



African American Artist, Programmer, and Community Leader

Written by:

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My Life as an Artist,
Lettie Margaret McGuire, Ed.M.

Life purpose: Uplift artists, nature and the underrepresented

Career focus: Art, science and wilderness

Research: Neuroscience, design and creativity



Photo of Lettie Margaret McGuire taken for NetNoir's staff page, mid-1990's.

Early life

In the summer of love, 1967, I was born into a large family with an older sister, two older brothers, and later, a younger sister.



The artist painting in Berkeley, CA, 1969.



The artist (right) with her mother and younger sister in Berkeley, CA, 1970.

At the time of my birth, my mother Rosemary Smith McGuire was a homemaker, and in addition to taking UC Berkeley extension classes towards her Masters degree in social work, was making and selling clothing to help support our family. My father John Wingfield McGuire was working on his PhD in Biostatistics at the UC Berkeley School for Public Health. As a family of seven, we did not have much money, but we had a very rich life full of love, education and culture. We spent a lot of our free time camping, hiking in the wilderness, and going on wonderful adventures across the entire continent of America in our blue and white Dodge van. Those were some of the best days of my life.



Painting in our Berkeley backyard at 3 1/2 years old.

My mother was one of the first black students at Richmond high school to take academic classes. In those days, black students were typically only allowed to take classes like homemaking, cooking etc., often for 5 or more periods in a row. She met Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. when he visited her church. Her beautiful, intricate quilts and creative spirit inspired my interest in art.

When my father attended Hayward high school, he would often ride his bike to UC Berkeley to audit classes. After serving in the Marine Corps, he attended UC Berkeley, dropped out temporarily, worked at the San Francisco Post Office, and returned to UC Berkeley after marriage to my Mom. While he was an undergraduate, my Dad worked on an IBM 650 for PhD students in Physics at the Lawrence Berkeley Labs. The 650 took all night to do things that modern computers can do in seconds.

My father's doctoral committee included [Professor David Blackwell](#), the first African American inducted into the National Academy of Sciences, the first black tenured faculty member at UC Berkeley, and the seventh African American to receive a PhD in Mathematics.

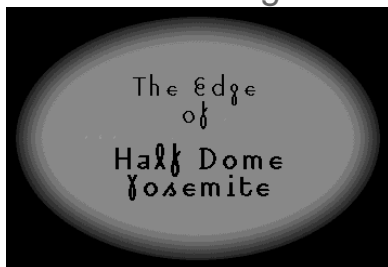
Although self sufficient, our family was very involved in historical events happening in Berkeley during that time. For example, Jack Weinberg, whose

arrest started the Free Speech Movement, was the Unitarian Church's version of a "Godfather" for my brother Hugh. My father was at the retreat where SLATE was started. He also taught a computer programming class in the black community at the North Richmond Neighborhood House, and one of his students was Pat McKinley, who became the second female African American Superior Court Judge in California. My parents babysat for families who marched in support of farmworkers, Mitford -Trudeau, etc., In later years, my mother co-founded the first consumer CO-OP in Ann Arbor and she also worked with Josephine Duveneck in California. My father served on school committees supporting underrepresented students in both Ann Arbor and Palo Alto.



(left) My parents married in San Francisco, first living in the Fillmore district. (right) Tilden Park, Berkeley, California in 1970.

We were fortunate because instead of going to Disneyland, our family would often go to the beach, to museums, or places like the Vorpahl Gallery, where the largest collection of Escher (the mathematician and artist) was held. I remember, at 9 years old, my father took me to the AAAS conference and told me I could go to any scientific lectures I chose. I was in heaven.



A gif from my first website in 1995, showing me and my family on the top of Half Dome, Yosemite.

In those days, very few people were interested in climbing mountains, so we saw only 9 other people that week while climbing and camping on top of Half Dome. Today, thousands climb Half Dome daily and sleeping on top is not allowed.

Throughout his career, my father always talked to my brothers and sisters and me about his daily work and research studies. He introduced us to the magic of math and the power of nature from camping and backpacking trips. We climbed some of the tallest mountains in America, met many bears, forded streams and valleys with no trails, and learned to live in harmony with the wilderness.

My mother loves books more than anyone I've ever met in my life. If you have a conversation with her, it will likely be a deep conversation filled with wisdom and insight. She connected us with the most diverse people in our communities. She taught us the names of almost every plant, tree and flower, and always sought for the healthiest ways to feed and raise us, knitting all our mittens, sewing many of our clothes and quilts, and making every meal from scratch.

An enriching experience

The initiative and tenacity of a Berkeley Co-op member and a staff home economist have brought an enriching experience to millions of consumers throughout the country.

Early last month, Co-op member Rosemary McGuire of Berkeley complained to Telegraph Avenue home economist Helen Black that the Co-op no longer carried an enriched type of biscuit mix (it had formerly carried Fisher's). Mrs. McGuire reported that she had already written to General Mills complaining about GM's new Bisquick mix which was unenriched (and which the Co-op did carry). She had received a non-committal reply from GM's quality control department in Minneapolis.

Mrs. Black then wrote to the sales manager at General Mills' western office in Palo Alto. Portions of her letter, dated September 19, follow:

"We . . . must advise people *not to buy the new Bisquick* . . . because the product is no longer enriched. We would call to your attention the fact that there is great concern among authorities today about the nutritional level of the diets of Americans. Especially alarming is the extent of malnutrition among the poor, whose diets are likely to consist of a larger proportion of enriched foods than the diets of the affluent . . . The Food & Nutrition Board of the National Research Council considers the problem of getting enough iron into the diet so great that it is now recommending additional iron fortification of foods to combat widespread iron deficiencies. "It would appear that General Mills is out of step with the times in decreasing the nutritional value of Bisquick. We hope that this change to the unenriched Bisquick was perhaps temporary, or if it was not, that General Mills will reconsider the action in the light of the nutritional consequences to all the many Americans who buy this product."

On September 24 Mrs. Black received a phone call from Robert Rice, product manager in GM's Minneapolis office. Rice said GM was currently considering the possibility of re-enriching the product, but that a decision had not yet been reached. Mrs. Black re-emphasized the importance of an affirmative decision.

The next day, September 25, Rice called Mrs. Black again. A decision had been reached: Bisquick would be enriched. The new enriched Bisquick would probably be on Co-op shelves in 60 to 90 days. Mrs. Black asked him to put it in writing.

Robert Rice arrived at the Co-op, confirming the decision. Among other things it said:

"We do consider consumer opinions in bringing about product changes . . . Your letter, in conjunction with other consumer opinions, assisted us in reaching our decision."

Thank you, Mrs. McGuire. Anyone still think Co-op home economists don't care their best?

How a determined Co-op member and a staff aide helped improve the diets of countless Americans



Co-op member Mrs. Rosemary McGuire (daughter Lettie in her arms) chats with home economist Helen Black in front of the Bisquick display at the University Avenue Co-op Center.

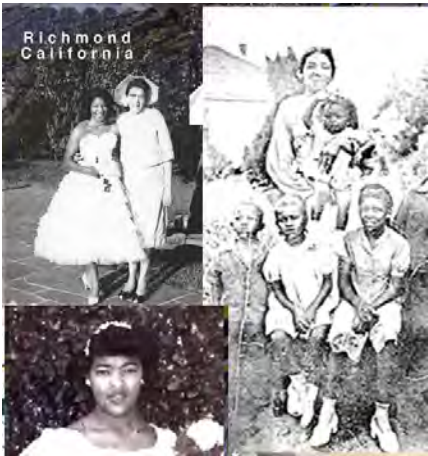
My mother (left) holding me at our local Berkeley Co-op Grocery Store on Ashby and Telegraph Ave in 1969. Today there is a Whole Foods in this location.

When the last of her five children headed off to college, My mother completed her graduate degree in social work and began a successful career. Because of the love and time my mother spent with us as an active homemaker while we were in school, we had her support and encouragement to pursue our dreams, no matter how far away they seemed at the time. She created a large library in our house which we called 'the black library', filled with books celebrating our blackness and allowing us to fully understand many things in the world we hadn't seen yet. When we stepped into the world, her quilts kept us warm, and those books prepared us.

My grandparents were incredible people. My Grandfather 'Honey' (Charles Smith) dropped out of the 5th grade when his father died to raise his 5 younger brothers and sisters, drove trains and was a boxer who owned his own grocery store near Waco Texas. He was parking a train on a siding when he first saw my Grandmother Lettie, who was teaching a Sunday School class in her church's back yard. My Grandmother Lettie (Long) Smith, was a community leader, and co-founder of the Hoffman Homeowners Association, an organization which helped the first black homeowners in Richmond, California. She worked full time while raising 9 children. Before and after leaving their farm land in Texas to move to California, my Grandmother Lettie and my Grandfather Honey's families were leaders in their communities, establishing some of the first schools and churches for black people in the South and the San Francisco Bay Area.



Above: Grandfather Honey (Charles Smith) as a boxer, and (right) standing next to his grocery store in Texas..



Above: My mother (bottom left and top left), Rosemary (Smith) McGuire with her mother, Lettie Mae (Long) Smith and (top right) being held by her mother at 3 years old with some of her 8 siblings.



Photos of the last slaves in my family on my grandmother Lettie and my grandfather Honey's family land in Texas.

During the great depression, my Grandfather James McGuire earned two law degrees and soon began working in the New Deal for the United States government. He died when my father was one year old. His wife, my Grandma Margaret (Wingfield) McGuire who remarried after my Grandfather died, was a top student and homemaker who began working in her 50's in the San Diego Schools Administration, retiring 20 years later in her 70s.



(left) Dad holding my sister DeRose's hand with Papa Ramsey (Mom's Grandfather) in the early 60's, under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California. Photo taken by my mother, Rosemary Smith McGuire.



(left) My Grandmother, Margaret (Wingfield) McGuire, with her son (my father) John Wingfield McGuire, and her husband (right photo), James McGuire in the 1930's.

Nature, Art, Math and Music

When I was in the second grade, My mother signed me up for traditional Japanese watercolor classes with Mrs. Iseke, who had been formally trained at the Hokusai School. One of my public school teachers noticed my artwork and poetry, submitting samples of my work to be featured in the Palo Alto City Newspaper. In the 3rd grade, my teachers asked me to teach painting workshops to the kindergartners, 1st and 2nd graders.

Mrs. Iseke noticed my skill in art. She spent one-on-one time with me after her group class so I could learn advanced techniques in Asian Sumi calligraphy, poetry and painting. This style of painting influenced the foundational style of my artwork, photography and years later, most of my web designs.

Growing up in a multicultural and multiracial family, Our parents brought us up to learn about all cultures and religions in the world. I received a MESA leadership award, an internship at a local pharmaceutical corporation, received a Merit Scholar Award, and received the Palo Alto community scholarship. Despite these awards, my high school academic counselor told me the same thing he told one of my older brothers – that I should not bother to apply to college because I was black.



Early Asian style watercolors by Lettie McGuire, also featured in my VRML art gallery.

Over the years, I learned that the art that my heart most yearned to portray was peace and the joy of nature.

I grew up in a family deeply connected to the wilderness, and my connection to nature had an immensely positive effect on my life perspective and creativity

While growing up in Michigan, we spent a lot of time on a family farm, so at three years old, one of my chores was to gather all the eggs from the chicken coop each morning. We lived near Canada and the Great Lakes, so one summer, all seven of us spent two weeks canoeing and portaging Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park. We experienced wolves, water rapids, bears, and overturned canoes.

I started learning violin at 3 years old, but for years, I yearned to play the piano like my mother, ultimately taking lessons from Dr. Anthony in Palo Alto. During this time in my life, I was happy to spend every waking moment either painting or composing music. Everyone in our family played a musical instrument.

Our house was an educational mecca, filled with libraries of books like Godel Escher Bach, philosophy, science fiction and volumes of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and we tried to read them all. We rarely watched television, but when we did, it was Nova and National Geographic. My father subscribed to various scientific journals, so I regularly read Daedalus, and Scientific American was my favorite magazine.

We got dressed up every Sunday and often walked to church. We didn't attend just one church however. We attended Howard Thurman's 'Church for the Fellowship of all People's' in San Francisco where my parents were married, Congregational Churches, Catholic Churches, black Baptist churches, and our weekly local Quaker Friends' Meetings. I attended half a dozen Bar Mitzvahs before high school. Because my parents taught us to embrace all cultures in the world at an early age, I saw life from a global perspective.



At my high school baccalaureate at Stanford Church, where Joan Baez gave the address.

The Real Silicon Valley No One Talks About Today

The community where I grew up was divided by a red line called highway 101. On one side, there is Palo Alto, one of the wealthiest small cities in America. On the other side is East Palo Alto, which had the highest homicide rate in the United States for four years in a row while I was in high school. Unlike today, East Palo Alto was predominantly African American in the 70's and 80's. An enforced, unofficial 'curfew' prevented black people from driving through Palo Alto after sunset. Most of these black people worked in Palo Alto during the daytime, but their children were not allowed to attend school nearest to them in Palo Alto (which has some of the highest performing schools in the United States), instead these students were bused to far away, lower performing schools in other cities. There were few opportunities for youth who lived in East Palo Alto, just like today.

Unlike today, when it is rare to 'see' black people in Palo Alto, during the 1970's and 1980's, you would see black people in Palo Alto often, but most of the black people you saw didn't live in Palo Alto. The majority lived in East Palo Alto and worked at low paying, menial jobs in Palo Alto during the day. Most of the houses I went into in Palo Alto during those years employed a black maid. Most of the people doing yard work were black men. All the janitors at the schools I attended were black men, and many of the cooks in restaurants were black. My brothers and sisters and I were often the only black kids in our classes, in our schools, and in our neighborhoods. I can only equate the experiences we had growing up in Palo Alto with stories I've heard about people living 100 years ago in the deep South. Teachers and kids often referred to us using the "n" word. What might be shocking today was 'normalized' in the 1960's, 70's and 80's. Growing up in this environment deeply affected my purpose in life, the jobs I chose, and who I am today.

