

Project *Water Us!*

Flint Youth Speak through the Arts about
Water Crisis
A Pierian Foundation Grant



Pierian Inc., Flint Chapter

President: Nelda Hebert/President-Elect: Velynda Makhene/ Grant Coordinator Chair: Semaj Brown-Literary Arts/Diane Kirksey-Music/ Janet Poole-Little-Drama/Corinne Edwards, Ed.D.-Curriculum Advisor

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1. Description of Project

Flint has enjoyed a long-standing history of providing community-based programs and services to ensure the holistic development of our youth. Often embedded in these initiatives is the opportunity to learn through experiences in the arts. But, the question begs: how can “art” be relevant when a community is in turmoil—when populations of children have been poisoned and denied something as basic as clean, safe water? Popularized notions of the artistic, the creative, may conjure imagistic frivolity—indulgences of the elite class; but, *The Pierians Inc.*, *Flint Chapter*— know differently.

The Flint Chapter Pierians recognize art to be a healing balm as well as a powerful force for social change, and would like to thank the Pierian Foundation for this opportunity of service through the arts. Understanding that the creative process stokes imagination, and thus problem solving, Flint Pierians, offer this grant proposal to the Pierian Foundation in an effort to render artistic voice, and platform to the Boys and Girls Club of Flint participants to address the largest man- made public health disaster in recent American history. Though the magnitude of callous neglect is unconscionable, a municipality poisoning 100,000 of its citizens, the Flint Water Crisis does not exist in a vacuum. Certainly, the struggle for justice has been a constant for peoples world-wide—ad infinitum, and artists have been a stalwart force, lifting pen, paint and poetry against oppression, striving for human rights— the promise dignity. Through the guided expertise of educators in literary arts, visual art, music, and drama, the Pierian Flint Chapter will rein focus by historically contextualizing the rich tradition of *protest art* or *art of self- determination* specifically realized in traditions expressed throughout the African American narrative.

This contextualization will strengthen students’ ability to identify self and community within the social justice continuum, command understanding of scope while harnessing historical data of forbearer artists who faced and successfully forged beyond injustice. Vital to this innovative initiative is the socio-political contextualization of art. Whether referencing quilts from the African Enslavement period where servile African women surreptitiously stole away messages of revolt in a fabric of symbolism or examining the urban graffiti artists of today who scream colors from bridges and walls of invisibility, such imagery will be sure to cultivate imaginative power with the children who have been profoundly marginalized.

Curriculum created by literary artist/educator, Semaj Brown, collaborated and enhanced by professional art educators: Edith Withey-Visual Arts, Diane Kirksey-Music, Janet Poole-Little, Drama with invaluable insights from Corinne Edwards, Ed.D. as curriculum advisor. The design of *Project Water Us* absorbs the full range of chapter participation; *Water Us* is a collective endeavor. There is a role for every Pierian sister, from tutoring to assisting with design to the marketing of the performance scheduled for May 2017.

Project Water Us Triad, problem solving through the Arts To accomplish the integration of social justice, and poetry/ spoken word, music application, visual art, and drama, Project *Water Us*' interdisciplinary curriculum presents as a pedagogic triad:

Phase One: Time Streaming Every session begins with fast paced 30 minute emergence in multi-media streams of: video clips, visuals, recordings, news articles, artifacts, mini lectures, and flash discussions highlighting *art of self-determination or protest art* from the following eras: a) African enslavement through Reconstruction, b) Harlem Renaissance through World War II c) Civil Rights/Black Arts Movement d) Contemporary voices of the Hip Hop generation. During this initial phase, students are assimilating data and research, developing a factual foundation from which to assess and imagine their creative voice.

