Carnegie Museum of Art

Black Photojournalism Podcast

Episode 1: Pittsburgh

Marilyn Nance: If you want to see yourself in history, you have to show up and you have to make that history, because no one's looking for you.

Adger Cowans: What I learned from Gordon Parks was how to take negative energy and turn it into positive power.

Theaster Gates: It was the way I understood my Blackness. And the way I understood Black aspiration was largely informed by these images and these stories of Black success from the middle 40s forward.

Shawn Walker: You gotta remember at that time, Black folks weren't being photographed. So it was a point where people were just open. 'Yeah. Take a picture of me. I don't care whether you give it to me or not, I just wanna be photographed.'

Ming Smith: And it wasn't just images. It wasn't just, oh, a Black face. No, there was a real respect for the art form.

Claytee White: I did not realize that people in other communities did not realize what was happening in Black communities: sororities, teas, card games, book clubs. I did not know that most people did not realize that the African American community is just like any other community. They believed what white photographers in our white newspapers had shown them over the years. So it was great to have this evidence that what I had grown up knowing was the truth here in this city as well as all across the country.

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MARK WHITAKER: ... that evidence—that *truth*—is what we'll be exploring on this podcast, Black Photojournalism. My name is Mark Whitaker and I'm your host.

You just heard from artists and photographers Marilyn Nance, Adger Cowans, Theaster Gates, Shawn Walker, and Ming Smith, and from Las Vegas historian Claytee White, all of whom you'll hear a lot more from as our series continues.

The subject of Black photojournalism is near and dear to me as a veteran journalist myself. I was the editor of *Newsweek* magazine and the first African-American to lead a newsweekly when I took the helm in 1998. After that, I worked as Washington Bureau Chief for NBC News and Managing Editor of CNN Worldwide. In the years since, I've published a number of books dealing with 20th century Black history, including *Smoketown: The Untold Story of*

the Other Great Black Renaissance; Saying It Loud: 1966—The Year Black Power Challenged the Civil Rights Movement; and, most recently, *The Afterlife of Malcolm X: An Outcast Turned Icon's Enduring Impact on America.*

I'm also here because I have a personal connection to some of this material, which I'll get into in a bit.

But in kicking things off I do want to note that the time period we're looking at on this podcast is really important: we're looking at Black photojournalism in the United States from roughly 1945 to 1985, so both preceding and following the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

It's a time period that encapsulates the rise and decline of the Black press and of vibrant Black communities all over the country, whose stories are lovingly preserved in the wide-ranging photographic archives we'll explore. Because this was a time when Black photographers were working all over the country too, documenting their communities but also Black music, art, sports, fashion, leisure, celebrities, local news, national news, and all the major political movements of the day.

Their work was radical in its beauty and its intimacy; in its truth-telling; and in its making of a critical historical record. You have to remember that this was a world that *barely existed* as far as white America and the mainstream media were concerned. This was a time when white media mostly covered crime in Black communities. And a time when the achievements of Black Americans were denied, denigrated, or simply ignored.

These photographers literally offered a different picture, and they did so decades before we all had the technology around our necks or in our pockets to photograph our own worlds and tell our own stories. It benefits all of us to revisit their work today.

Which is exactly what we're going to do in seven episodes and seven American cities and regions. From Pittsburgh, where Charles "Teenie" Harris epitomized the career and concerns of the mid-20th century Black photojournalist; to Baltimore, home of the historic and still-thriving Afro-American newspaper; to the Westside of Las Vegas, where the history of a robust Black community went largely unseen for years.

From there, we'll head to Memphis to talk about Dr. King but also the particular kind of pressures photographers in the movement were under; to the Dallas-Fort Worth area, where two groundbreaking Black journalists pushed for change in the mainstream news.

We'll go further west from there to California, to revisit the L.A. music scene of the 1970s through the lens of Bruce Talamon but also the Black Panthers as they caught the attention of the world up north, in a conversation with award-winning documentary filmmaker Stanley Nelson.