After I left for college, I was not surprised to hear that there were several protests and marches through the streets of Palo Alto, bringing attention to decades of discrimination. Soon after that, almost every black maid, janitor, cook and day laborer were replaced in Palo Alto, and within less than a decade, most of the black families who owned homes in East Palo Alto were bought out and replaced by other groups as well as large technology companies.

Early Interest in Computers and the Internet:

One day in the 1970's, my Dad brought home and configured the 'internet' on our dining room table. There were so many parts, it took up the whole table, and he was so excited to share this brand new technology with us, I will never forget that day. He showed us how to use our house rotary phone to connect to something that very few people in the world even knew existed. He began bringing home some of the earliest computers ever made for my brothers and sisters to experiment with. In 1984, I typed my college essay on one of those computers.

Despite often experiencing discrimination in Palo Alto, I knew that I had access to opportunities and education that few young people – of any color – on earth could access.

All of my brothers and sisters positively influenced and encouraged me. Some of my first memories are following my sister DeRose around everywhere she went, wanting to do everything she did. When she said she wanted to be a teacher when she grew up, I wanted to be a teacher when I grew up. When she said she wanted to be a nurse when she grew up, I wanted to be a nurse when I grew up. The teacher idea stuck for my whole life. When my brother James was in high school, our family flew to the White House, where he was honored as a Presidential Scholar. His achievements gave me the courage to believe that there was nothing I could not do. My brother [Hugh Wingfield McGuire, PhD](#), was a big influence on me, and encouraged my interest in computers and early coding on the internet. Years before NetNoir began, Hugh was the first black student to receive a PhD in computer science and artificial intelligence at Stanford University. In the same year, Malcolm Casselle received his Masters degree in the same department, where we met. My genius younger sister began 'collecting' my art over the years, hanging my paintings on her walls and always encouraged my interest in art and computers.

[Hugh's website](#) after he left Stanford. [Hugh's website](#) after he left UC Santa Barbara.

College and early career:

When I started college at 17 at UC Berkeley in 1985, I was the only student at Stebbins' Hall with a word processor, so students began paying me \$3/page to rewrite, fix grammar and retype their essays, manuscripts and doctoral thesis. One of my friends was a doctoral student in the computer science department and allowed me to access the few university computers connected to the internet, where I began experimenting, writing applications and communicating with other universities via early online networks.

During this time in the mid 1980s, I established my first 'presence' online, learning as many networking languages as possible. It was a very tiny, almost 'secret' community that few people knew about. This new technology was very exciting during the era of typewriters and rotary phones, before cell phones and the world wide web existed. The internet was mostly just a dark screen with command prompts. I learned everything I could, knowing there must be images in it's future and I would be putting images on the screen the day it became possible.

I was co-founder of the first UC Berkeley video club, protested against apartheid and served as art coordinator for the student Earth Day Committee, setting up large art exhibits in libraries across campus.

Copy machines were evolving quickly at this time. For several years, before graphic design software was invented, copy machines were the main tool many designers used to create professional designs. I was an art major, so I was also learning traditional print design like lithography on large stones. Being a fine artist was still a very lucrative job because speedy and efficient 'design applications' like Adobe Illustrator did not exist yet. If you wanted a professional 'design' in those days, you usually had to hire a traditional artist. People paid me to create designs using my skill as an artist combined with copy machines, then Pagemaker, then later Photoshop. Whatever was new, I learned it. They couldn't create new software fast enough.

In the 1980's, I started my own graphic design business, designing for hundreds of clients large and small, including the presidential campaign for Perot.

I was creating these 'pre-website' experiments with early online networks, bulletin boards, MS-DOS and any combination of programs I could get access to while the internet was evolving slowly from the government to universities. Many people in my life kept asking me, "Why are you spending all your time on that?, what is the internet anyway?" I just loved it and didn't care what people thought. I spent equal time on my watercolor painting,

playing the piano, writing code and creating designs. I was focused on supporting artists. On [my first website, I offered an online presence to underrepresented artists](#). This was long before NetNoir existed.

I was moving through computers so fast, I was always searching for more advanced machines with more programs and new software. While teaching a pagemaker workshop in Berkeley, I met people who worked at Industrial Light and Magic. They asked me if I was interested in creating a newsletter for the North Bay Multimedia Group in the Marin area, soon joining this small group of 10 early adopters of 'multimedia', including George Lucas. This was years before AOL, during the first years before images could be seen easily on computer screens. This was the time of Star Wars, and the movie industry wanted the computer graphics industry to catch up.

A friend of mine got a job at Western Images and told me what he saw people working on there. I asked if I could visit and met a 3D animator woman who created television commercials and movie clips using Flame. She worked in a room that looked like a giant airplane cockpit with hundreds of controls. Sitting next to her felt like we were in a futuristic spaceship. The machines powering her controls were larger than my whole apartment and were on the opposite side of the large building where she worked. This was a young woman using her computer skills to pay all her bills, something I had never before seen in my life. I never forgot this.

Beginning my career without a college degree

In 1985, I wanted to be a full time art major, studying painting and ceramics in the Practice of Fine Art Department. I also took Mandarin (so I could write poems using Mandarin characters for my Sumi watercolor paintings), South East Asian Literature, Ancient Art History and language courses like Urdu and ancient Greek poetry. With a few friends, I co-founded the first accredited Ethnic Studies course at UC Berkeley and we published an anthology book of art and poetry called 'Smell This'. After a series of multiple unforeseen events, including the death of my mentor Professor Joan Brown, I reluctantly dropped out of college.

I began working at a cable television station, hosting and editing my own music video show, working closely with the record companies to select artists, eventually having my own top 40's list in Billboard magazine. This was in the early days of MTV when music videos were new and becoming very popular. I met and interviewed many leaders in Hip Hop and R&B.

As my popularity as a 'music video television host/model' grew, I quickly realized that I did not like being in front of the camera and was more interested in the new Apple computers in the office that no one was using. I saw that the television 'playback' office could save money by being automated, so I created a software application on one of the early Apple computers, automating and tracking television commercials for our clients, saving thousands of dollars a month for the tv station.

I kept trying to get access to more advanced computers and a job where I could just use computers all day. A friend gave me a used Japanese computer and despite the fact that it had no software in the english language, I spent all my time learning every software program it had in Japanese (Autocad, Photoshop, and others), then took the computer apart and put it back together again several times, trying to get that machine to do more. I left the television station to work for Coopers and Lybrand, where I was finally able to use some of the same software programs in English.



A photo of me on my parent's porch in Palo Alto, one month before I quit my \$40,000/year job at Coopers and Lybrand to work for free as an artist, designer and programmer at NetNoir.

Launching my first website, Artwebb.com

Long before the WWW was launched upon the world, I had created my first 'internet/network profile' around 1987, while my brother was teaching programming as an assistant teacher at Harvard. At the time, I thought I would have a career as a painter. My brother Hugh told me I was good at programming in multiple languages, which was hard for me to believe at that time for various reasons.

Finally, around 1994, when Hugh was completing his PhD nearby at Stanford, he told me where some of the first domain names were being sold to the public nearby. I rode my bike to Mountain View to buy my first domain name, artwebb.com.

Hugh's dissertation was related to temporal logic and artificial intelligence, and he shared an office with another fellow postdoctoral student named Sergey Brin. Neither of them minded when I asked for explanation after explanation of everything they were working on. I remember at one point, Sergey told us he was dropping out of school to pursue a side project and asked my brother to join him, but I think Hugh was more interested in becoming a professor. I asked Hugh to explain his thesis to me over and over again and he never got impatient with me. I tried to learn as much as possible and experimented endlessly.

Buying my first domain name was one of the most exciting days of my life. Every week the Graphical User interface for HTML expanded. At first, we could only put left aligned white text on black backgrounds, then we could add some subtle formatting, then tables and images! So the day the image tag was available, I added many of my watercolor paintings and soon had my dog Marley barking on my homepage. Frames were a big step forward and many websites used them until they became obsolete.

Before, during and after working at NetNoir, my artwebb.com and lettie.com website and graphic design business became an important resource for my creative development and an opportunity to uplift other artists, underrepresented youth and communities.

Click to see early versions of my resume on artwebb.com. The goal of artwebb.com and my goal in life is to uplift underrepresented artists. Here is the form I created on my website:



Exhibit Your Art free of charge

Send your art digitally by attaching it to your email. If you cannot email it, call 510-873-1188.

send art now![questions?](#)

Email:	<input type="text"/>
Phone:	<input type="text"/>
Name:	<input type="text"/>
Address:	<input type="text"/>
City:	<input type="text"/>
State:	<input type="text"/>
Zip:	<input type="text"/>
Country:	<input type="text"/>
Browser:	<input type="text"/>

Add your poetry or tell us what you like us to add/change?

[Mail to mcgrafx@artwebb.com.](mailto:mcgrafx@artwebb.com)

Below are different evolutions of my first website artwebb.com. The Way Back Machine didn't exist long before ~1995, so it does not have the early versions of artwebb.com. You can see the influence that my Sumi calligraphy painting had on my design style.



natural web hosting

510
873
1188



[Click here to see a version of my artwebb.com website as it was preserved by the Way Way Back Machine in the mid-1990's.](#)



Elements where artists could exhibit their art and learn about art events and exhibits.



Enter The Black Age of Comics

Mighty Ace



Cyberzone



One of the artists featured on my website gallery.

NetNoir's AOL days:

“I accepted David's offer and immediately quit my \$40,000 job at Coopers and Lybrand to work for NetNoir for free”

The first week AOL was launched, I joined. Not long afterwards, I noticed that there was a channel called 'NetNoir', and I had never seen a place I wanted to work for more. I felt that if I could convince them to hire me, it would be my first real job as an artist. I emailed the art director that moment, letting them know that I would like to apply to work for NetNoir as a designer. They told me to send them a sample of my design work. I quickly created a Photoshop design and emailed it to them the same day. I thought they were in New York. They emailed me back 15 minutes later, telling me they were in San Francisco and how soon could I get there?

I rode my bike to the first NetNoir office the next day and David Ellington interviewed me. There was this young kid with a skateboard hanging out in the hallway while I was in the interview. At the end of the interview, David Ellington told me I was hired – but they couldn't pay me for a while because they were a startup.

This is the image I created and sent to NetNoir before my interview.



They were still making the transition between working from home and sharing a small office off South Park with an architecture firm. I accepted David's offer and immediately quit my \$40,000 job at Coopers and Lybrand to work for NetNoir for free, despite many people in my life thinking this was a big mistake. Looking back, I can now understand their perspective, but during that time, I knew and still know today that it was one of the best decisions I've ever made. As I walked out of the conference room, the kid with the skateboard had this big smile on his face and shook my hand, letting me know that he was Jon Santos and he was really happy we were going to be working together. Jon Santos was the Art Director and I would be working for him as his designer.

Jon is a genius designer as well as a famous 'jungle' dj. He taught me everything he knew as a world class designer for magazines and now for AOL. He designed NetNoir's logo and branding.

NetNoir was on AOL, but did not yet have an HTML website. Anouk and Jaasi Munanka were doing all our programming in Rainman for AOL at the time, but Anouk left for another job and Jaasi eventually returned back to Stanford Law School. Jon told Malcolm that I already had a website and that I knew how to code HTML, so Malcolm told me that I had to take over all the Rainman coding since no one else there knew how to code. I did not know at the time that I was doing two jobs - designer and programmer. I continued to do both jobs almost everywhere I worked for my entire career, learning years later that these were two separate roles at most companies and especially at design agencies.

I was one of the only coders in San Francisco at the time, so I helped several companies like Samsung learn the language so they could launch their first website. It was a very strange experience to see all these white guys line up to learn from me, after growing up in Palo Alto, where white people rarely said a word to me.

I would meet up with a small but growing community of coders at South Park, one block from our office, the heart of 'multimedia gulch' (as people later called it) almost daily to connect and learn the 'newest tags of the week'. I got a little 'extra' creative with the Rainman code, so soon the Rainman software developers flew out to visit me often and learn how I changed their code to do more interesting things. Several of the AOL channels wanted to learn from me, so David told them I would provide consulting, sharing my methods of design and code. It was a full schedule with little sleep, but I loved every minute. I also came up with an idea to create mini Rainman websites for companies that were not online, like Visa, Kraft, Columbia

House Music and others. Each of these mini sites brought in tens of thousands of dollars and helped pay NetNoir's bills.

Entrepreneur, Moonlighting, VRML and Siggraph

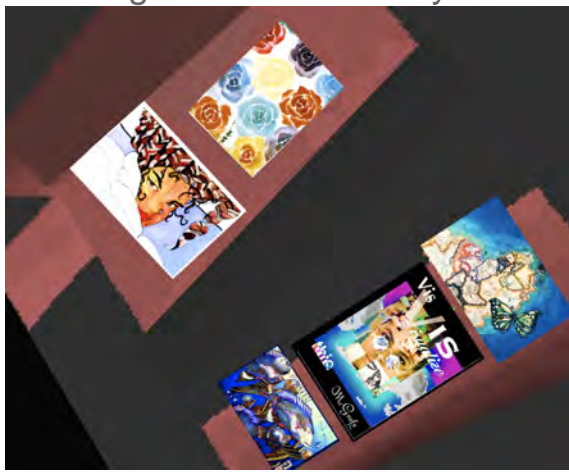
Jon Santos and I attended the international Siggraph Design Conference in New Orleans, meeting the first 'internet' designers from all over the world. We were the only designers of color at every event we attended.



