUKEE story.

Coming to Milwaukee

THE STORY OF MILWAUKEE'S Bronzeville began over 100 years ago when a small group of African American families moved to Milwaukee after the Civil War. During World War I, increasing numbers moved from

farms in southern states like Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas to northern states like Wisconsin. Their hope was to find higher-paying factory jobs, in addition to escaping Jim Crow

segregation and providing new opportunities for their families. This was called the First Great Migration. At the time, Milwaukee's tanneries, foundries, and factories were bustling with activity, turning raw materials into finished products like leather goods, engines,

auto frames, and machinery used in the war. In fact, Milwaukee was nicknamed the *Machine Shop of the World*. A larger wave of Southerners came north during World War II in the Second Great Migration. In 1900, Milwaukee's African American population was about 900, growing to over 20,000 by 1950.

Bronzeville's Golden Era

DURING THE 1940S, 50S AND 60S, Milwaukee's black community prospered. While industrial jobs were exhausting and sometimes dangerous, higher incomes meant a realistic path to the middle class for African American families. Men worked in major companies like the Milwaukee Road, A. O. Smith, Allis Chalmers, Briggs & Stratton, Allen-Bradley, Harnischfeger, Pfister & Vogel Tannery, American Motors, and the breweries - Schlitz, Pabst, Miller, and Blatz.

Neighbors weren't just neighbors, they were guardians that looked out for each other. When someone else's child (stepbrother), whoever happened to be a witness should reprimand that child in place of the parents. The community strengthened itself with the protection of each other. —Patrice Tate

Bronzeville's most popular attraction was its jazz clubs. Jazz legends came to town to hear local musicians play Milwaukee's distinctive jazz-and-blues style.

Daddy answered an ad for a chemist at Schlitz Brewery. Daddy's name was Jackson Alexander Riley. They thought they had a white man until he walked in the door. And after he worked in, of course, the job was no longer available. He had a degree in botany from the University of Iowa! Yet he ended up as a porter for the old Burton's grocery store which was down on Third and State. —DeLores Riley

AT THE HEART OF BRONZEVILLE was Walnut Street, a thriving corridor of restaurants, barbershops, beauty parlors, record stores, tailors, jewelers, hotels, law firms, and the beautiful Regal Theater. At its peak, there were about 180 black-owned businesses.

—Ruben Harpole, Historian and Honorary Mayor of Bronzeville

THE MID-20TH CENTURY was a time of prosperity and camaraderie in this community that also welcomed European immigrants and Jews. But Milwaukee was deeply segregated and African Americans were often discriminated against in communities with predominantly European backgrounds. In fact, the music greats who visited Milwaukee stayed at boarding houses or with friends in Bronzeville because they were not welcome at many white-owned venues.



The Golden Era of Bronzeville embodied a great pride and promise felt by African American families in Milwaukee, in spite of segregation.

And so, Bronzeville became a destination where life was good and promised to get better. Family, community, faith, work, and education were pillars of life in this tight-knit community.



Doors were always open. You could go in someone's house and leave a note that said: "I got some sugar, I got a cup of flour" and then you signed your name. There was a sense of accountability. —Fred Reed

"It just tore us up..."

THE HIGHWAY SYSTEM is a fact of life in present day Milwaukee, but it was built at a grave cost. Plans to connect I-43 from north to south began in 1965, but Bronzeville stood in the way. As a result, hundreds of buildings and houses in the original

neighborhood were demolished, uprooting people from their businesses and homes, and dividing the community physically and spiritually. By the 1970s, the process known as deindustrialization began. Products that were

once made in Milwaukee were now being produced in the suburbs and around the world, greatly reducing the number of good-paying jobs. African Americans were especially hard hit, as 43% of men worked as industrial laborers at the time. By 2001, Milwaukee had lost over 82,000 jobs, almost 70% of its

manufacturing jobs. The engine that drove Bronzeville's prosperity was largely dismantled.

"Knocked it down. It just tore us up... It was really a good community... Freedom split us up! It really did." —DeLores Riley

Rediscovering Bronzeville

BRONZEVILLE'S NEXT CHAPTERS are being written. Neighbors and community leaders are working together to bring new energy to this beloved African American community: local entrepreneurs are opening businesses along Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and surrounding commercial corridors; community organizations are helping create stronger neighborhoods;

and arts and culture are making a comeback, with new venues for visual and performing arts. While many of the original houses and buildings are gone, the spirit of Bronzeville is being carried forward by neighboring communities, with much to celebrate in Brewers Hill, Halyard Park, Parkside, and the surrounding areas. —Sheri Williams Pannell, playwright and director of First Stage's WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE

Way. For that reason, this Guide to Bronzeville also highlights these neighborhoods. To really understand where the community is headed, go out and discover for yourself!



There's a lot of beauty in this community. By telling the Bronzeville story, I hope to inspire young people and families of all races to forge their own journey of self-discovery, to examine the choices they make, be more thoughtful to one another, and find ways to connect with and celebrate their unique cultural heritages. —Sheri Williams Pannell, playwright and director of First Stage's WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE

EXPLORE BRONZEVILLE!

It was the little adventures that made Bronzeville special. For the characters in WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE, daily life was filled with surprises found while shopping on Walnut Street, enjoying music at the Regal Theater, playing in Lapham Park, or spending time with friends at the Baymarket or the Hooker T. Washington YMCA. The spirit of Bronzeville lives on in today's neighborhoods. To feel their sense of community, visit these places with your family. You'll find your own surprises!