In Chicago, we'll talk *Ebony* and *Jet* and their enduring influence with Johnson Publishing Company's Linda Johnson Rice, and with artists Theaster Gates and David Hartt, before ending our tour in New York City, where Anthony Barboza, Adger Cowans, Marilyn Nance, Ming Smith, and Shawn Walker documented their surrounding worlds while always aspiring towards high art.

So with all of that in mind, I want you to get acquainted with an artist whose work explores and uplifts the legacy of some of the photographers we're going to be discussing throughout this series—and compels all of us to keep looking for new insights and perspectives in their work.

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Hank Willis Thomas: My name is Hank Willis Thomas. My mother's name is Deborah Willis. She is an artist, an art historian, a curator, a photographer, a photo historian, an author, and most importantly to me, she's a wonderful mother.

When I was a young child, my mother was working at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and I got to grow up kind of in the archives with her.

I was exposed to so many incredible images and the stories of so many amazing photographers. I got to meet Roy DeCarava and James Van Der Zee and Gordon Parks, and young artists like Lorna Simpson and Coreen Simpson and over the course of the past, I guess 40 years, my mother's published almost that many books on artists like James P. Ball and Teenie Harris and written books about the Black female body and the Black Civil War soldier. And so I just was really immersed in this visual legacy, in the stories of Black image-makers.

When I was in high school, I was taking a photography class and I really had these memories of my mother making the kitchen into a dark room when I was in high school and started to really just love being in the dark room, loved processing film and seeing the magic of an image kind of appear in the developer. And my teacher, Margaret Paris, gave me the keys to the dark room and the school was open late and so I would be in the dark room till like 12 o'clock or one o'clock in the morning by myself, and that never felt strange, it felt fun and easy.

And so when I got the opportunity to apply to college, I went to NYU. I was in the photography program there at Tisch School of the Arts. And then after four years there, I hadn't gotten enough. So I decided to go to California College of the Arts, where I could study with artists like Larry Sulton and Jim Goldberg and continue to kind of explore and expand my knowledge of photography and my understanding of the different forms that image-based media could take.

MARK WHITAKER: Hank's work has gone on to take many forms. He makes collages, prints, sculptures, neons, text-based works, riffs on advertising, interactive installations. And he supports the work of other artists, and of democracy itself, through a collective he

co-founded called For Freedoms, which aims to “deepen civic engagement through the arts.”

But photography continues to hold a special and crucial place in Hank’s practice. And much of his work still draws on photography as its foundation.

Hank Willis Thomas: I always love photography 'cause It was a form of time- traveling, you know, a photograph is literally a capturing of a representation of a split second in time. And I was always drawn to this idea that, especially when I look at older black and white photographs, that, like, someone witnessed this and chose to, like, preserve this moment. And oftentimes people in it, they were participating in that capturing of a moment.

And I just love to imagine kind of what was going on outside of the frame of that image as far as whether it was other people helping with the lighting or if there was someone making a person laugh off camera or something horrible had just happened. I was also interested in kind of what happened right after the picture was taken, what happened right before. And so I've always just really been drawn to the magic of image-making or of capturing moments.

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Hank Willis Thomas: One of the stories I think is so important to tell is that when my mother was in college, she decided to study photography and she was asking her professors about Black photographers and they would talk about all these other photographers and they couldn't really name any besides Gordon Parks and James Van Der Zee.

And so my mother actually decided she wanted to do a research project and it was called *Black Photographers*. And that led to her book and her book was instrumental in creating this kind of canon. The artists were gonna do their work regardless of whether or not anyone was going to recognize them.

And the images that they were making of Black communities was strikingly different than images that were being made and published broadly. There was a care, there was an intimacy, an affection and a sense of social responsibility. And I think that sense of social responsibility more than anything, especially of the generation of photographers in the Civil Rights era, had a huge impact on me.