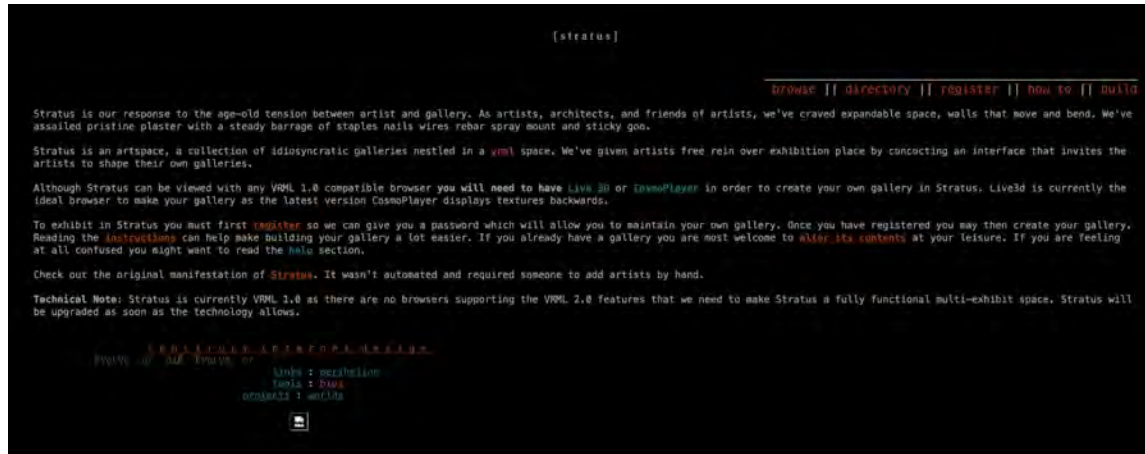
A design I made in the early 1990's, paying tribute to Jon Santos. Here he is skateboarding at San Francisco City College parking lot.

Months before the Siggraph conference, and [Mark Meadows](#) and [Annette Loudin](#) from Construct Stratus (another tech company across the street from NetNoir at South Park) had seen my watercolor exhibition at Cafe Centro and reached out to me, asking if I could create a [VRML gallery of my watercolor paintings](#) using their technology in the first interactive VRML exhibit premiering at Siggraph. I said yes and will never forget seeing my paintings exhibited via VRML in New Orleans.

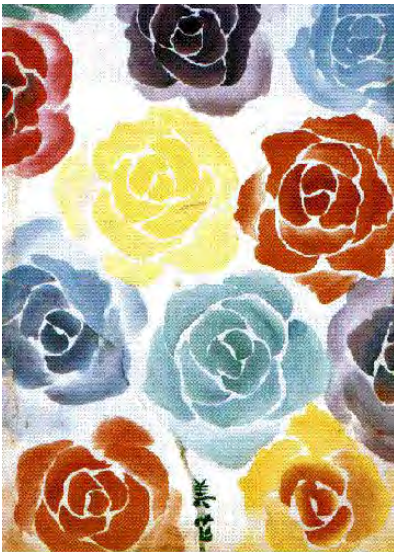
A screenshot of my watercolor paintings in the first VRML art gallery exhibited at Siggraph New Orleans. If you have the software, you can click the image below to see my VRML art gallery.



Construct and Stratus' first site:



Below, some of my watercolor paintings featured in my VRML art gallery, exhibited at the Siggraph New Orleans Design Conference.



"JOY" Watercolor by Lettie McGuire



"Fish 2" Watercolor by Lettie McGuire



"Freedom, Africa" Watercolor by Lettie McGuire



"Women with Pots" Watercolor by Lettie McGuire

While NetNoir was still only focused on AOL, I was rapidly devouring HTML code at home, spending long nights at home experimenting with exciting new combinations, and countless hours connecting with the few other HTML coders I could find online. I created a form on my artwebb.com website offering free and low cost web pages to black artists, including the up and coming black Comic Book Creators and building the first website for The North Beach Jazz Festival. At one point, there were so many websites hosted on artwebb.com, it became a small hub for the local Bay Area art community.

Soon, I was creating websites for dozens of various organizations and artists in the black community around the world as a young black woman entrepreneur. Herbie Hancock paid me to build a website for his non-profit organization. I designed a website for Terry Ellis of En Vogue's new perfume line via Tyrone Thomas from Virtual Melanin Inc. I built the first website for KBLX, Pacific Telesis and others. Everyone seemed to want a website and few people had one or knew how to get one. Some people knew how to design but not how to code, others knew how to code but not how to design. Since I could do both easily, building websites was like breathing for me. I felt like I had the best job in the world, and it was so much fun, it never felt like work.

The only other black woman coder and designer using HTML that I knew of in the world at that time was Auriea Harvey. She lived in New York and I lived in Berkeley California. We communicated, hoping to visit each other one day. Whenever I felt particularly alone, all I had to do was go to her homepage, as she had a camera on herself almost 24 hours a day, broadcasting to the world. Most of this time, she was sitting at her computer, designing and coding, just like me.

(below) A few samples of my own clients in the 1990's, including Maxwell, Herbie Hancock, Terry Ellis of En Vogue, Essence Magazine, and Black Enterprise Magazine.



Black Enterprise Magazine featured two of my clients web sites in their March 98 issue: Herbie Hancock's site for youth and technology and Terry Ellis of En Vogue's e-commerce site promoting her new perfume line.

Terry Ellis of En Vogue 's Southern Exposure

Worked closely with recording artist and staff to conceptualize, art direct and design entire site promoting her music and new perfume line.

Herbie Hancock

Designed and programmed site: "Rhythm of Life Foundation" founded by Herbie Hancock's technology institute seeking to bridge the gap between youth and technology.



A page from my 1990's portfolio featuring Notorious BIG, Bad Boy Entertainment, Faith Evans, Boowakwala, KBLX Radio Station, San Francisco Examiner, San Francisco Chronicle and others (below).



life and death

CREATIVE DIRECTOR, VMI INCORPORATED

I was approached by the CEO of VMI Inc., a web development company in N.Y. that created sites for HBO and Spike Lee among others. They asked me to consult as their Creative Director starting with Bad Boy Entertainment's own megastars; Notorious BIG (biggie smalls) and his wife, singer Faith Evans.

faith
EVANS

Working virtually from San Francisco, I moved on to art direct these artists' entire layout, graphics, animations and html framesets. Within the month, I was flown out to Brooklyn New York to complete the project on site and assist with the live webcast/website launch party hosted at Puff Daddy (Puffy Combs) house in the Hamptons.

Tyrone Thomas and Arzie Hardin of [Virtual Melanin Inc.](#) in Brooklyn New York emailed me one day, asking if I could design a website for Notorious BIG and Bad Boy Entertainment. I began designing and coding the websites for Biggie Smalls, Bad Boy Entertainment and all of their current recording artists. We had webcasts in San Francisco and our launch party at Puff Daddy's (his name at the time) house in the Hamptons.

Puff Daddy (also called Puffy Combs) of Bad Boy Entertainment wanted to hire a black web designer and after looking all over the world, Auriea and I were the only two black web designers they could find. Virtual Melanin Inc. and their 'community' site called Cafe de Los Negroes' was one of the most popular websites on the internet for black and brown people at the time, especially in New York. It was an honor to be hired by Virtual Melanin Inc.

Auriea Harvey had created the most beautiful websites in existence, showing us all what is possible, and winning top honors and first place at the Webby Awards several years in a row.

Auriea drove across the United States and stayed at my house in Berkeley California the first time she received a webby award. Here she is taking my portrait in the redwood house I lived in at the time in Berkeley, California. I captured her setting up the shot using my video camera.



Video taken by Lettie McGuire



Photograph taken by Auriea Harvey.

Launching NetNoir's World Wide Web

Although NetNoir still did not have a website, I was doing more and more with my own website, as each week, another tag became available, giving html coders new and exciting creative directions to go in. I recommended to David that we launch a NetNoir HTML website. Especially once the table cell tags and targeted frames were available. Once he gave the go ahead, I began coding the first homepage for NetNoir.

It would be many years before reliable WYSWYG (what you see is what you get) tools (like Dreamweaver or Wordpress) existed, so I wrote every line of code and uploaded each page and each image via ftp. This is how all websites were built in those days. While we were still at the South Park office, Jon Santos left to work at another job. I became Art Director, and Anouk and Jaasi left around the same time. This meant that for awhile, I was the only person designing, creating images and hand coding Rainman for our AOL channel and hand coding every line of HTML code for our newly launched website.

After several months, our HTML site was growing quickly, and with the AOL site still growing as well, I told David that I needed an assistant to help me with my work. After interviewing dozens of applicants, I finally had the honor of meeting the creative genius, Sean Patrick O'Connor and I hired him on the spot. We transformed NetNoir into one of the most popular websites in the world.



Lettie McGuire

Art Director



Sean O'Connor

Assistant Art Director

The first HTML NetNoir page.



A banner for this spotlight area:



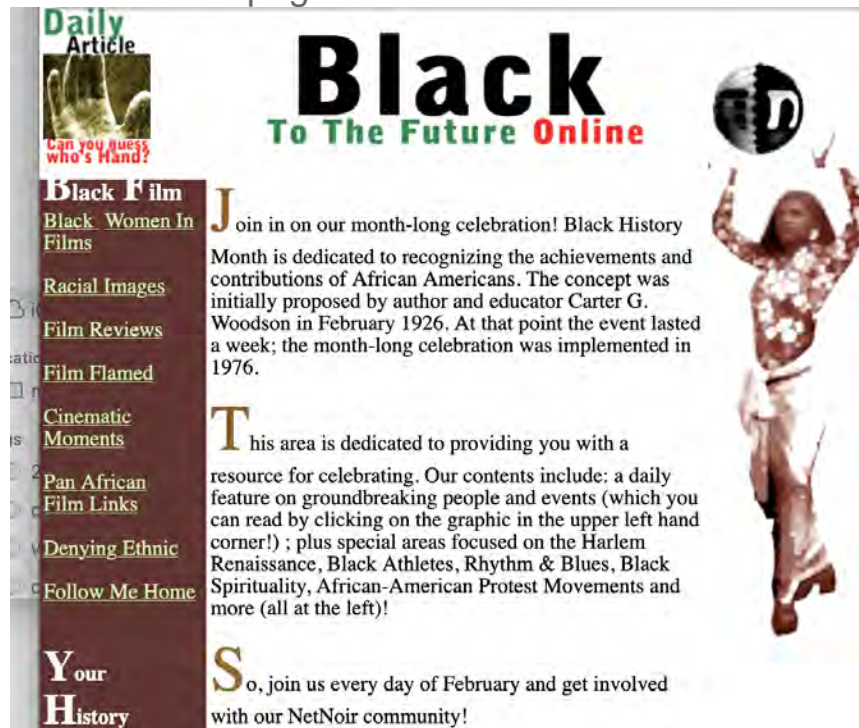
An early version of NetNoir's AOL channel.



A page (below) from my own personal portfolio website in the 1990's. My design was featured in Forbes Magazine and Vibe Magazine.



Below, you can see the first online Black History Month. Click the screenshot to view all the pages.

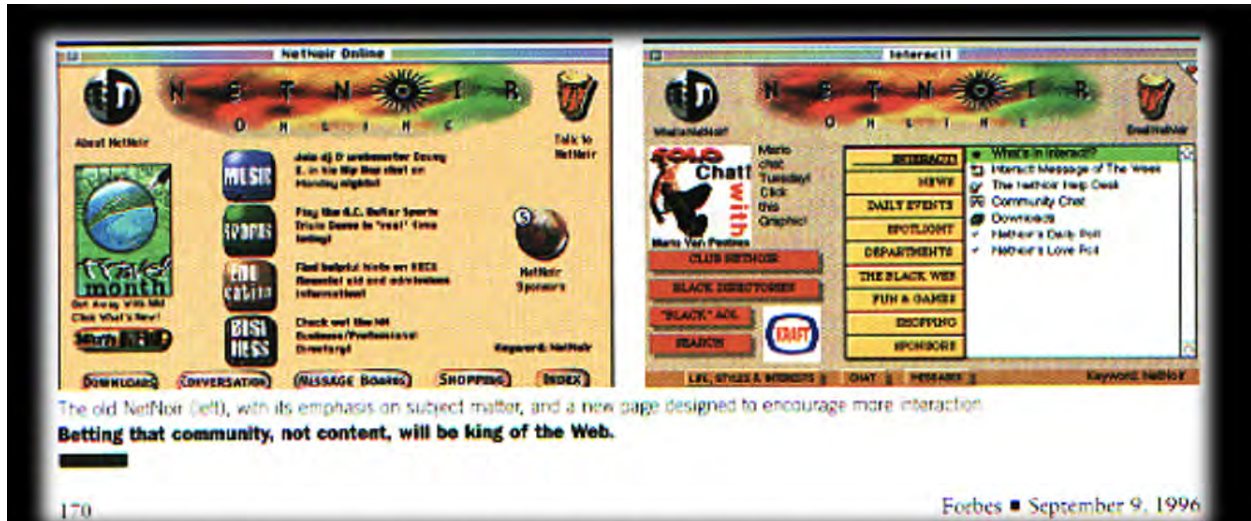


NetNoir HTML days:

Sean and I researched, wrote and designed all of the monthly spotlight websites, client websites and basically everything that was launched online for NetNoir except we did not write the journalism posts. The journalism posts cost us a lot of money as we were paying writers tens of thousands of dollars. After a year or so, I pointed out to Malcom and David using an analytics tracking algorithm I created, that our viewers weren't interested in journalism, they just wanted more community. This analytics tracking algorithm I invented was the first of its kind and allowed us to get paid 'per views and clicks' for each advertiser shown in banners Sean and I created for our site. I shared this code with other nearby companies so they could also start billing their advertisers automatically.