Phase Two: Reservoir Building concerns the acquisition of foundational tools through a survey of artistic genres: poetic arts/spoken word, visual arts, musicality, and drama. For example: the figures of speech, mask making and color palette, percussion as cultural pulse, and stage blocking will be taught respectively. Fundamentals of the arts are acquired during phase two per a 60 minute focus sessions lead by an art-educator with the assistance and reinforcement from several art-educator facilitators and Pierian volunteers. Students begin the process of honing artistic craft, developing artistic tools of empowerment.

Phase Three: Water Walking is dedicated to defying the odds; it is swimming against the current in turbulent waters. The metaphor represents the ultimate in voice actualization, and self and community determination through platform building and creative expansion evidenced by student participation in collaborative stage set design and live performance. Project *Water Us* is scheduled to don the stage at the Flint Public Library February 4, 2017.

The **duration** of this project is consolidated into 8-10 intense 90 minute after school sessions, two days per week for 4-6 weeks. The project will begin April 2017 and will end the in May 2017.

The **target demographic**: ages 10-12. Generally, the children are from an economically challenged demographic and of African American ethnicity. The class size: 16-20 students.

Goals

To provide Flint Youth with the tools of creative expression through a survey of artistic genres: Literary Arts, Visual Arts, Music and, Drama, to assert art as a relevant force for social change while historically contextualizing the impact of the Flint Water Crisis, and to stoke imaginative problem solving skills by developing a platform for youth voices to reverberate emotion and creative collaboration.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Oftentimes accomplished persons recount the educational initiative or the teacher that helped to inspire them on to success. We have all heard those stories and may have one of our own to tell. Though we expect this project to yield many positive intangibles, we focus on quantitative measurable outcomes accompanied with evaluative assessments:

- Pre and post survey that measures student's knowledge of basic integrated arts presented in project *Water Us!*
- Pre and Post attitude evaluation that quantifies student's impressions of the present and future
- Pre and post survey that assesses student's knowledge of protest art or art of self-determination
- Student directed interpretation of painted and decorated masks molds of their face
- Project Water Us methods will be evaluated by students through video statements and the written word.

2. Budget

Project Water Us! Budget for 8 sessions and Performance

Total Project Cost **\$2,000.00**

Personnel

1. Art Educator Literary Arts	In-Kind	\$250.00
2. Art Educator Visual Arts	In-Kind	\$250.00
3. Art Educator Music	In-Kind	\$250.00
4. Art Educator Drama	In-Kind	<u>\$ 250.00</u>

Sub Total = \$1,000.00

Time Streaming

Video clips, visuals, recordings, news articles, artifacts \$200.00

Literary Arts

Journals and mini thesauruses \$100.00

Visual Arts

Guest speaker, stage design, art/ mask making supplies \$400.00

Music

Improvisational percussive soundscape found instruments \$250.00

Drama

Fabric \$50.00

Sub Total= \$1,000.00

Flint Chapter Pierian In-Kind Services = \$1,000.00

Pierian Foundation Grant = \$1,000.00

Grant Total = 2,000.00

May 5, 2016

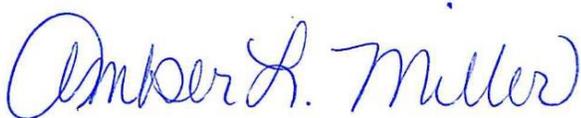
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to show support for engaging Flint youth in the arts surrounding the water crisis, by way of the Pierian Foundation Grant, Project: Water Us! The proposed partnership will allow for the youth we serve at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Flint to experience the arts coupled with science in a new and exciting way. Youth will get the opportunity to explore the art of self-determination, in addition to gaining an understanding of how science and art intersect.

Our hope is that, through this partnership, we will be able to expand our Club members' exposure to the entire arts spectrum, including poetry, spoken word, music application, drama and visual arts. Academic success is something we work to instill in every child who walks through our doors, and exposure to such programming may spark an interest that would not have otherwise occurred.