The Black photographers knew that their capturing of these images was going to be important. That they were taking a record outside of the frame of the popular story of American history or American culture. They didn't know where these images were going to be circulated or if they were gonna be preserved, but they knew that it was necessary to capture it, even if just one or two people got to see them, that we have to make our history. We have to tell our truths. And that was something that I just felt was inspirational.

Every issue of *Ebony* and *Jet* magazine was a counter-narrative. Moneta Sleet's image of Coretta Scott King and one of her daughters at the funeral of Martin Luther King...

MARK WHITAKER: This photograph shows a five-year-old Bernice King clutching her mother's waist as she sits in the church pews. Coretta looks solemnly toward the pulpit through a black veil; Bernice looks out vacantly toward the aisle, her eyes possibly welling up with tears. Moneta Sleet became the first Black American to win the Pulitzer Prize for journalism for the photograph in 1969.

Hank Willis Thomas: There's images by Gordon Parks, fashion images, but also just images like at the Selma to Montgomery March of people with "vote" written on their faces.

There was a sense of patience, you know. To take a picture at that time, the image didn't just like, appear magically on your screen the second you took it. You didn't have infinite amount of pictures to take. You know, you had 35 millimeter camera. You had 36 pictures that you could take in a roll.

And that meant that every picture mattered, that every frame mattered. And so the photographer was attempting to be often, if they weren't directing the image, they were kind of quietly watching moments take shape and attempting to let life happen right in front of them and catch this kind of what became known as the decisive moment, where something that was happening could describe the essence of a certain moment. This idea of a mother with her children or couple walking, or people singing or cooking... These moments that don't seem important to us while we're doing them become representational of universal elements of our lives.

And yeah, I love that. I miss actually just knowing that like, I have to get it right as a photographer, I have to take this picture and hopefully in a few hours or a few days, I'll know that I did the right thing.

MARK WHITAKER: That slowness of the process—that waiting for the so-called decisive moment, is something that can unfold more organically if you're a part of the community you're photographing, too.

Hank Willis Thomas: Well, I think if you're photographing a community that you're familiar with, you might have had some of these experiences before and know what you were looking for or waiting for. But I'm always in awe of how many people there were that were using photography as an art form in this way at a time when the community that they were documenting wasn't largely respected or appreciated or cherished.

MARK WHITAKER: And here's where we get into Hank's own work a bit more.

Hank Willis Thomas: I was also interested in photographing my family and photographing my community and photographing the neighborhood and the world. I guess I still am, but I was not nearly as good as the legends and even a lot of my peers in school. I was pretty good. But not extraordinary. And because of professors like Larry Sulton who were working with archival images I felt like I was given license to think about the archive in a different way.

And then of course, my mother was also making her own work using archival images. And so I kind of gravitated towards that and I realized around the same time that we started to have cell phones and cameras in our pockets, you know, that there are more images taken in a single second than any of us can make sense of in our entire lives.

And that perhaps it was a responsibility of certain people to try to make sense of the images rather than just capturing another one. And so looking at old photographs is just as interesting as making new ones to me. And trying to encourage other people to look at old photographs and to learn from these windows into time would be kind of a really exciting challenge for me as a maker.

There are dozens of different ventures I've made into making images based off of historical and archival images. I've made sculptures that attempt to capture or remake a moment that was captured in photographs.

MARK WHITAKER: Like in *The Embrace*, a permanent public sculpture Hank made for the Boston Common. The sculpture honors Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King, by isolating the gesture of their arms wrapped around one another from a photograph taken in 1964, shortly after King learned he'd won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Hank Willis Thomas: I have done collages, both digital collages and physical collages. I've approached images in a form of painting and screen printing, similar to Andy Warhol. I've developed a process with this material called retroflective vinyl, where images are invisible to the naked eye, but if a flash photograph is taken of them, it reveals an archival or historical image. I've printed on, you know, wood and acrylic and metal, so I've done my best to find as many different ways as possible to recreate images in a new way.

For a generation that grew up with digital photography there seems like there's too much distance between a certain period of time and now, and I think with my work I'm trying to be a bridge between the original source material, the current moment, and the future.