Years before MySpace and Facebook existed, I saw this clear preference for community from our large user base and pushed for us to change our channel's focus. After many discussions, Malcolm finally agreed to let me give it a try, so we began with the AOL site first, changing the homepage focus to community instead of journalism. The week we launched the new 'community focused' design, we gained millions of new users, becoming the fastest growing online community in the world. Forbes Magazine and news outlets around the world flew into San Francisco to interview us.

The wild success of my 'community' focused design for NetNoir featured here inside Forbes magazine.



"The Old NetNoir (left) with its emphasis on subject matter, and a new page"

"designed to encourage more interaction."

"Betting that community, not content, will be king of the Web."

"To keep them coming back and at the same time hold down costs, NetNoir has been shifting steadily to a community model. In October, 1995, NetNoir's traffic swelled up to 20,000 users a day. A new design reflecting a direction CasSelle calls "community-heavy, content-light" goes on-line this month."



Before I met Sean, he was already a gifted artist with a college degree and had valuable experience in print design. When we began working together, I taught Sean everything I knew, and he learned very quickly. Soon thereafter, he helped me build every page on our website, and we began creating all the graphics and wrote all the Rainman and HTML code together. Without him, the amazing websites we created would never have been built.

We created numerous websites for NetNoir as well as NetNoir client sites that paid NetNoir's bills.

In addition to our work at NetNoir, there was an evolving door of people stopping by our office, asking to intern with Sean and I, so they could learn how to design and/or build websites. We provided mentorship to many other young, aspiring black artists, designers and coders.

Sean is a genius designer and coder. He designed and hand coded several areas on the site on his own. He created the famous 'Be-In' website and started his own website design business, called Data Kitchen.

We launched a website for Martin Luther King Jr. Institute and many other similar organizations, seeking to uplift and honor black history and achievements. Click any image to see the actual page in the Way Way Back Machine.

A man who changed the course of world history, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. lives eternal through the message and fruition of his dream.

"I n the final analysis, agape means a recognition of the fact that all life is interrelated. All Humanity is involved in a single process, and all men are brothers."

by Martin Luther King Jr., Experiment in Love



SPEECHES

CHRONOLOGY

TELL US!

READINGS

I created the NetNoir Quilt gallery to honor my mother's creative passion and the tradition of quilting which originated from African Americans and the African Hausa Tribe. Click the screenshot to learn more.

NetNoir Quilt Gallery

[Cinematic Moments](#)
[Pan African Film Links](#)
[Denying Ethnic](#)
[Follow Me Home](#)

Your
History
[Harlem Renaissance](#)
[Quilting](#)
[Daily Articles](#)
[Politics](#)
Black Sound
[The History of African American Music, Pt. One](#)

NetNoir features one of today's most well-known quilters, Faith Ringgold, whose quilts tell vivid stories of personal and historical events.

Africans, such as the Hausa, brought their quilting tradition with them overseas.



VIDEOS



The first web-event dedicated to recruiting minority professionals.



Welcome to NetNoir's SPOTLIGHT area!

Every month NetNoir features a Spotlight celebration. From this screen you can visit our current Spotlight area, and check out any of our previously featured areas. As NetNoir grows, watch this department become a valuable educational resource!



Le BHM programme en français

This Month!: *[Black To The Future Online at NetNoir during National Black History Month!](#)*

January 1997: *[NetNoir Martin Luther King Jr.](#)*

December 1996: *[NetNoir Celebrates Kwanzaa!](#)*

October 1996: *[Join the Political Arena](#)*

September 1996: *[NetNoir Spotlights Entertainment](#)*

August 1996: *[NetNoir focuses on Travel!](#)*

July 1996: *[NetNoir spotlights Technology Month](#)*

June 1996: *[NetNoir celebrates Black Music Month](#)*

May 1996: *[Celebrate National Health & Fitness Month with NetNoir's Soul Spa](#)*

April 1996: *[National Poetry Month](#)*

March 1996: *[Women's History Month](#)*

February 1996: *[Celebrate Black History Month with NetNoir](#)*



FREE TRIAL (CD-ROM) [CLICK HERE!](#)



Your Style!... Estyle

About Home Search Spotlight Links Lifestyle Community Empowerment

©1996 NetNoir, Inc. Comments and Questions: drum@netnoir.com

[Click here to join Club NetNoir](#). Enter "SUBSCRIBE DRUM" your full name

I proposed a new spotlight area highlighting technology, hoping to highlight the work that [Professor Ricardo Gomez](#) was doing to promote black designers, the work that [Saki Mafundikwa](#) was doing to start the first digital design school in Zimbabwe Africa, and I especially wanted to highlight [Three](#), who was the Creative Director and only black employee of Wired Magazine.

[Click to read the introductory page I wrote for our technology month.](#)

**NetNoir spotlights
Technology Month**

tech-nol-o-gy n. 1. the branch of knowledge that deals with applied science, engineering, the industrial arts, etc. 2. the sum of the ways in which social groups provide themselves with the material objects of their civilization.

Highlights

- [Introduction by our Technology Man](#)
- [Technology WebLinks](#)
- [Techno Trivia](#)
- [Submit your favorite Techie!](#)

Technology & Art

- [Art Director's Introduction](#)
- [Loretta Staples \(U dot D\)](#)
- [Three \(HotWired\)](#)
- [Prof. Ricardo Gomez \(Global Design\)](#)

Historical Pioneers

- [Benjamin Banneker \(astronomy\)](#)
- [Jan E. Matzeliger \(industry\)](#)
- [Ernest E. Just \(physiology\)](#)
- [George Washington Carver \(agriculture\)](#)
- [Charles Richard Drew \(medicine\)](#)

One day, I was told that an important software developer would be stopping by to meet us. I was surprised to see a young woman – since women developers were rare in those days. She asked Sean and I if we would like to be the first to try her new animation software she had invented. This software was later called Flash and transformed the internet. We were showcased in her ‘pilot’ launch to promote Flash to the public. I fell in love with Flash and will miss it forever. I designed the majority of my most beautiful websites using Flash, now all gone forever after the software was discontinued by Adobe.

Art & Technology



The individuals highlighted in this section; Staples, Gomez and Three, could all be considered techies just as well as artists. Technology has made an enormous impact on digital art created today. Read and learn about these two areas that are becoming more as one.

How has technology impacted art?

by Lettie McGuire

With the digital age, art has transformed and morphed into a medium no longer constrained to paint & paper in a frame. In the past year alone, the WWW's new gui (graphical user interface) has changed the look and feel of the net from boring text to visual worlds. Traditional galleries and conservative museums may still be hesitant to consider digital art as sellable works worthy of exhibition, but that will soon change.

Everyone is an artist. This we all learned while fingerpainting back in nursery school. Some of us lost the touch, but it comes back to us in the office. Ever experiment with the draw/paint accessory in microsoft word to add that extra punch to an otherwise rather dry looking document? Everyday the digital medium expands. First it was paint programs in Windows & Apple Computers, now it's Photoshop, Illustrator & Painter. The same gesso, oil, watercolour & other effects once limited to fine artists are now the domain of all - except without all the paint fumes & mess & stuff. Except for the trained eye, it is now often difficult to tell the difference between an oil painting created in a Painter application and the real thing.

Art on the Internet is art. Some people call it graphics, web design, gifs, whatever..... it has no boundaries & there are no limitations to what can now be created artistically in this brand new world of the web. Digital art (created on the computer) is now distributed for two main groups of viewers; print (magazines, posters, etc...) and Internet (Computer screens). What is so cool about art produced for the Internet is the dpi (dots per inch). All art created for the Internet is 72 dpi, where as print art is 300, 600, 1200 dpi (linotype) or more. This means that art for the internet takes much less time & cost to create, manipulate & access.

You might be hearing a lot about the coming "virtual office" complete with stationary, files & a receptionist. Many may think these futuristic design plans are just the domain of the html programmers & web builders. Not exactly so. Many web designers such as myself often create all the html for entire web sites because companies realize that the html programming *is* the design.

The future of our technology may well be run by artists.

Lettie McGuire, Art Director, NetNoir Online



[Technology Month Main Page](#)

[Staples](#) | [Three](#) | [Gomez](#)



Teaching

It was during this time, when I began what felt like the most natural, and at the same time, the strangest part of my career – teaching college courses. I had been accepted as a teacher into the world of academia for the first time in my life – having only a high school diploma.

[Professor Ivan van Sertima](#) reached out to me, sharing manuscripts of two books he was working on documenting African presence in ancient Americas and Egypt. After what I had learned about black history in Palo Alto High School, I became enlightened and inspired to go to Africa one day and learn first hand what American schools and most American writers of history books had left out since slavery.

[Professor Ricardo Gomez](#), Chair of the arts and industry department at San Francisco State University, also reached out to me, asking me to begin teaching HTML and web design courses, since his design and computer professors had never actually created a website. The WWW had popped up so quickly in the world, professors everywhere were looking for people like me who could offer these new skills that colleges didn't yet have a curriculum for.

I soon began teaching 5 different college courses in HTML, web design and development. Through Professor Gomez, I also met [Saki Mafundikwa](#), founder of the first design school in Zimbabwe, Africa. He later wrote the book [Afrikan Alphabets](#).



Teaching HTML with Professor Gates at San Francisco State University.

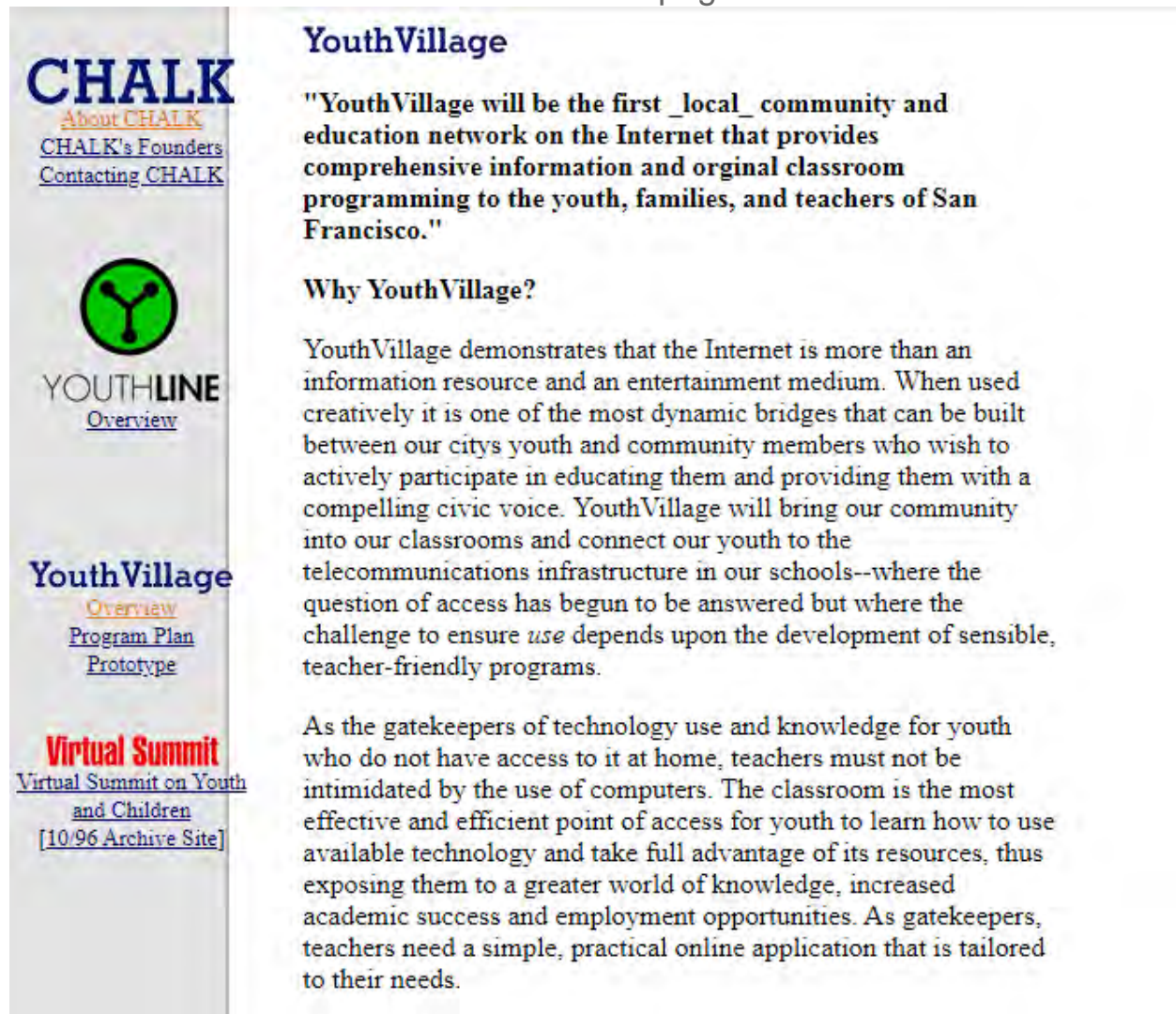
When the first dot.com crash happened, David and Malcom brought in an independent consulting firm who interviewed each of us to determine who to keep and who to lay off. They decided to lay off every employee at NetNoir except for myself. Without Sean, I had no creative energy to continue working in that large, empty warehouse. Within a few weeks, I left to focus full time on giving back to my community. After seeing almost zero black developers or designers out in the world like Sean and myself, I decided to do something about it, something powerful. I was determined to do everything I could to teach my skills to underrepresented youth and bridge the widening technology gap. I became the executive producer for YouthVillage, one of the first youth technology centers in the world.

Community

I left NetNoir to start the non-profit Youthvillage, one of the first youth technology centers in the world as part of **CHALK**: Communities in Harmony, Advocating for Learning and Kids.

