

# GO!

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

## Tribal ART

### 'Women of a New Tribe'

Now through April 15

Flint Institute of Arts

1000 E. Keweenaw

Noon-5 p.m. Mondays-

Fridays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Saturdays, 1-5 p.m.

Sundays

\$7 adults, \$5 students/

seniors, free to members

and ages 12 and under

Admission is free to all

visitors Saturdays

(800) 234-8036

flintarts.org

Essence Wilson is the founder of the Communities First Inc. community group.

### NEW EXHIBIT FEATURES PORTRAITS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN OF FLINT

BY JIM MCFARLAN | Special to The Detroit News

Flint

As the Flint Institute of Arts conceals a crystal ball amid its collections? When curator Tracee Glab agreed three years ago to book a photographic exhibition celebrating local African-American women from all walks of life, how could the Flint have known it would arrive at a time the beleaguered city most needed some positive images?

"Women of a New Tribe," installed at the museum through April 15, features 49 Flint area women individually captured in larger-than-life, elegant black-and-white portraits by Charlotte, N.C.-based photographer Jerry Taliaferro. He has toured the country with versions of the display since 2002.

"I heard Toni Morrison on NPR one day describe

African-Americans as new world Africans, and that struck me," Taliaferro says. "We're probably the biggest tribe in the world, because of our history, and black American women are different from any other women in the world. The beating heart of the exhibition is the inclusion of local women."

#### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

That intrigued Glab. "At least once a year we're committed to do an exhibition devoted to African-American culture or art," she says, "and when we read about this we got really excited. We thought it would not only be a great fit in terms of having an exhibition of African-American art, but also engage the community in a way we really haven't done before."

Please see 'New Tribe,' Page 5D.



Natasha Thomas-Jackson is a co-founder of the RAISE IT UP! Youth Arts & Awareness organization.

## 'New Tribe'

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In the interim, of course, Flint became the national synonym for urban decay as its contaminated city water supply threatened its residents — nearly 60 percent of whom are black — with long-term health hazards.

"There's been very little progress," says "New Tribe" model Claudia Perkins-Milton. "We still have to go pick up our bottled water. It just seems like we're spinning our wheels. They broke us from the inside out."

Perkins-Milton, a UAW trailblazer, was one of more than 100 women recommended for the exhibit through community-wide nominations. Finalists were chosen by a random drawing. "That was the most fair way to do it," says Glab.

Taliaferro came to Flint to photograph the women over eight days last May. Several of the images may be incorporated into his core exhibit.

Even the subjects themselves concede the results are remarkable.

"I thought it was magnificent," Perkins-Milton says. "He really did a work of art. I said, 'Is that me?' The exhibit is just dynamic because there is such an array of women from all diverse backgrounds that have so much to offer."

Does "Women of a New Tribe," with its focus on the African-American woman who forms the backbone of the black community, have the power to boost Flint's sagging spirits?

"My honest answer? Depends on who's looking," opines Audrey Dismond, a retired residential builder who owned two construction companies, both of

which were staffed entirely by disadvantaged women she trained in the construction trades. "To so many, it's just another, 'Oh, a Black History thing, the African-Americans, it's their month, let's support them.' It's the 'in thing' to do.

"However, for many it's very inspiring, very uplifting. It's what our people need. It helps feed hungry souls."



Photos by Jerry Taliaferro

Samaj Brown is an accomplished poet who has worked with Broadside Press.



Dr. Sharon A Simeon, a retiree, works with the Red Cross and also helps people with disabilities.