MARK WHITAKER: One image that Hank has drawn on repeatedly for his work is Ernest Withers's photograph of the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968, taken just days before Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in that same city in support of that very action. Dozens of Black men fill the wide frame holding signs that read, in all caps, I AM—underlined—A MAN. Hank has drawn on the image itself but also the rallying cry of its subjects. His riffs include prints that read "I AM MANY," "I AM. AMEN."

So we asked Hank—why does this image in particular continue to hold his interest?

Hank Willis Thomas: This is a really powerful image because of the story it tells the questions that it provokes to me. Like why was it necessary for people just eight years before I was born, to hold signs collectively to say that they are people? Why is there only one woman in the image, and with her back turned to us? Why don't the signs read: 'I Am a Woman?' Who were they looking at? Who were they holding the signs up to and what were those people perceiving? How did it feel to stand in that group of largely nameless people?

There's so many questions that I feel like that picture provokes for me. And I, yeah, I've come back to it and revisited it and revisited the signs to propose answers to some of those questions. But that picture just says so much or it challenges us to consider so much. And that's what I love about historical images.

Every one of those images is an opportunity to time travel and to just squint for a second and feel like the moment before or after the image was taken, thinking about looking into people's faces and imagining if they know they were photographed, what they were attempting to communicate or share.

And I do think of photographers as conjurers. You know, this photograph would be seen as magic to a different generation, right? And we've sometimes lost that sense of wonder that photographs really should inspire. And so with my artwork, I am still lost in the wonder.

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MARK WHITAKER: We'll talk much more about Ernest Withers in a later episode. For the remainder of our time today, I want to take you to Pittsburgh, where Carnegie Museum of Art has organized a pioneering exhibition exploring the history of Black Photojournalism in the mid-20th century.

It's also where I encountered this history first-hand. Because, as I said, after a long career in journalism, I started to write books. My first book was the story of my long and difficult relationship with my father that became a broader family history going back several generations. Of his family, and also of my mother's family—they were an interracial couple that met and married in the 1950s, when interracial marriage was still illegal in much of America.

When I was small, and my parents were still together, we made many visits to Pittsburgh, where my dad had grown up. His parents, my grandparents, were undertakers—both of them. My grandfather had migrated to Pittsburgh from Texas as a teenager. My grandmother grew up in the Hill District—she was a little bit more well-born in the Black world of the time.

Even after my parents divorced when I was six, my mother would still make a point of taking my younger brother and me to Pittsburgh every year to visit my grandmother, my aunts, and my cousins. But that was the extent of what I knew of the city.

Then the year after my dad died, in 2009, I decided to write this memoir, and I started doing research about the Pittsburgh in which he grew up—he was born in 1935, so he was there in the thirties, forties, and fifties before he went away to college. And in the process, I discovered photographs of my grandparents and one of my aunts in the Teenie Harris digital archive, which had just been created at Carnegie Museum of Art.

Now, Teenie Harris is the nickname of Charles Harris, an extraordinary Pittsburgh photographer who worked for the local Black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, for some 40 years, in addition to taking private commissions throughout the Black community. Carnegie Museum of Art purchased Teenie's archive in 2001.

So I started looking into this archive... and there was a photo of my grandfather presiding over a funeral of Black veterans at a cemetery outside of Pittsburgh. There was my grandmother at a luncheon of Black ladies in Homewood in the forties, all of them decked out in elegant hats and pearls.

There was my Aunt Cleo at a student debate at Westinghouse High School in the Homewood District of Pittsburgh. So literally, through these photographs, I discovered a chapter of my family's life that I hadn't known about—and never would have known about—were it not for Teenie Harris.

I experienced Black Pittsburgh in the 1960s and 70s, after the city had torn down large parts of the Hill District under the guise of "urban renewal," and when many of Pittsburgh's other Black neighborhoods had gone into decline. My family had been hit hard, too. My grandfather had suffered a stroke, and my grandmother was struggling to keep their business going. But here in these photographs, in the 1940s, was a time when my grandparents were still running a very successful funeral home in Homewood, a neighborhood where a lot of the most prosperous Black business people lived.