I also worked closely with Pritha Srinivasan to uplift youth in San Francisco with the launch of Youthline. Chalk is still going strong today, supporting underrepresented youth in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Click screenshot below to read the online page.



The screenshot shows a vertical sidebar on the left with the following content:

- CHALK** logo in large blue letters.
- Links: [About CHALK](#), [CHALK's Founders](#), [Contacting CHALK](#)
- A green circular logo with a stylized 'Y' shape.
- YOUTHLINE** text with a link to [Overview](#)
- YouthVillage** text with links to [Overview](#), [Program Plan](#), and [Prototype](#)
- Virtual Summit** text with links to [Virtual Summit on Youth and Children](#) and [\[10/96 Archive Site\]](#)

The main content area on the right features the following text:

YouthVillage

"YouthVillage will be the first local community and education network on the Internet that provides comprehensive information and original classroom programming to the youth, families, and teachers of San Francisco."

Why YouthVillage?

YouthVillage demonstrates that the Internet is more than an information resource and an entertainment medium. When used creatively it is one of the most dynamic bridges that can be built between our city's youth and community members who wish to actively participate in educating them and providing them with a compelling civic voice. YouthVillage will bring our community into our classrooms and connect our youth to the telecommunications infrastructure in our schools--where the question of access has begun to be answered but where the challenge to ensure *use* depends upon the development of sensible, teacher-friendly programs.

As the gatekeepers of technology use and knowledge for youth who do not have access to it at home, teachers must not be intimidated by the use of computers. The classroom is the most effective and efficient point of access for youth to learn how to use available technology and take full advantage of its resources, thus exposing them to a greater world of knowledge, increased academic success and employment opportunities. As gatekeepers, teachers need a simple, practical online application that is tailored to their needs.

Everyone came together for my students. Bill Gates sponsored my program, flying out to meet my students and be present for the launch of our technology center and online 'virtual visitor' learning platform (the first 'Zoom'). I asked Cisco to provide the network, and Microsoft to provide the hardware and software needed to create 13 new technology centers for almost every high school in San Francisco. Vice President Al Gore helped get Cisco on board. Trying to beat out Apple's competing offer, Bill and Steve from Microsoft pulled 10 of their top software developers to create for

me the first 'Zoom-like' software just to support our educational plan of bringing 'virtual education' directly into classrooms. [Here is the case study Microsoft published about this software.](#) Mayor Willie Brown was our first 'virtual visitor', and Craig Newmark provided essential funding and a large network of support.



Launch day (left to right) Steve from Microsoft, Mayor Brown, two supporters and (far right) Lettie McGuire. This photo was taken by my father, John Wingfield McGuire.

CMP
Internet Business Media**TechWeb**

The Business Technology Network

SEARCH [E-Business](#), [Business Apps](#), [Mobile](#), [Networking](#), [Security](#), [Network & Systems](#), [Services](#)[home](#) | [news](#) | [technologies](#) | [industry issues](#) | [services](#) | [our sites](#)

YouthVillage Will Help Minority Youth Online

August 31, 1999 (8:50 a.m. EST)

By [Malcolm MacLachlan](#), TechWeb News

SAN FRANCISCO – A nonprofit organization here has joined Microsoft and other companies to start a program to encourage minority high school students to get online.

Communities in Harmony Advocating for Learning and Kids, known as [CHALK](#), unveiled its new [YouthVillage](#) program Tuesday. The site provides a resource for minority and low-income high school students in the city, who can access educational resources and get to know each other online.

By centralizing resources, the site acts as an alternative to building expensive computer centers in individual high schools. Three area high schools will be using YouthVillage to help teach civics and history classes this year. Organizers said they hope the program will expand to up to 16 schools by next year. The site also features several monitored, education-oriented chat rooms where students and teachers can exchange ideas and research.

The new program debuts less than a week after researchers at Vanderbilt University announced a [study](#) that found a troubling racial divide online. Among high school and college students, whites were more than twice as likely as blacks to be online, even when income disparity was taken into account.

YouthVillage producer Lettie McGuire said growing up as a mixed-race woman, she lacked role models among people in technology. Through programs such as this one, she said, the minority youth she meets today might find someone to look up to.

"I wish this website had been around when I was their age," she said.

Youth Village also features a Virtual Visitors program, in which prominent artist, technologists, and others will speak directly to students via a live online feed. The first guest was San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown. Never one to shy away from controversy, he urged students to fight for the repeal of Proposition 209, the 1996 California ballot initiative that banned affirmative action in state programs.

"We want to ensure that women and racial minorities have an opportunity, and we will do that in spite of Proposition 209," he said.

Mayor Brown's comments may indicate that CHALK will not let controversy get in the way of its goal of bringing technology to minority youth. Indeed, the group's alliance with Microsoft might eventually bring some controversy, as well, given Microsoft's recent public relations problems.

Microsoft Internet Business manager Steve Hale said the Redmond, Wash., software company gave CHALK a \$14,000 cash grant. It also came through with \$50,000 worth of software, including copies of Internet Explorer 4.0, the Windows NT operating system, the Netshow multimedia player, Internet Information Server, and the SQL database server.

The gifts were part of Microsoft's Connected Learning Community Grant Program. The company gives out such grants three times a year through its 15 regional offices around the country, said Charles Earnest, media and community liaison for Microsoft in Northern California. Microsoft details its charitable donations on its [website](#), which says the company gave more than \$10 million in software and an even greater amount in cash last year.

Microsoft has come under fire from some corners for its involvement in education, however. For one thing, the company gives such grants largely in software, which it is then able to write off against its corporate taxes for the full retail value, even though it cost the company a fraction of that to produce. The result, some critics have said, is a free tax write-off for the company.

The company has also been criticized for deals that seem designed to initiate young people into the use of Microsoft software. Student groups at Indiana University protested last month when the school signed a comprehensive deal to standardize on Microsoft software and ended contracts with competitors such as Novell and Corel. Last week, Microsoft passed on a deal to provide software and technology infrastructure to the California State University system.

Microsoft is not the only company the organization went to, said David Glickman, co-director of CHALK. Glickman said the group spoke to a number of other companies, including Apple. In Cupertino, Calif., less than 40 miles from San Francisco, Apple has long been known as a leader in education. However, Microsoft was by far the most responsive.

"Microsoft was the company that had a grant program in place and was interested in the project," Glickman said.

Glickman said the company also gave them free corporate-level customer support for all the software, a service worth several thousand dollars. The company is also willing to work with competitors on such projects, Glickman said. For instance, he said, Microsoft was happy to still work with CHALK when the group chose iChat to provide the software that will let students talk online, even though Microsoft has competing chat software.

Other contributors included Hewlett-Packard, which gave two servers; GeoNet, which provided a T1 line; and Cisco and 3Com, which gave routers. Yahoo is giving Virtual Village six months of free advertising on its Yahoo San Francisco and Yahoo!igans sites.

I hired 10 underrepresented high school student interns from Hunter's Point and the Mission District to help me build the program and website. Many of them became successful web developers and web designers.

(next page) The Conduit interviewed me after I left NetNoir to launch the first technology center with CHALK: Click screenshot below to go to the Conduit website.

SEARCH

GO

WELCOME

WHAT IS
THE CONDUIT?

SUBSCRIBE

ARCHIVES

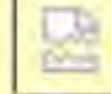
RETURN
CHANNEL

TECH DEFS

WRITE FOR
THE CONDUIT

ON RAMPS

WHO WE ARE



Tuesday, April 17, 2001

From THE CONDUIT

Here is your selection**A Conversation with Lettie McGuire**

From the Fall 97 Conduit

Some of the web site designers here at **The Conduit** thought they were "all of that" until they came face to face with the works of Lettie McGuire. Lettie is a new media artist, designer, programmer, and animator. If you are hip to some of the offerings of Afrocentric cyberspace, then you have viewed her offerings at Virtual Melanin, Netnoir, web sites for Notorious B.I.G., Faith Evans, and Envogue's Terry Ellis. She has also designed special web sites for Silicon Graphics and the 1996 Democratic National Convention. Currently, Lettie's passions have her as an Executive Producer at CHALK (You can view some of Lettie's work at www.artwebb.com) And now...Lettie McGuire!



Lettie McGuire

Q What is CHALK?

LM: CHALK is Communities in Harmony Advocating for Learning and Kids). CHALK was founded with the help of San Francisco Mayor **Willie Brown's** office and the San Francisco Unified School District, and is a non-profit organization that demonstrates how technology can be used to inspire people to become active participants in the lives of our youth.

Q What title best describes what you do?

LM: Although I am mostly known for the web design, layout and programming work I have done for **Bad Boy Entertainment, NetNoir Online, EnVogue, Forbes** magazine, **VIBE** magazine and others, I prefer to call myself an *artist*. I have held titles such as Creative Director, Programmer, Producer and Executive Director. The title of artist has been seriously underrated by our society. In other countries, artists have much more stature and respect. Since America is such a new country, I'm sure this will change in the years to come. With the internet, artists (or "designers" as many of us are called) will receive more credit for their accomplishments online.

Q What's a typical day at the office like for you?

LM: Producing the first online classroom/community for the San Francisco Unified School District means I wear many hats. It is a non-profit organization and I therefore do much of the work by myself as well as hire interns, and delegate tasks to students and volunteers. I speak at various events and functions in the Bay Area. I occasionally teach as a visiting lecturer to graduate classes in the Multimedia & Art Departments at **SFSU**. I take classes all the time myself to keep up to date in this everchanging technological industry. I am responsible for designing the YouthVillage web site, programming all the Java, VRML, HTML and everything that's needed to build an online community for our youth.

On a given day my office hours are 8:30 to 5:30, but I often start earlier so I can visit a local high school or work around the student's schedules. I work long long hours and often through the weekend as well. I also own my own business (McGuire Graphics) doing freelance web design--so sometimes I leave work just to come home to another computer and another long night in my home office.

Q What part of your work do you enjoy the most?

LM: When I look at my job realistically--my most important responsibility is being a role model for African American youth who would never believe that a black/light-skinned/biracial woman such as myself could do the things I do. I give them a reason to believe that it is possible for them, when many may tell them different. With this job, I may not have the time to build more profitable web sites like I have previously--but I will profit more from empowering the thousands of youth that will touch a computer for the first time. I work directly with the youth and train them to help me maintain the web site. I try to empower them as much as I can. There are very few outlets for youth that allow them to feel creative and powerful. One area of great satisfaction for them is that any thing they create on the web can be seen and heard by any living human on the earth. This makes them powerful in their own right.

Once the full YouthVillage is launched, youth will be able to help maintain it as well as build their own web pages, get email and communicate with other youth worldwide. I carry a heavy responsibility because even to this day I have only met one other woman of color who is a web designer/programmer such as myself and she lives in New York. I am still looking for another one--and maybe that is why I am so dedicated to teaching our next generation who will be required to be "wired" to function well in tomorrow's globally wired world.

Q How did you arrive at your current position?

LM: I was told about my position by a friend who literally said to me "Lettie, I just saw a job opening at an organization called CHALK that seemed to be all the things you have been talking about for years". I immediately followed up on this lead and unlike any job I held before, I interviewed the directors of CHALK just as much as they interviewed me. This is the first position I have held that fulfills not only my professional goals, but my personal goals as well.

Q What advice do you have for all of the "Lettie"'s of the future?

LM: I would advise young African American (or biracial) women to put school before any boys or distractions that stand in their way. I would advise them not to pursue modeling (which I did) or jobs that focus on their body instead of their mind. Society has stereotypes for African American women and it is our job to change them - not continue the myths that keep us from being taken seriously. For young African Americans who are trapped in a world that does not have computers or role models or places where they can explore their creative talents--I would tell them to go to the library and read. Before I learned how to use the computer I was called a bookworm. I absorbed books like a sponge. If the innercity schools cannot offer the quality of education equivalent to that found in the suburbs, young people can always go to their local library and learn what they need to move beyond and see "out of the box".

Q What's your take on technology today?

LM: Technology is only as good as the purpose people use it for. The internet's true purpose is for communication. If people use it for that reason--or to further what myself and others like me are doing, then it will benefit not just a privileged few--but billions all over our planet and beyond.

Q Can African Americans benefit from the growth in technology?

LM: African Americans have a bad habit of crossing each other to get ahead...Not all of us are like this, however, the internet gives us a chance to better our ways. The internet allows information and education on a global level. A thesis written by an African American receiving their Ph.D. in African American History can put their work on the internet and it will be instantly available to a person into the farthest reaches of Africa with just a laptop and a ricochet. Communication like this should be used and never taken for granted. We have tried to stop warring with our own kind for centuries. The internet allows us to overcome this as well as form bonds with other cultures and nations. African Americans are now almost non-existent in the online community of today. Besides *NetNoir*, *VMI*, *NYO* and a few others, most of the prominent online web sites are not even owned by African Americans. If we stop taking a backseat in this tidal wave of surfing, and finally settle down with our own domain names, we may still be able to catch up.

[CONV0022] [More Conduit Articles](#)

Global Community:

Once Youthvillage was launched and running smoothly, I noticed many offers to work overseas.

I took an offer to work in the Netherlands as the Art Director for BFM Tonebeeld, the largest web design agency in the Netherlands. I told them I would accept on the condition that I would join their team after I completed my research travels around the world. They accepted.

My first stop was Africa. My goal was to research and document cultures around the world as the internet was just beginning to exist. My desire was to see and connect with cultures that few Westerners, especially Americans, typically visited. I quickly learned that I was one of the first black American women many cultures had ever met. Before the WWW existed, the world seemed like a larger place. Many beautiful cultures and ancient traditions were unchanged for thousands of years. I did not know at the time how fortunate I was to see the world before it was transformed by plastic, 'satellite-powered' technology, and artificial intelligence.