- 1 African American Children's Theatre** | **1014 North**
AACT provides opportunities for young people to learn about their heritage and see positive images of African American life.
- 2 Alice's Garden** | **1014 North**
Occupying an entire city block, this space filled with life is tended by diverse groups of people and hosts community events during the growing season.
- 3 The Big Easy** | **1014 North**
A taste of Louisiana, right on King Drive! The restaurant's head chef moved here from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and Milwaukee is grateful to have him.
- 4 DreamBikes** | **1014 North**
Stop in if you need a tire, want to browse bikes, or have an old one to donate. DreamBikes also employs neighborhood teens to gain job skills while they learn to repair bikes.
- 5 First Stage** | **1014 North**
Founded in 1987, First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young audiences. It has presented over 50 world premieres, including WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE, and is home to the nation's largest high-impact theater training program for youth. Stop by to learn more about year-round Theater Academy classes and education in-school programming, or pick up a schedule of performances.
- 6 Growing Power Cafe** | **1014 North**
Empowering people to grow food in urban areas, Growing Power has started a "Good Food Revolution" in communities in Milwaukee and around the country. Watch and taste their locally-grown produce and healthy and delicious menu items!
- 7 Jake's Deli** | **1014 North**
Jake's is a beloved neighborhood icon. Since 1959, this Jewish-style restaurant has served their famous corned beef and pastrami sandwiches. Their recipe is sought by everyone from patrons down the block to those from across the city.
- 8 Johnsons Park & Underground Railroad Wisconsin Historical Marker** | **1014 North**
This park was named for Clarence and Cleopatra Johnson, owners of Ideal Tailors and featured in WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE. In the mid-1900s, a farm that stood on this land was part of the Underground Railroad. Visit the historical marker just east of the park and learn more about the long road to freedom that included a stop in Milwaukee.
- 9 The Juice Kitchen** | **1014 North**
Community never tasted so good! The Juice Kitchen's fresh-pressed juices are equal parts zesty and nourishing. This space is also an important community spot where old and new friends meet.
- 10 Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra** | **1215 Walnut**
One of the most successful and respected youth orchestra programs in the nation, every year MYSO provides musical training to around 4,000 young musicians of all backgrounds and experiences levels. Stop by for a schedule of their public performances.
- 11 MLK Library** | **1215 Walnut**
This Milwaukee Public Library branch features a special collection of fiction and nonfiction books reflecting African American life and culture, as well as a permanent art display inspired by the library's messages.
- 12 Northern Chocolate Co.** | **1215 Walnut**
There are no finer chocolates in Milwaukee! Made by an experienced local chocolatier, this cozy shop features delectable flavors and shapes.
- 13 Pete's Fruit Market** | **1215 Walnut**
Pete's is bringing fresh produce back to the neighborhood. After establishing a successful anchor on the South Side, the second location for this homegrown business is being welcomed with open arms.
- 14 Spiced Queen Bar-B-Q** | **1215 Walnut**
Spiced Queen began in 1996 in Bronzeville's Baymarket using secret family recipes. Over the years, their food and service earned them the loyal hearts and stomachs of the community. Their Bar-B-Q sauces - a must have in every pantry!
- 15 The Tendon** | **1215 Walnut**
This recently opened restaurant is located in a renovated 100-year-old bar. Their menu includes down-to-earth food with fresh-from-the-earth ingredients!
- 16 Taste Twist** | **1215 Walnut**
A neighborhood staple, this old-fashioned business is known for its delicious ice cream and its "biteable coat" topping and lemon ice cream on Sundays.
- 17 Wisconsin Black Historical Society and Museum**
Devoted to the experience of African American people across Wisconsin, this building is home to events, permanent and rotating exhibits, unique artifacts, and documents.

ABOUT THE PLAY

WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE, a First Stage production written and directed by local playwright and dramaturge Sheri Williams Pannell, inspired the creation of this Guide. Set in 1957, WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE tells the fictional, coming-of-age story of a young African American boy, Michael Jr. The play follows Michael Jr. as he prepares for a talent show with his siblings and cousins, struggles with peer pressure from the "Market Square Boys," and faces the consequences of his actions from the firm but fair sergeant Chaney. Michael Jr. receives guidance along his journey from family, neighbors, and iconic jazz singer Billie Holiday during one of her visits to Milwaukee. Pulsing to the beat of jazz and do-wop, this play explores the universal themes of growing up, finding one's true self, and how a community can work together to uplift and empower its young people. With input from Bronzeville community elders, Sheri Williams Pannell honors this historic and revered community, revealing a humorous and touching tale of growing up in a truly special place and time.



FROM THE PLAY TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD



Now that you've seen WELCOME TO BRONZEVILLE... You may be wondering about the history of this beloved Milwaukee community. You may also be curious about where Bronzeville is today... This guide will help you explore Bronzeville's past, present, and future. Read more about the history, then go out and experience the community with your family and friends. Feel the rhythms, taste the flavors, discover Bronzeville's many treasures. Then... share the story! And keep in mind, Bronzeville is alive - new and exciting things are happening and waiting for you to join in.

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TIMELINE
Photo of McClain Family at Christmas: Courtesy of Ethel Martin (née McClain)
Photo of Ossie Evans twirling a baton: Courtesy of Aronetta Anderson
Photo of Bronzeville Week: Pat A. Robinson
MAP
Artwork: Mutope J. Johnson
Renderings: Brandon Kirkham
Charcoal drawing of Walnut Street: Sylvester Sims
TREASURE HUNT
Photos: Adam Carr
BACK COVER
Detail of Billie Holiday: Mutope J. Johnson
Photo of Cogg's family at 700 Tap: Courtesy of Elizabeth Cogg-Jones

The timeline includes excerpts from the book *The Walnut Way Story Project - Caring Neighbors Make Good Communities* with permission from Sharon Adams. Some quotes are from community elders who participated in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Oral Traditions program in Walnut Way. We are deeply grateful to the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation for sharing this content with us!