Then I started looking at all the other photographs Teenie Harris had taken during these decades. It was those photos that inspired me to write a separate book that became *Smoketown*, which explores what I've called the *other* Great Black Renaissance.

Because from the 1920s to the 1950s, Pittsburgh was an industrial powerhouse that attracted hundreds of thousands of Blacks looking for jobs during the Great Migration. It was home to some of the greatest jazz musicians of the day, and a place where other influential Black artists from all over the country would pass through—like Lena Horne, who lived briefly in Pittsburgh, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong. Teenie Harris had photographed them all.

The city hosted two of the greatest Negro League baseball teams of the era and, of course, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, which was, at the time, the most powerful and influential Black newspaper in the country.

During those decades, the *Courier* took up a number of causes that reached out to all of Black America. It played a big role in putting Joe Louis on the map. And it was critical in rallying Black America to support World War II. This was after the heartbreaking experience that Black America had in World War I, when Black soldiers went overseas and came back and to the Red Summer *lynching* campaigns in which scores of returning Black soldiers were hunted down and killed.

So when America entered World War II, at first there was a lot of controversy about whether Black folks should support the war effort. The *Courier* played a major role in convincing Black folks that they should serve in the military, and work in the defense plants. The paper called this the Double V Campaign, with the double V standing for victory abroad, but also the promise of victory over segregation and racism once the war ended.

It was a very visual campaign. There were hundreds of photographs of people holding rallies and other events. There was a Double V hand sign. Double V haircuts, and double V pins. Teenie Harris took photographs of it all. Then in the fifties and sixties, the Civil Rights Movement arrived in Pittsburgh. Martin Luther King Jr. came through town. Eleanor Roosevelt visited. And Teenie Harris photographed all of that for the *Courier* as well.

So by telling the story of Black Pittsburgh, you could really tell the story of Black America during that entire period. And Teenie Harris's photographs brought that whole world to life.

Discovering the Teenie Harris archive also led me to meet Charlene. And it turned out that Charlene had all the stories behind the images...

Charlene Foggie Barnett: I'm Charlene Foggie-Barnett. I'm the Charles “Teenie” Harris community archivist at Carnegie Museum of Art. And I have to say that's a real privilege for me to have that position and to have cultivated this role.

MARK WHITAKER: As community archivist, Charlene oversees Teenie’s archive of nearly 80,000 photo negatives and 5,000 feet of 16 millimeter motion picture film. Charlene co-curated the *Black Photojournalism* exhibition with Carnegie Museum of Art photography curator Dan Leers. Both she and Dan have been critical partners on this podcast project as well.

Charlene’s connection to this material runs as deep as it gets.

Mark Whitaker: Hi, Charlene. Great to see you.

Charlene Foggie Barnett: Hi Mark. It's good to see you again and always.

Charlene Foggie Barnett: I'm a Hill district native from the city of Pittsburgh, as is Teenie Harris and August Wilson. But I came to this opportunity because my family was so connected to Teenie and he was our family historian and photographer of sorts. You can see me from three months old until I'm in my mid-twenties in his lens. And he was just someone that we all knew and appreciated.

And we were not the anomaly, but because my father was a Civil Rights leader and a minister in the community, he was president of the NAACP local branch and he was president of the Housing Authority and he was on so many other organizations and boards. And then my mom had actually been raised with Teenie and his relatives. So knowing Teenie and being kind of around him was second nature to me. And as a little girl, when he would come to the church for instance, to take photos of some event or Mother's Day or something happening at the church, my job was literally to run upstairs after I saw Teenie's car pull up out the window and tell all the adults that “Teenie's here, Teenie's here! Get ready, get ready!” Because he was going to do this very swiftly. And we didn't want anyone to miss out on their opportunity.