While living and working in the Netherlands, I continued my travels and research, creating online visual 'journals' on [lettie.com](#). Very few people in my village spoke English, so I took Dutch language and culture classes at Rijks Universiteit. Three tall blond Dutch women designers worked for me. This was completely opposite my experience growing up in Palo Alto. They did not speak English and I did not speak Dutch, but we became fast friends. On my first day, I turned my computer on and noticed that everything, the operating system and all the software was in Dutch. I was delighted, fondly remembering my old Japanese computer. Not skipping a beat, my fingers remembered just 'knew' all the menus, like playing a well-learned song on the piano.

My first task was redesigning the Dutch company website where I worked using a theme dedicated to nature and wilderness. After that, I began designing and coding our clients' websites throughout the Netherlands, Europe and Asia. I also took contract work, designing interactive educational games for kids at a French company in Paris, winning the international People's choice award for Macromedia (Adobe) in Flash.

One of my minimal designs for [lettie.com](#) at the turn of the century, using a photo of my eye taken in my house in the Netherlands.

[flash](#) [dhtml](#) [html](#)

[contact](#) [work](#)



Screenshots from some of my daily broadband designs for Bay Insider, the first broadband, online news for Bay Area newspapers. I designed the large daily homepage designs and uploaded my own interactive code for morning and evening issues.



Research in Africa.



Below: Samples of my design work as the Art Director for the Dutch Design Agency, BFM Tonebeeld, Groningen, Netherlands. A few of the websites I designed there. You can click screenshots below to see these pages in the time machine.

A collage of website design work. On the left is a large green abstract graphic with the text 'BFM Tonebeeld'. To the right are four small circular images labeled 'BFM website design'. Below these are several screenshots of website pages for 'Enlight' and 'Yachtcharter'. The background is dark with some glowing effects.

BFM website design

Enlight

Yachtcharter

Art Director, BFM Tonebeeld
www.bfm.nl

Created multilingual, international web interfaces and Project Management Development for Dutch Design Bureau.

- * Art Direction and design for BFM Tonebeeld's own website www.bfm.nl with changeable interfaces.
- * Art Direction and design for: www.enlight.nl, www.yachtcharter.nl, Score and Nassau College websites.

The little Dutch village I lived in where cars are not allowed.



A screenshot from my first design of lettie.com. click image to see one layer and rollover a butterfly. Modern browsers do not support the original full interactive layers and design featuring a movable, animated navigation element.



Lettie@Lettie.com

why
where
how



Below: Research and travels in India, where I visited all the places my late mentor and professor [Joan Brown](#) conducted her research. In this photo below, I was attending a women's rights protest.



Auriea had moved to Belgium not long after I had moved to the Netherlands. She and her husband came to visit me in my village, and we also met up in Amsterdam when she was being featured at a tech event. We definitely stood out wherever we went. We were often the first black women in the world to 'be' in the places we were, doing what we were doing, and traveling to many of the places we traveled, living independently **on our own terms**. This was what my parents, my grandparents, and all my ancestors before me had prepared me for. I felt a deep responsibility to bring positivity to each and every person and community I met.

New York:

After several dark winters in Scandinavia, I began looking at opportunities in Hong Kong and New York. Sean had moved to New York, but other than him, I knew very few people besides Virtual Melanin Inc. I bravely took the leap.

I was offered jobs at 10 different companies, including Creative Director for Times, Inc., Senior Art Director for Digitas, Creative Director for Juno, and many others. The dot.com world was booming. I took the Digitas job, settled in on the Upper West Side and began designing websites for American Express.com, [Estee Lauder](#) and Aveda. I soon began working for three corporations full time simultaneously: Digitas, Urban Box Office and Grey Global Interactive, the largest design agency in the world, launching website designs for their clients like Advil, Pantene, Starburst and many more. What took other designers 2 weeks to create, I could often build in a couple hours, and I understood the design and the code behind the design. I noticed very clearly that I was often the only black employee, and often the only black person in the entire building wherever I worked. As Senior Art Director for American Express, I had to travel through the World Trade Center twice a week to go over all of my newest design ideas with [Harvey Golub](#). It was my first 'plunge' into the design agency world outside of Europe. There was little diversity, brutal racism and oppressive hours, but the pay was amazing. Outside of work, my focus was connecting to the art community and to continue painting watercolors as much as possible. Many artists I met had good paying jobs because of the dot.com boom.

Eventually, I was designing for several different companies at the same time, as well as running my own design business and I loved it. Only one tech company had a friendly, inclusive culture, and this was Indieplanet at Urban Box Office, founded by [George Jackson](#). Sean O'Connor, Tyrone Thomas and Arzie Hardin also worked there.

Before and after the second dot.com crash, I continued my own business, designing and coding for numerous companies, artists and organizations, building the first intranet for New York's Public Television Network (Channel 13), and websites for artists and community organizations, including hosting the [first Juneteenth website for Fort Greene](#) on lettie.com. I worked tirelessly for the Ford Foundation to create a website for the MLK Jr. Streets organization, and had the honor of supporting [Professor Sigmund Shipp's](#) research on the effects that community technology centers had within African American neighborhoods across the United States. I learned about proven strategies to uplift underrepresented communities from Professor Shipp.

Screenshot of one of my early mock-up designs for Indieplanet, Urban Box Office.



Screenshot from one of my rough design draft 'mock-ups' as Art Director for Estee Lauder.

lauderbeauty.com SEARCH TAKE ME TO:

ESTÉE LAUDER

PLAYFUL

It's Spring's freshest face, right in tune with the season's upbeat mood. And it's all in Estee Lauder's Playful collection.

A palette of Springtime for lips, eyes, and nails

Spring 2000

is very sexy and feminine and the Playful collection features all the right-now colors that capture the look:

Eyes are soft and neutral in pale washes of corals, pinks, greys and blues.

Lips are natural or glossy but definitely pink or coral.

Skin has a healthy fresh glow.



Elizabeth is wearing Two-In-One Eyeshadow in Funtime, HighShine Lip Lacquer SPF 15 in PinkSorbet and Playful Pressed Powder for Face.

Click here to see the complete Playful color palette for Spring.



Questions
Talk to your personal Beauty Advisor now

My Favorites
Your instant reference to best-loved Estee Lauder products

Color Play
Go to Color Play to see how the Playful collection will look on you!

My draft design mockups for several brands under Estee Lauder.



Screenshots of my mockup design drafts for Aveda's website.



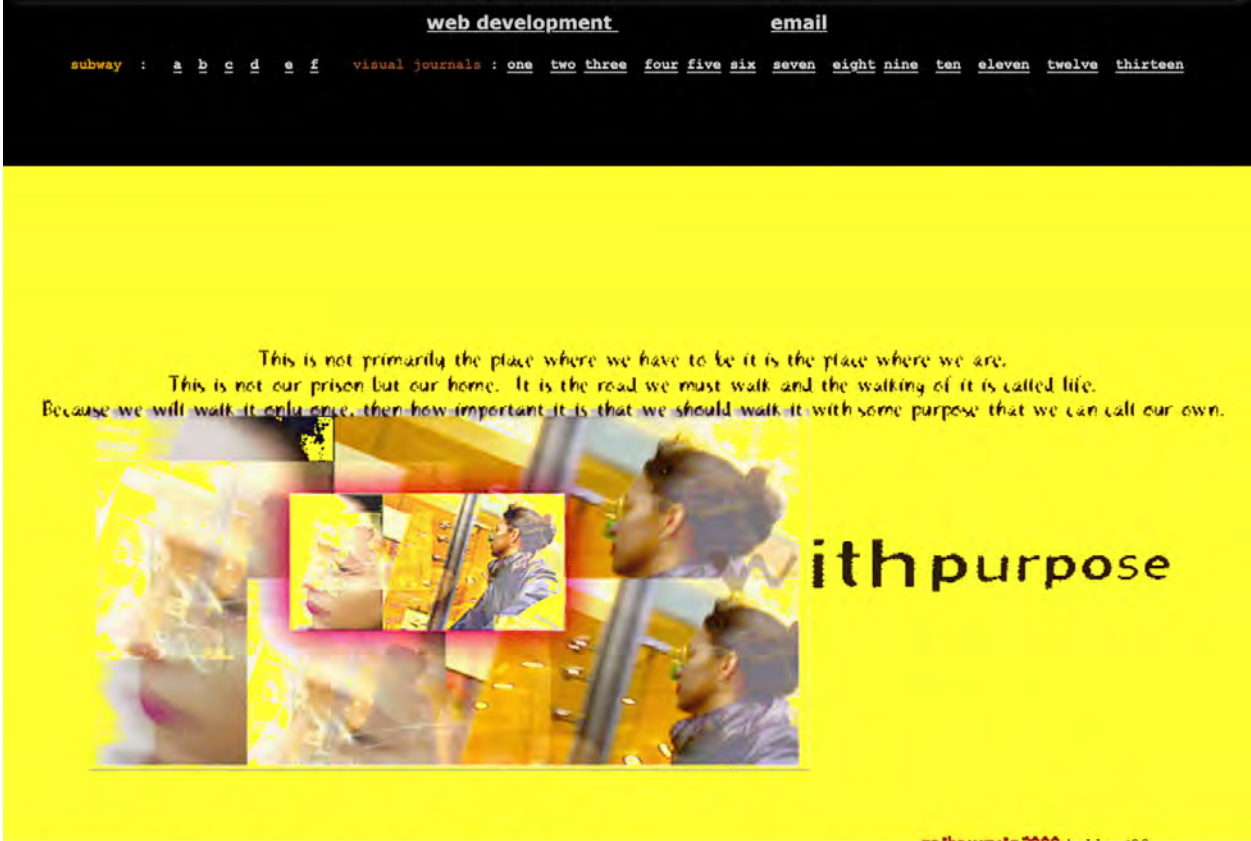
Harlem:

After the crash, almost everyone I knew who worked in the tech industry left town. I was working at Transagon, designing information architecture and design (frontend and backend) of the first shopping cart portal for Amazon and Barnes and Nobles.

While the world wide web was crashing, I began to raise funds to build the first youth technology center at Harlem School of the Arts. With all the knowledge I gained from Professor Shipp's years of research on what made a community technology center successful, and using all my experience from building one of the world's first youth technology centers in San Francisco, I put a plan into action. I raised \$300,000 to buy enough hardware, software and a connected network system to build the first technology classroom for students on Sugar Hill. I rode my bike from Williamsburg to Harlem and back again daily, teaching kids from Harlem and the Bronx everything I knew about design, HTML and animation. If a student could not afford to pay for my class, I covered their tuition, 100%. I set them up for success.

Throughout my career, I never stopped painting and creating my own art works daily. Taking the A train to Harlem every day, I began documenting musicians under the subway using photographs, sketches, video and later, creating large watercolor paintings, 20 feet wide. I tried to capture the spirit, culture and artists of New York. After growing up in the quiet towns of Ann Arbor, Berkeley, Palo Alto and Groningen, I felt like I was living in another universe. I tried to capture it all.

[Click to see a snapshot of my resume](#) captured by the time machine back then.



Now is the time, the time is now * Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin

These pages are my own personal expressions. It felt like the more design work I had during the day, the more I craved to make my own 'art' at night.

Like many artists, I have a never ending burning desire to constantly create. All my art expressions are messages of life, joy, color, light, music and hope. For every one of these 'html' art expressions, I also created hundreds of beautiful interactive flash artworks, now completely inaccessible due to the death of flash.

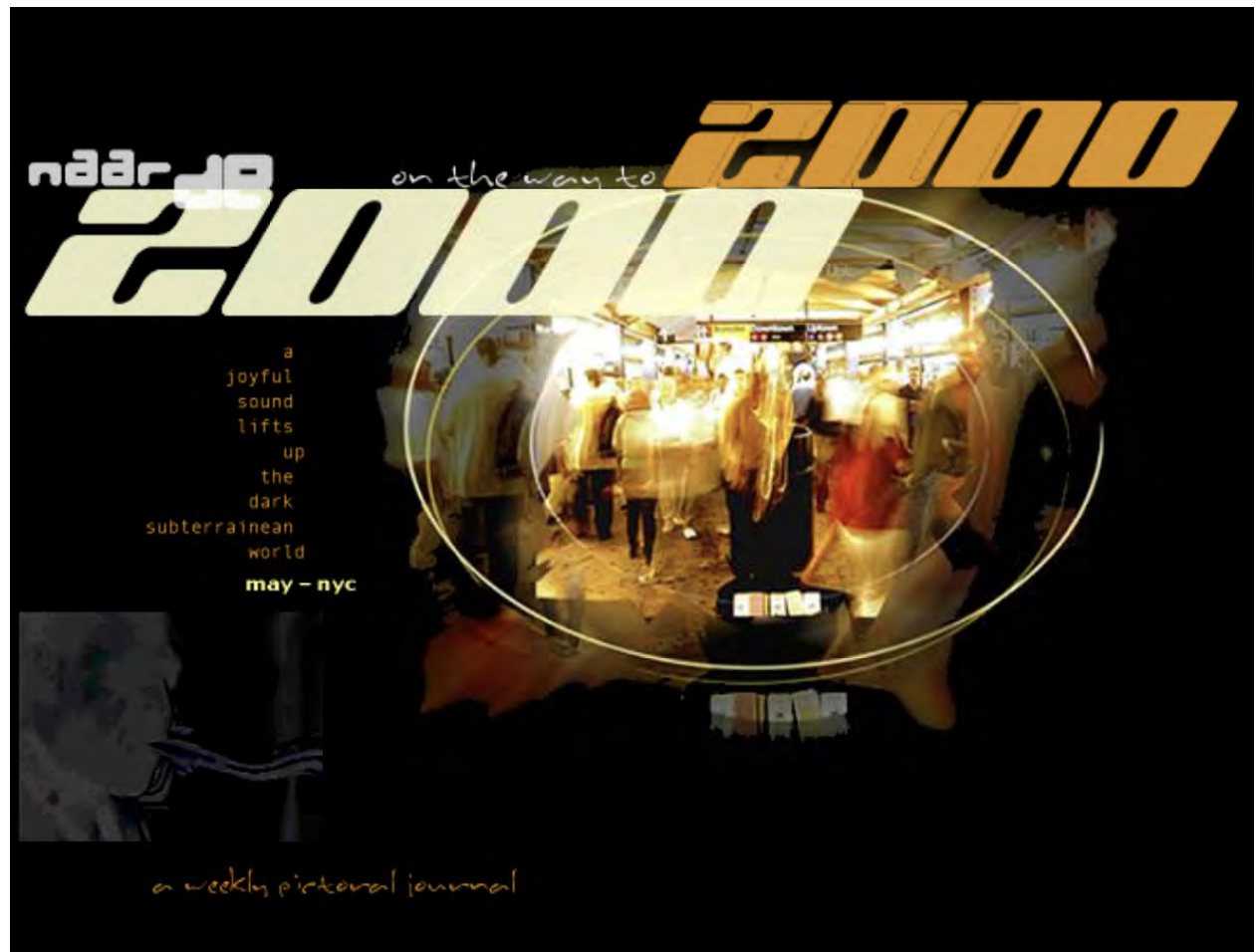
My 20 foot long painting of a musician playing in the subway, taking the L train from Manhattan to Bedford Ave.