The mission of the Boys & Girls Club simply states our dedication to enable all youth, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as caring, productive, and responsible citizens. We must provide the youth we serve access to every opportunity, in order for them to truly be aware of the options they have afforded to them. It is with the vision of a great future for our Club members, that we recommend and support this program and all of the benefits it has to offer.

Respectfully,



Amber Miller BSW
Director of Programs & Operations
amiller@bgclubflint.org



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OF GREATER FLINT**

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GREAT FUTURES START HERE.

Biography



Semaj Brown is endowed with gifts that allow her to excel in both right side and left side brain capacities. On one hand, she is science driven holding a degree in Biological Sciences from Wayne State University. She also attended Grambling State University in Louisiana. Semaj developed and implemented integrated curriculum in areas of physiology, chemistry and earth science as a public and private educator consultant/administrator. But, on the other hand, Semaj is a published poet, editor, performing artist, radio personality, and developer of an innovative lifestyle change program for women, ***Mrs. Brown's Butterfly Building***. The One- woman show, "***Onion Revolt!***" written and performed by Semaj has said to be a life changing event, and ***Feasts and Fables from the Planted Kingdom: Story Cookbook and CD*** (Publisher-Health Collectors LLC) received pre-release accolades. <http://www.mycitymag.com/veggie-virtuoso/>

Vintage work by Semaj, *Womb Tongue: The Poetry Play* was supported by The Arts League of Michigan, Scarab Club, and the National Endowment for the Arts, and was hailed with spontaneous standing ovations. Her epic poem "Wave Rock" was featured in an Art- Video Short by New York International fine artist Jasmine Murrell. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPrMcHAK83U&ebc=ANyPxKo9qUKE4laKUluPGhfY2qaf1qG-YZdxs9w9ldTvC3kMJsa0ImQhXaNst6x0B1iHeyqfwHdAQvf8km1ziBB7-etWi9NCqA>

Semaj evolved playing violin in the Highland Park Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Detroit Symphony Orchestra violinist/conductor Mr. Joseph Striplin, and also enjoyed summers in Stratford Ontario studying Shakespeare. Dissecting literature with her mother, the late Mrs. Bessie L. James, a classically trained pianist who also taught a socio- political appreciation for world cultures through a Pan-African lens was the crucible which informed Semaj's aesthetic. In her home basement, science lab- explorations grew crystal gardens as well as the imagination of the young Semaj. By college, Semaj was comparing patterns in seemingly disparate disciplines- the potter's wheel had successfully molded math, science, literature, art and music into an extraordinary artist/science educator.

Many people have called what Semaj does genius- birthing new paradigms of art/science compositions. She responds: While I understand the arbitrary distinctions between art and science, I recognize the universe to be a live light spectrum of wave and color. Art and Science are but isomers, mirror images. The duality is a magician's reflection. I see art and science as one."

Semaj belongs to an esteemed generation of writers referred to as the Broadside Progeny. The name derives from Broadside Press which is the oldest continually operating publisher of African American poets-Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Etheridge Knight, Audrey Lorde and Haki Madhubuti were published first by Broadside Press. Broadside Press was founded by Dudley Randall in Detroit (1965). Semaj: "I came of age in the context of the political and literary advances made by the writers of the Black Consciousness movement. Because their works established a record of excellence, and pushed back political barriers, my literary landscape is now vast, and I can dare to write about something as fanciful as recalcitrant singing vegetables."

Semaj is also cofounder with her husband James Brown, M.D. of the **Planted Kingdom Project**, a branch of Health Collectors LLC which promotes wellness and better health through innovative integrated art/science programming. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHrsek5Liiw>

FLINT YOUTH THEATRE
HOSTS

Starring Semaj Brown



Onion REVOLT!

A Healthy Comedy

Written/Directed by Semaj Brown
Music Composed/Performed by James Brown, M.D.