But my opportunity came as a result of I graduated from high school and went to college in the South at an HBCU. And then I moved to Los Angeles, California, and continued my education. And I was there over 20 years. When my parents were elderly and my father was very ill and my mother passed away, my husband and I decided to move back to Pittsburgh to take care of family. And I read in the newspaper that Charles Teenie Harris had an archive and all his photos were being held at Carnegie Museum of Art, and I'm so glad I read that article because I thought, what is going on with Teenie? Why are these images and photos there?

So they were asking for children, and I took all the pictures off the house walls and in our photo albums, and I marched on down to the Carnegie, expecting to see a room full of people, and I was the only one that showed up that night. And the reason was, you know, a little bit, admittedly the same reason I was curious like, what is going on and what is this museum going to do with Teenie's work? But after spending time with the curator who had taken the collection in, Lulu Lippincott, and with the archivist at that time, Kerin Shellenbarger, I gained so much respect for what they were trying to do with the archive.

This entire collection of nearly 80,000 images came unidentified. Totally. I mean, there were negative boxes that might have photos that had say women, you know, some organization or ‘Babies 1958,’ but they were all jumbled up and mixed up. And so the museum was struggling to try to put bracket information on each one of these photos so that it not only had information but was retrievable so it could be used. Because when Teenie brought the collection to the Carnegie, and he did that himself, which is another reason why I had so much respect for what they were doing. His objective was that it not just stay in another, you know, cold storage place. He wanted this to be a living, breathing archive, and he wanted it to be used and utilized for posterity, but most especially by the people from which most of the content came, which was the Black community of Pittsburgh.

So, as I said, my respect for the Carnegie grew so much because that's what their goal was and has been since that time. And I've been very fortunate because as a result. I've rolled into a number of roles. I started volunteering in 2006 and in 2010, the museum hired me to do oral history collection and oral history work because I could get to people that they could not reach.

And a lot of the times people would say, I don't wanna say something wrong, you know, and I don't wanna misrepresent Teenie or anything else, so will you stay with me and sit with me while I give my oral history? And this kept happening spontaneously. And so the museum realized we're doing a retrospective show in 2011, we need to hire this person to help us build these oral histories and to help us connect with the community. So I started with oral history research, and then after the retrospective show closed in 2012, the museum retained me to continue doing community work on the outreach level, to represent the archive publicly, to speak to Teenie's practice because not only am I doing archival work, but I'm also someone who knew the artist. And now I am the community archivist and a co-curator for this Black photojournalism exhibition.

So I am one of the most fortunate people you'll ever meet because my passion for what Teenie preserved for us and my love of wanting to make sure that everybody in this archive is represented in the proper way, whether I know who they are or not, you know, and I love my work. Like I love it every day and it's just a dream come true, really for me.

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Charlene Foggie Barnett: Charles Teenie Harris was born in 1908, passed away in 1998. And he was just your average young man in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. He was not academically inclined per se.

So Teenie dropped out of what is now known as middle school and went to work, initially working for his parents with their hotel in the hill. And he had an interest in photography because he had some older relatives who had some cameras and had taken some beautiful photos. And Teenie was trusted by everyone because of who he was in the community and how he treated everyone.

No one's ever had a bad word to say about Teenie. We would all agree that he's a straight shooter. He said what he thought, but he was kind and he was giving. He didn't like swearing around women and he didn't like vulgarity around anything. He was physically attractive, not just 'cause of his face and whatnot, but he was physically fit.

So, you know, everyone liked Teenie and he would dart around. He'd be behind you. You didn't even know he was there, you know? But he was so well-liked because he really did try to make everyone feel as if they were a star. We would see Teenie coming with the camera and we'd light up or we would relax or feel comfortable. It wasn't foreign to us or frightening to us to see him coming with his camera.

Mark Whitaker: Now his nickname Teenie was given to him when he was a child. Women loved him so much and were so charmed by him that he was given the nickname, 'Teenie Little Lover.'