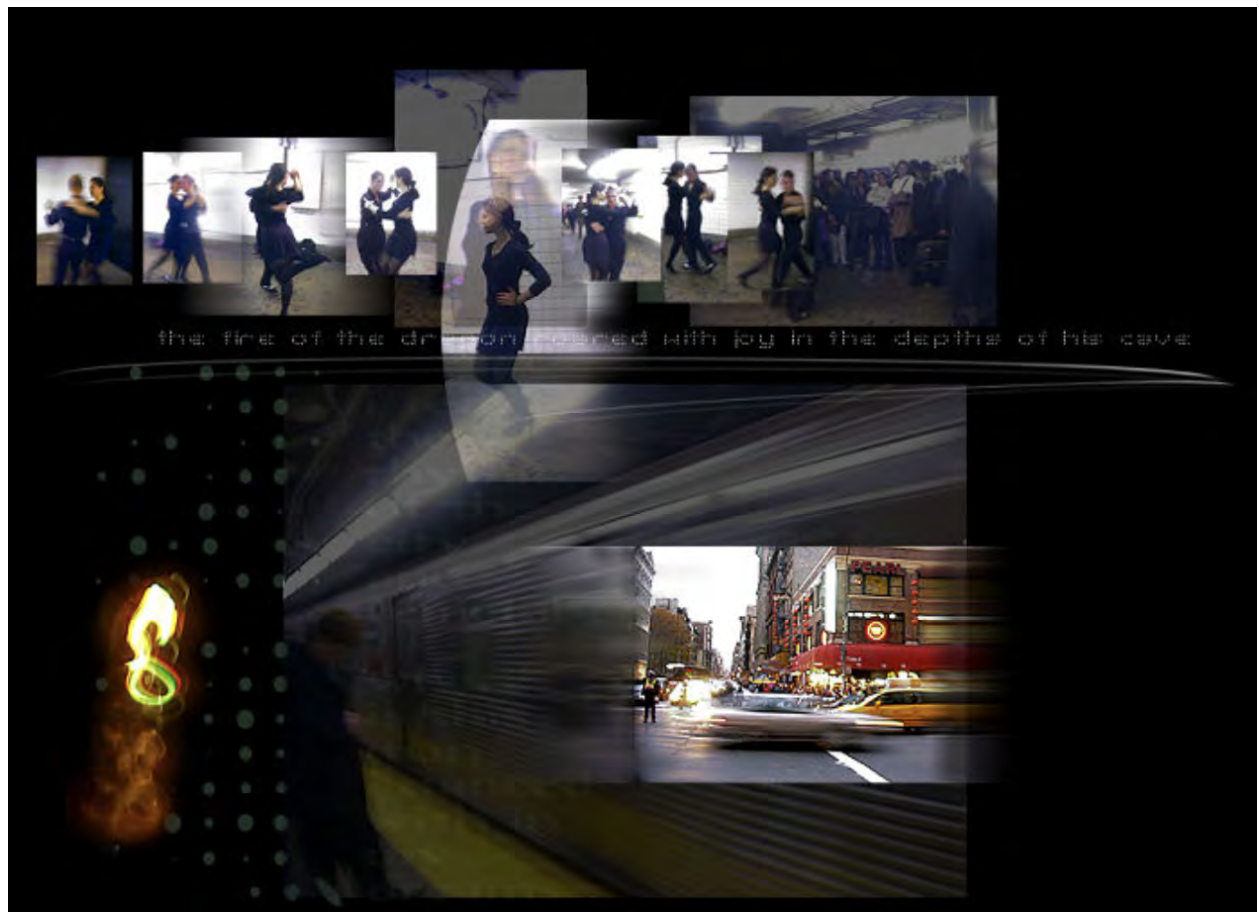
Two of several 20 foot long watercolor paintings I created to honor musicians in the New York Subway.

Here are the two guitarists who played almost day and night at my stop on the Bedford Ave. train platform.





when you go [into the time machine](#), click on a, c or d to see my personal online designs. These images link to the original online pages. Blank pages are flash, no longer viewable since the death of flash.



Dancers in the New York Subway - visual design by Lettie McGuire

on my way back from the internet



Click on image and then subway 'c' to see this page live.



Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and m.

My job teaching at Harlem School of the Arts, and the students I was privileged to teach changed my life tremendously. I learned just as much from them as they did from me. When many of these kids told me they were having problems in the New York Public School system, and that they never expected to attend college, I told them that I had high expectations of them, and that they would definitely be going to college, I would make sure of that. I helped them study for their exams, and when it was time to apply for college, I helped them fill out their applications and wrote letters of recommendation. It was during this time, I realized I was a hypocrite. I was telling my students that college was the most important thing in the world, yet after having a career spanning over a decade and around the world, all I had was a high school diploma. I knew what I had to do.

My College Education:

23 years after dropping out of college, I went back to school, hoping to earn my first college degree. I took a student job working at the student life advising center so I could support other underrepresented students, and reconnected with my mentor, Director [Gloria Burkehalter](#).

Students successfully petitioned the university to allow me, as an undergraduate student with only a high school diploma, approval to teach an accredited graduate course on web design, programming, animation and portfolio development. Several of my students won scholarships for the websites they created in my class.

Professor Richard Shaw was our faculty sponsor and Aisling Maguire (now Petipas) was my co-instructor. Any student at UC Berkeley could take our graduate level course and receive 2 units. We named it the [Artist's Empowerment Workshop](#).

I noticed, that just like in 1985, I was still one of the only black students in the entire department. I dedicated all my paintings, exhibitions and final senior works of art to my parents, and all the multiple ethnicities they gave me, creating pottery featuring photographic time capsules and designs honoring cultures around the world. I asked my mother if she would 'sit' for a portrait. I built large, room sized, walk-in 'healing' exhibits where people could see wall sized paintings of my parents and family. In one exhibit, there were pillows, incense, music and candles for people to meditate and connect with a giant photorealistic watercolor painting of my mother. There was often a line of students waiting their turn.

Small detail from my 10 foot tall watercolor painting of Mom.



Painting studio at my University in Madrid.



[Click here to see the 2 unit graduate level course Aisling and I taught while undergraduate students in UC Berkeley's Fine Art department.](#)

Fall 2006 - Practice of Art 98/198 - Units: 2

Shortcuts: decal.org/67 decal.org/portfoliodesign

This course will empower serious fine artists with the tools they need to communicate their art and portfolio in a more competitive and technologically advanced global art community. For students who plan to pursue a career in fine art after they graduate, creating and enhancing their portfolio presentation is a crucial first step. New media and web design training will be taught to enable students to showcase their work online and on cell phones. Visiting lecturers and mentors will provide needed support and valuable resources.

Enrollment Info:

Limit: 15 students

To apply for enrollment, attend the first class session on Monday, January 29 – 355 Kroeber 5pm and fill out an application form. You can also fill out the online [application form](#). **Bring an 8×10 sample (photograph or photocopy is fine) showing 3 examples of your artwork.** Submitted application forms will be reviewed and admitted students will be notified by email that they may add this class. Advanced fine art students with no prior web design experience will have priority. Professors who teach fine art or photography classes can recommend two students each.

Course Contact: [lettie AT berkeleyartstudents.com](mailto:lettie@berkeleyartstudents.com)

Website: <http://www.berkeleyartstudents.com>

Faculty Sponsor: Professor Richard Shaw

Section	Facilitators	Size	Location	Time	Starts	Status	CCNs
Media Lab Class	[?] Lettie McGuire	20	212 Wheeler Hall	Wednesday 5-7:30	1/29	started	—
Section #1 - Lecture	[?] Lettie McGuire	15	355 Kroeber Hall	Monday 5:00-7:00	1/29	started	—

Name	Date	Size	Type	Actions
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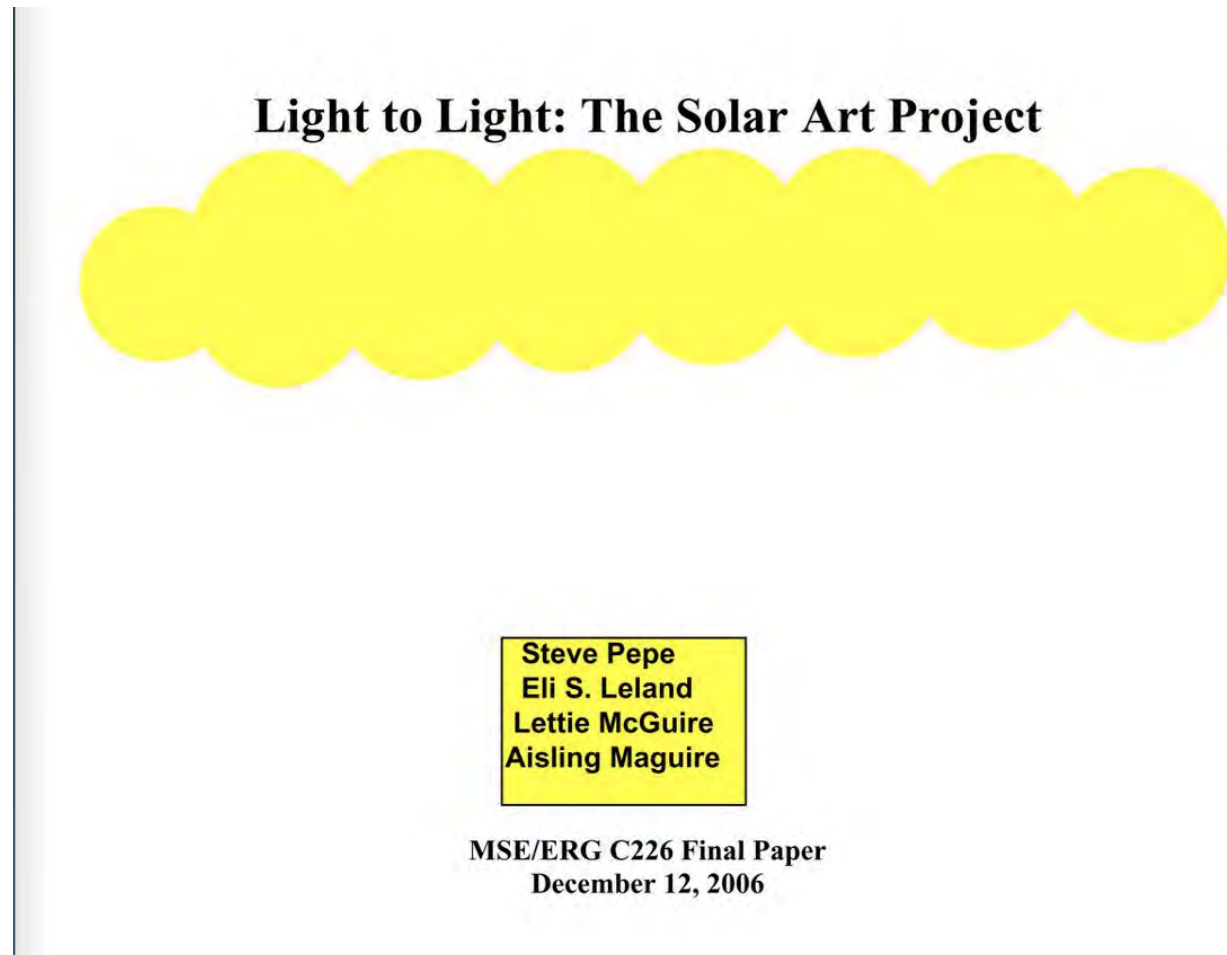
One of the First Solar Powered Art Exhibits

So inspired to uplift my students and connect our work with climate change, I came up with an idea to create the first solar powered art exhibit to showcase my students' final websites and online portfolios. Solar technology was in its infancy during that time, so fortunately, [Professor Dan Kamman](#) (winner of the Nobel prize the following year) reached out to help. He assigned his instructor [Cyrus Wadia](#) who was teaching 'Energy and Resources/Materials Science C226: Photovoltaic Materials; Modern

Technologies in the Context of a Global Renewable Energies Market' to lead two doctoral students, Steve Pepe and Eli Leland who helped Aisling and I design and develop a solar powered art exhibit in the redwood tree grove between Boalt Law School and the Art Department.