Produced by James Brown, M.D. PLC
Planted Kingdom® Project

**"The
Feeling of
Color"
Art and
Interior
Design by
Edith
Withey**

**Thursday
October
23, 2014**

**Diverse
Expressions
Office
Complex**

**G-3560
Flushing Rd.**

**Flint, MI
48505**

RSVP

810 742 8471

***Flint
Chapter
of the
Pierians**



***The
Pierian
Flint
Chapter
Presents***

***The
Visual
Art
and
Interior
Design
of
Edith
Withey
- 'The
Feeling
of
Color'***

Edith was sixteen; she told friends she would one day travel the

world, and they laughed. At nineteen, she and her husband David's priority was to save money and travel while they were young. Edith and David "took turns" finishing college and began collecting various forms of art while working and caring for their son, baby David. Together they visited five continents and explored the United States and Canada. Discovering fascinating art galleries and institutions was their passion. Edith proclaims, "I thought my heart would stop when we entered the Louvre in Paris France!"

Mrs. Withey left her job as Associate Executive Director of the YWCA of Greater Flint to pursue a career in higher education at Kettering University. She was eventually promoted to Associate and Acting Dean of Student Development. Simultaneously, Edith enrolled in home improvement classes and decorated the homes of families and friends.

Also, Edith had the experience of renovating and decorating her church, Kingdom of Heaven Ministries under Dr. Lonnie Brown. At Kettering, she was in charge of decorating the Student Development office complex, prior to being commissioned to renovate and design the newly formed, WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER (WRC).

Edith's Vision: *To create a comfortable environment where the female students (comprising less than 10% of the population) could gather to learn, deal with personal challenges, and enjoy the camaraderie of other young women with similar concerns and issues. I also wanted to provide an environment that would help foster leadership, encourage self-development, and allow future female leaders to think "outside the box."*

With support from the Dean and the art department director, Edith was encouraged to act as curator, and began to purchase art on both business and personal travels. Much of the work collected was created by women artists. The various forms of art inspired students to develop a variety of fun and creative art /craft workshops over the years.

Edith did not take up the paint brush again until she and David purchased a mid-century modern home in 1998 which needed a complete overhaul. The renovations took eighteen months, during this time; she painted murals inside linen closets and built-in book cases.

Throughout the years, Edith has taken a multitude of classes and workshops from Mott Community College and the Flint Institute of Arts in both home design and visual arts. In 2007, she decided to "step out on faith," leaving her position at Kettering to establish her present business, "In My Mother's GardenBut Father's House" which is in memory of her mother who loved beautiful gardens, and in reference to the Biblical scripture, John 14: 2 "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you..."

Edith proclaims: "As a visual artist, and interior designer, it is my desire to help clients create their own "peace of heaven," wherever they choose to live, at a price they can afford." Edith's visual art has been exhibited at the Greater Flint Arts Council, Flint Institute of Arts, and the former Left Bank Gallery.

Edith resides with husband (of fifty Years) David in Burton Michigan. She is mother to son, David and daughter, Tamisha, and the proud grandmother of six.

Feel free to bring guests and invite others RSVP 810 742 8471 – Light Refreshments

Diane Kirksey Biography

I still enjoy introducing myself, Diane Kirksey as a retired teacher. I taught for thirty-six years in the public school system. I enjoyed teaching vocal music along with visual arts, public speaking and regular education. My final four years of teaching was as preschool teacher for a head start program. During my long teaching career I also served in the position as a music educator trainer. In this role I supported and demonstrated ways that elementary classroom teachers could integrate music into their classroom curriculum. With each new teaching adventure I enjoyed challenging myself as an educator and also learned by participating in available professional development. My final four year of teaching was as a preschool teacher in a Head Start program. Even today I continue to teach preschoolers at my local church and of course singing and making music is a part of our curriculum.