But he was always very respectful. There is a photograph of my grandmother at a women's lunch in Homewood in the 1940s, and it's all women and they're all clearly middle class, they're all very well-dressed. But they are beaming in his presence. They're all posing for the camera, but they seem very comfortable and that makes his photography very contemporary, because we can see all aspects of life, not just from a class perspective, but also from a gender perspective in that era.

Charlene Foggie Barnett: And the LGBTQ+ community is photographed as well.

Mark Whitaker: Right. It all seems very natural, just sort of showing the community as it exists. But when you think about a news photographer in that era, it would largely be essentially a man's world. And if that's all that Teenie Harris had ever photographed, it might still be sort of historically significant in some ways, but it would not be the rich and still contemporary-seeming record of the full community that it remains.

Charlene Foggie Barnett: And that's interesting because so many of these photos are backstory photos. Let's say someone was playing the big Stanley Theater downtown. We have numerous photos of big names like Sammy Davis Jr. or Nina Simone or Harry Belafonte. They're playing down there, but they can't stay in downtown Pittsburgh.

So they come to the Hill District to stay in the hotels, one of which Teenie's family actually ran. And then Teenie catches them in moments when they're relaxed, when they're just talking to one another. Those are some of the best photos we have. And he got them very quickly. In fact, our mayor, David L. Lawrence, who became our governor, nicknamed Teenie, another nickname, which was 'One Shot Harris,' because he took these shots oftentimes just one, maybe two if it was a major moment, like with Martin Luther King Jr. But rarely. Not because you know, he wanted to necessarily, but because he was able to get the shot and he wasn't paid for the film or the solutions to process it, or the bulbs or his camera.

Any outlet from the news, especially the *Courier* or for instance, our family photos. We paid for the product, the picture. So he couldn't afford to just be bouncing bulbs out left and right and I think that's important to his story and so many other photographers' stories because they had to get these things done and get out and get to the next gig per se and have the right kind of content.

Mark Whitaker: But you also have to visualize, he shot with this enormous Speed Graphic news camera, which he continued to use throughout his career, even as the technology evolved. So it's not as though he was inconspicuous, you knew that Teenie was there and you knew he was taking the photographs. And yet I think the combination of his speed, but also I think his personality and his ability to win people over and get their trust. And then over time, the fact that he just was so well known in the community, he managed to capture a lot of very, very

intimate and unscripted moments when people knew he was taking photographs and yet they were not self-conscious as they might have been around other photographers, I think just because he had this amazing combination of technical skill and personality that put people at ease.

Charlene Foggie Barnett: And people always said he never took a bad shot. And from what I've seen, 'cause I've seen every one of the photos in the archive. There are one or two that are a little interesting, but there's really not a bad photo. In fact, one of his best photos is of Nina Simone playing the piano downtown, and it's a double exposure. She's moving, so there's two of her at the piano in the photo, but it's one of our most-requested images because that's a very unique version of her.

But another reason that he was so good was also remembering or knowing, learning that the film of those days, Kodak and Agfa and all the film companies, the film was not designed for Black and brown skin tones. So Teenie's processing also had to include, for instance, a group shot.

You have 10 African American people, they could be all 10 different shades of complexion. And my hairdresser was one of the first dark-skinned Black models in the city of Pittsburgh. And she told Teenie, and in her oral history interview with us, she told us that, she said: "Teenie, when you take my picture, I don't wanna just see teeth and eyes. So you figure it out." And he did.

He took his hands and put his fingers over certain faces in the developing process and gave it a few moments, and then lifted his hands off to let the rest of the photo develop, because he wanted everyone to have the dignity of what they really looked like: the curl in their hair, the shine on their hair, their teeth, what their ears looked like.

He didn't want people to fade out or muddy out. And that subsequently became dodging and burning. I know when my brother was doing photography in Los Angeles, they had weights that they could use to do that same process, but Teenie did it without gloves. And he told his kids, don't touch these chemicals. And they were like, well, we saw him put his hands in without gloves. But that's how he could balance photos. That takes a lot of dedication.