Aisling Maguire (now Petipas), Jessica Tatara (now Howard) and my students built the treehouse which rotated projections of all my student's artwork, powered 100% by the sun. People from all over the Bay Area came to watch it. You can read our publication documenting the solar project [here](#).

Click on screenshot below to see the entire document.



Click on screenshot below to see the entire document.



Figure 11: Solar array

In all, 19 solar panels made up the collector array used in this project. The following table lists the number and type of panels used. All are amorphous silicon, with the exception of the Helios panel which is single-crystal silicon. All but the Uni-Solar and Helios panels were acquired in the Kenyan home photovoltaics market as part of a prior research project.²

Quantity	Brand	Rated power output (watts)
10	Phoenix Gold	14
3	Kental	14
3	Free Energy Europe	14
1	Free Energy Europe	19 (larger than the others)
1	Uni-Solar	32
1	Helios	18
	Total rated power	293 watts

Table 3: Solar panels used in this project

The lead wires from each panel were fitted with crimp-on spade tab connectors to facilitate easy connection. The panels were joined in parallel using two power buses constructed from dual-row 8-position barrier strips and were housed in small plastic box enclosures (Figure 12). One power bus connected nine panels and the other connected ten panels. On each barrier strip four positions were used for positive terminal connections and four were used for negative connections. Jumper strips connected each of the four positive and negative terminal positions, and 10-gauge wires were soldered directly to these jumpers to carry the solar array's current to the power electronics. Male and female tab connectors connected the power bus lead wires to the power electronics for easy connection and disconnection.

² R. Duke, A. Jacobson, D. Kammen, "Photovoltaic module quality in the Kenyan solar home systems market," *Energy Policy* 30 (2002) 477-499

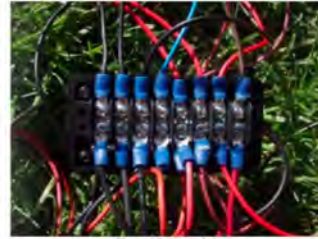


Figure 12: Power bus

Power Electronics

The solar array was connected to a Condumex charge controller. The charge controller is designed to regulate the battery's charge. It provides an appropriate charging voltage to the battery and disconnects the battery from the loads when its voltage drops below a critical level. It also disconnects the solar array from the battery when solar power production drops below a critical level in order to prevent the battery from discharging through the solar panels at night.

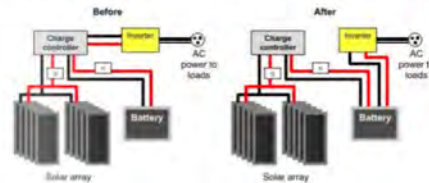


Figure 13: Wiring diagram, before and after connecting inverter directly to battery

A Go Power 600-watt inverter was used to convert the 12 volt direct current produced by the battery to 120 volt 60 hertz alternating current used by the computers and projection equipment. Initially the inverter was connected to the charge controller in order to protect the battery from

Click image above to read how we set up the solar powered art exhibit in the redwood tree grove next to Boalt Law School.

Welcome to:

Cal Artists Empowerment Workshop Spring 2007!

For Students, By Students

In Collaboration with
The Berkeley Art Group
(previously the Art Club)

Mondays - 5:00 - 7:00pm
Wednesdays - 5:00 - 7:30 pm

Auditing is permitted with facilitator's approval. Fill out an [APPLICATION FORM](#), first, Print it & your artwork out, and bring it to our

first class Monday
January 29th
5:00pm
355 Kroeber.

Apply Early for a Spot in our Spring 2007 Semester Class

Fill out and print your student [APPLICATION FORM](#), send it and bring a hardcopy to our first class with you with 3 small photos/images of your artwork no bigger than 8x10 inches.

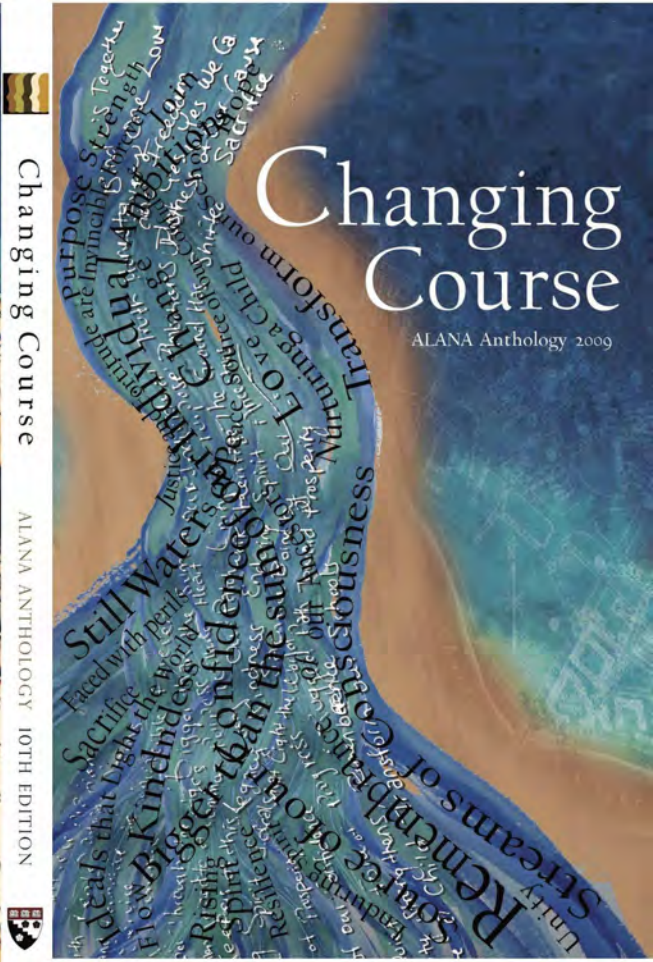
We will review your applications and artwork and email selected students their course control #'s. Photographs, photocopies or prints of your artwork is fine. Students with advanced fine art skills and little to no web design experience will have priority. Professors teaching fine art (ceramics, drawing, painting) or photography classes can recommend 2 students.

[Contact us](#) if you have any questions regarding this course.

After receiving my first college degree - a Bachelors in Fine Art (focused on painting and ceramics) from the University of California at Berkeley, I was accepted into a PhD program at Oxford University and a Masters program at Harvard. I decided to go to Harvard, focusing on neuroscience and learning in the Harvard Graduate School of Education, receiving the Kistler scholarship in Neuroscience and Creativity. I attended and audited additional courses at MIT, Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and painted daily at home. My thesis was – of course – focused on the creative brain. It was one of the most stimulating years of my life. I was honored to have [Professor Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot](#) (the first African-American woman in Harvard's history to have an [endowed professorship](#) named in her honor) as my professor and mentor. Every time I walked out of her lecture, I felt like I had met God.

While there, with now lifelong friends, I joined the black Student Union, became one of the 14 founding members of the reactivated Harvard NAACP chapter, president of multicultural ALANA (African American, Latin American, Asian American, Native American and Allies) organization, and founding member of the first Harvard Graduate Students Council.

We published a book celebrating our multicultural collaboration on the eve of Obama’s presidency called ‘Changing Course’. My watercolor paintings are featured on the cover and back of the book.



Graduation day at Harvard, age 42.

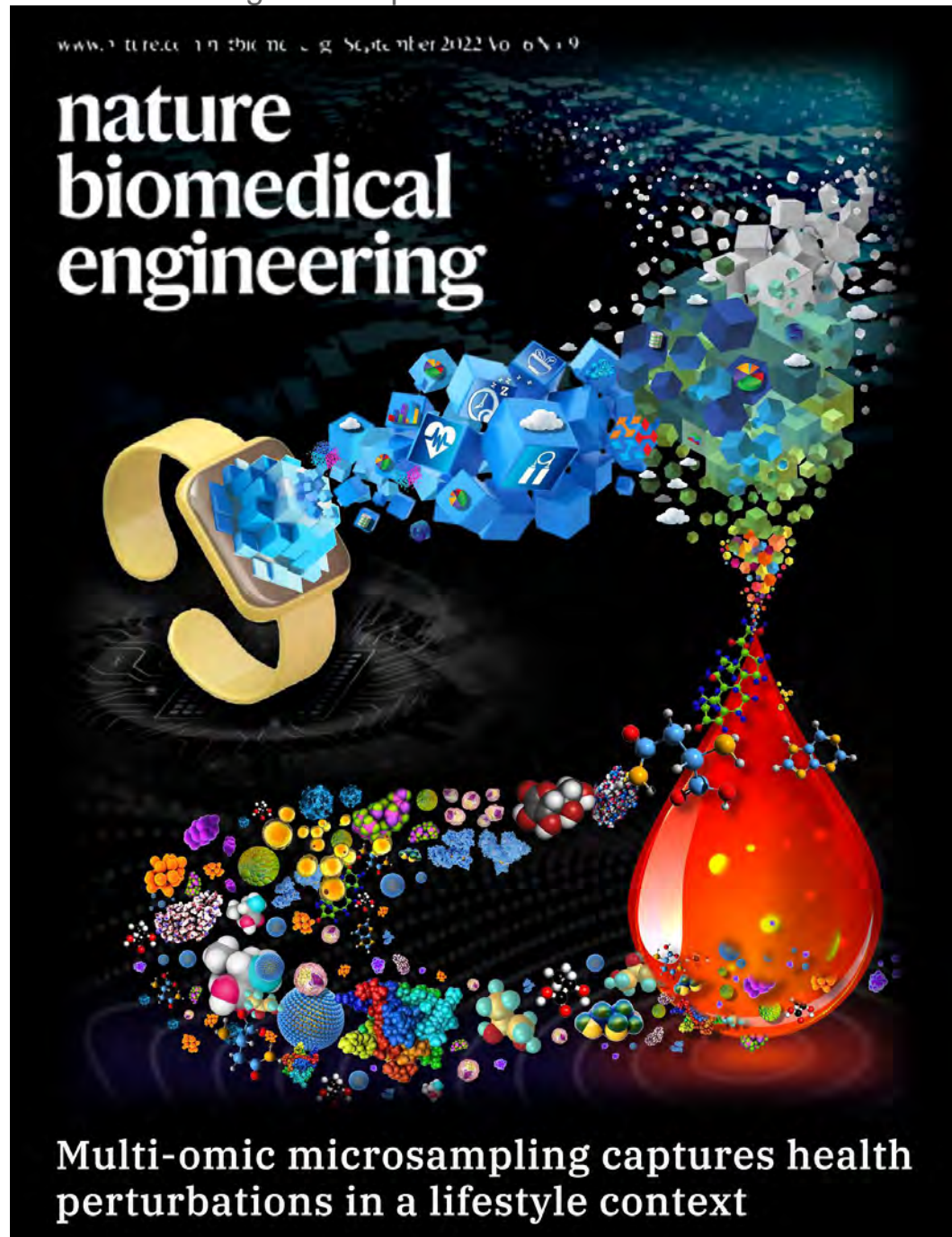


Some of my current genetics research and designs featured on the covers of various scientific publications.

Click cover I designed to read about this research.



Click cover design mockup below to learn about this research.



Click cover I designed to read about this research.



Lettie McGuire, co-author, Nature Medicine Publication. Click screenshot below to learn about some of my research:

nature medicine

Explore content ▾ About the journal ▾ Publish with us ▾

nature > nature medicine > articles > article

Article | [Open Access](#) | [Published: 29 November 2021](#)

Real-time alerting system for COVID-19 and other stress even

[Arash Alavi](#), [Gireesh](#)

[Emily Higgs](#), [Alessar](#)

[Alavi](#), [Rajat Bhasin](#), [S](#)

[Rolnik](#), [Erika Hunting](#)

Lettie McGuire ×

Department of Genetics, Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, CA, USA

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Nature Medicine **28**, 175–184 (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

32k Accesses | **22** Citations | **697** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

In the years before I became president of ALANA (African American, Latin American, Asian American, Native American and Allies), it was mostly closed to White students. I opened it up to all students, from every background, knowing that by bringing all groups together for one purpose, it would allow more connections, understanding and real change for the future. I saw this happen in real time. Featured in the book we published were Irish poets, Indian painters, Jewish writers, Asian artists, Mexican sculptors, and dozens more. Before graduation, I was offered a student fellowship with Harvard Law School, working that summer with The Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law Policy and Biotechnology, at the [The Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society](#).

I received my graduate degree from Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2009 during the deep recession. As always, my parents, sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews were my main source of inspiration, support and encouragement. Despite many obstacles in my path at that time, I was determined to start a new career in the world of academia, leaving the 'design agency' world far behind me.

Giving back and supporting others uplifts my soul. During this time, I wrote technology articles for Ebony and Jet Magazine **to support and highlight inequities for young black men in tech**, helping to launch the first **'Startup Hackathon' for young black males** with 'Yes We Code', Van Jones and 'Qeyno Labs'.

Below: photo of me co-launching and teaching at the world's first Hackathon for young black Males, funded by the **Kapor Center for Social Impact**.

CourtDate App wins award at Startup Weekend Oakland, 8-9 February 2014

CourtDate App is a software program that sends SMS messages reminding young people of upcoming court dates. It was among the winners at Startup Weekend Oakland, 8-9 February 2014.

The Website for CourtDate App is signup.courtdate.co/

The App has a Twitter feed at [@courtdateapp](https://twitter.com/courtdateapp)

The Website for Startup Weekend Oakland 2014 is bmaoakland.startupweekend.o...



Lettie McGuire Designing CourtDate App

Soon afterwards, I began working in Academia, supporting diversity and designing and co-authoring published research studies for universities. I am honored to work with world renowned, international research teams, encouraging them to expand research and recruitment to more underrepresented participants and underrepresented researchers.

To this day, I have never taken a programming course in my life. I am currently creating a scholarship to support young underrepresented art students seeking a career in science, technology or supporting nature and wildlife.