My journey to pursue a career as a public school vocal music teacher began years ago after graduating from a high school in the North Muskegon, Michigan area. I went on to attend Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan where I earned a bachelor and a master degree in music education. I also enhanced my teaching career by earning an endorsement in early childhood education. Over the years I have also participated in a number of professional and community organizations: Music Educators of Michigan, The Flint Community Ensemble, The Institute of Education through Music, and The Orff and Kodaly Institute of Michigan and most recently The Pierian Chapter of Flint, Michigan.



JANET Y. POOLE-LITTLE

Biography

Drama Coach,

MT Olive Missionary Baptist Church

Flint, MI



Janet Y. Poole-Little, Drama Coach, has worshipped at MT Olive Missionary Baptist Church (Mt Olive MBC) since 1985. She has served in various ministries in the church including but not limited to Mission, the Inspirational Choir, Security, Emergency Medical Response Team, Dancercise, Sunday School Department and Drama.

She is a graduate of Flint Northern High School, Class of 1981, where she received her Diploma. She completed the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program in 1994 and worked as an LPN from 1995 until she returned to Mott Community College, to earn an Associates Degree in Nursing, 2006. She then began her work as a Registered Nurse. She has received certifications in Pediatrics Life Support, Basic Life Support, Chemotherapy Administration, Pain Management and Wound Care Management.

She enjoys serving in church and holds the Drama Ministry near and dear to her heart. She has worked alongside and gleaned from the late Dr. Harriet Grigsby, Min. Cathye Johnson and Mr. Anthony Ennis, all very gifted writers, producers and directors in theater and/or filmmaking.

Janet directed a full-length comedy for Christmas entitled “Doc’s Holiday,” written by Pat Cook, as well as many short skits for different services at Mt Olive MBC. She hopes to bridge the gap between youths and adults within the church. Therefore, she strives for intergenerational scripts where all ages can learn to work together.

Janet Y. Poole-Little has been a resident of Flint, MI for 50 years. She is the wife of Mr. John D. Little, mother of Leanna (Tony), Terri (Nicholas) and four bonus children, Alice, David (Stephane), Latrina, and John (Keira).

CORINNE E. EDWARDS, Ed.D.

Community Service:

- Baker College of Flint- Teacher Education Advisory Board, Board Member (2004-2012)
- University of Michigan-Flint University Outreach Advisory Board, Board Member (2005-2012)
- University of Michigan-Flint NCATE Standards Review Committee, Member (2005-2012)
- Urban League of Flint Board of Directors, Board Member (2008-2012)
- Saginaw Valley High School Athletic Association, Past President (2005-2006 & 2006-2007)

Professional Experience:

- Director of Learning, Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment, Saginaw Township Community Schools (Present)
- Baker College of Flint, Adjunct Faculty (Present)
- Principal, Flint Southwestern Academy & The Classical Academy
- Principal, Flint Central High School
- Assistant Principal, Flint Northern High School
- Guidance Counselor (Elementary/Middle/ High School), Bridgeport-Spaulding School District & Flint Schools
- Assistant Director of Admissions, Kettering University (GMI Engineering & Management Institute)
- Teacher, Secondary English Language Arts and Journalism, Flint Community Schools

Research Interest:

My dissertation research focused on increasing positive home-school relations and administrative models for developing greater parental involvement in the urban high school setting. I am continuing this work in my present job capacity through data review, process application, and analysis of practices. At the same time, I have a broader interest in K-12 teacher education/preparation and educational leadership training, with an emphasis on data-driven, “purposeful practices” that yield greater student achievement in urban schools. These interests lay the foundation for future professional contributions and research.

Professional Development Experience:

I have prepared and facilitated professional development & training in the following areas:

- K-12 Educational Leadership Models and Practices
- Curriculum Design & Development
- K-12 Teaching and Instructional Strategies
- School/District Improvement & Transformation
- Building Positive Home School Connections
- Conflict Resolution
- Team-Building & Collaborative Practices
- Diversity Training
- Organizational Management
- Effective Personal and Professional Communication Skills

Professional References:

Available Upon Request