Mark Whitaker: So August Wilson, the great black playwright who was born in Pittsburgh, in the Hill District, and then set nine of his 10 plays in each separate decade of the 20th century in the Hill District. When Denzel Washington was making the film *Fences*, which he starred in with Viola Davis, his people came to Pittsburgh, reached out to you to consult the archive to recreate the world of the Hill in the 50s when that play took place. Tell us about that experience.

Charlene Foggie Barnett: Well, you can hardly imagine the excitement I have when the phone rings in the Harris office, and it is the set designer from Paramount Studios trying to explain a project that I'd heard about, and I had been trying to figure out a way to get to them. And they called us and I said, I know all about this project and I have everything you need.

And as they have come to learn, you can't do an August Wilson play set in Pittsburgh without Charles Teenie Harris as the costume influence, the set design influence. In fact, we worked so closely together, those departments for these films, that as an homage to Teenie, Denzel had a facade put into the film *Fences* that said Harris Studio, that looks exactly like his original Harris studio.

And we were able to get his oldest son, Little Teenie, on the set and they let him have the clapboard. But can you imagine? I went up to the Hill District where they were filming *Fences* and I was watching them paint the awnings that I had spent so much time, you know, sending them photos of, and they were painting them green.

And I'm standing there as a Hill District native myself, and I'm three blocks from my original childhood home, just three blocks. I could walk down there in five minutes and I'm watching them paint a set based on August Wilson's play, which is influenced and recreated by Teenie. All of us are from the Hill District, and I feel like this little Black girl from the Hill who now gets to help tie together the legacies of these two great men that came out of Pittsburgh and make sure that we mold this together in the right way.

And I literally burst into tears. And I use that story to share with students and other groups, obviously, when I'm touring and talking about working as a community archivist. But that's the beauty of what I am able to do. And all kinds of people reach out to us for this content because they now know that you need this. And the community archivists out there in the world are the ones that bring you this information.

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Mark Whitaker: With the beginning of integration of the news media in America and the opportunities that Black reporters and photographers had to work for white newspapers and other media organizations.

As far as I know, Charlene, correct me if I'm wrong, Teenie never had that opportunity. He was sort of an earlier generation, but it meant that the *Courier* itself fell on hard times. So that was one source of income that largely went away for Teenie by the 1960s. And one of the reasons that he found himself in an economic circumstance where he thought he had to either sell or turn over some of the licensing rights of his photographs in that later period of his life before he took action to get the rights all back.

Charlene Foggie Barnett: Yeah, you're absolutely right. It was kind of a rollercoaster ride, I think for him. And that fortunately, or unfortunately, whatever way you could look at it, coincided with Teenie's aging process, his ability to zip all over the place. He was still spry, but one of the advantages of photographers like Teenie was that, one of the junior editors for the *Courier*, who's named Patricia Reid, she said that a lot of times Teenie's pictures would write the story because he was just that good.

So it's fortunate that Teenie came at a time when African Americans needed the information from their own voice and receptacle.

The *Courier*, in his heyday, ran twice a week. There was a local version and a national version. We have found in our research around the country some of Teenie's photos in many other newspapers. And that's so heartwarming to know that these stories were getting outside of the city of Pittsburgh. And that it was recognized as very reputable content outside of a local perspective. So one of my objectives is to make that known to people in a broad sense. You know, locally, we know Teenie, but he needs to be known around the country, around the world, as do his counterparts who are local heroes telling the story of their communities. And that is not just great photography that's fun to look at, that is Civil Rights.

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MARK WHITAKER: With that, we'll leave you, with much more to come.

Thank you Charlene Foggie-Barnett and Hank Willis Thomas.

For more information on the *Black Photojournalism* exhibition and the Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive, please visit carnegieart.org. You can learn more about Hank and his work at hankwillisthomas.com, or through his gallery, Jack Shainman. As a reminder, Hank's memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King is on permanent view in the Boston Common.

The Black Photojournalism podcast is a production of Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. Join us next time for an inside look at the legendary Afro-American newspaper in Baltimore.

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