



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHER HIGHLIGHTS PROMINENT AFRICAN AMERICANS IN 'GIANTS OF UNIONTOWN' SERIES**

**Uniontown, PA** – February is Black History Month, and Melvin Morgan Jr. has been working all month long on a project that honors that history by recognizing well-known African Americans in Uniontown.

Morgan is the owner of AOP Visuals (Aopvisuals), a Christian-based photography business, and has been using his talent to create Giants of Uniontown, a photo series focusing on a different member of the Uniontown community each day. Along with a photo shoot, Morgan conducts an in-depth interview with each person covering such topics as their inspirations, differences they hope to make in the community, and the messages they want to send to the city and African American youth.

Morgan said Giants of Uniontown is an idea that had been brewing for a few years.

“The idea came back in 2019, right before COVID,” he said. “My vision was for African American people who have been active in the community, or a big part of it, to be recognized – African Americans who own businesses, or maybe are heavily involved with the youth, or are simply trying to make Uniontown a better place.”

Morgan said he chose subjects based largely on those who have inspired or encouraged him.

“The people I picked were mostly people I’ve had good personal experiences and encounters with – people I’ve looked up to, people who’ve inspired and encouraged me, even if from a distance, from artists to preachers to athletes to teachers, politicians, electricians, hairstylists, DJs, and everything in-between,” he said. “African Americans have successful people here in Uniontown, a lot living and serving on the east side. I want our youth, especially our troubled youth, to see a future, to see they, too, can walk in the footsteps of people who have been and are big parts of the very same community they live in.”

Morgan started Aopvisuals five years ago but has been interested in and studying photography for twice that amount of time. “I first became interested in photography almost 10 years ago,” he said. “I took a photo of a seagull, perfectly frozen in motion, and thought it was cool.”

Morgan continued to shoot wildlife photos, also devouring articles and YouTube videos to teach himself the art of photography. Though this is the first year for his Giants of Uniontown series, Morgan’s talents are already being appreciated.

Angela Brown is a Uniontown city councilwoman who works in behavioral health and co-owns Brown Innovators. One of Morgan's first featured subjects, Brown said the project has the potential to do a great deal of good in the community.

"One way to erase the divide is through education," she said. "I feel, if others outside of this community actually see the good, hard-working residents in the city of Uniontown, they may be more compelled to join us in the efforts to bring life back into our community. We do not want to move from our lifelong homes. We love our community and want to bring back the days when we all were safe and thriving in life. Melvin's vision sheds light on us all."

Terry Vassar, co-founder of One Voice One Community, also was chosen and said he liked the idea of spotlighting people within our own community. Vassar noted many of the community's youth are unaware of the sacrifices and accomplishments of people they see daily, and the Giants of Uniontown project is helping to spotlight them.

"I thought it was a great thing to do because we always look to (recognize) people outside the community, but there are a lot of people right here doing things that these kids are seeing every day," he said.

Brown said she has encouraged Morgan to branch out into other media.

"I pray his vision has generational longevity," she said. "We live in an electronic age. Books and magazines are becoming extinct. As I told Melvin, this is a great idea – and go deeper with it. This needs to be a book or magazine."

Though a naturally shy person, Brown said her experience as a photography subject for the project was a pleasant one. "We all do what we do because that's the way our hearts were designed to be," she said. "For me, being recognized isn't the goal or desire, so when Melvin asked me, I was honored. Such recognition is both uplifting and humbling and serves as motivation for me to continue to strive for excellence."

Vassar also had a good experience, despite being "a little taken back when he asked me."

"It's humbling, but it's exciting as well," he said. "You want to hope you're making a difference or making an impact." To be selected for such a project, he said, is proof, in a way. "You realize it's not in vain – maybe I am making a difference in some way."

Vassar said being asked to take part in a project involving so many other people who have done exceptional things in the community, particularly those who have been working and sacrificing for a long time, was an honor.

"There are a lot of great people. That you're mentioned in that conversation is amazing," he said. "A lot of them have been doing it a lot more years than myself."

Morgan posts his photos and interviews on the AOP Visuals Facebook page and said he has gotten good feedback.

“The response has been amazing, just seeing everyone showing each other love,” he said. “Even if it’s just on Facebook, people are uplifting one another, sharing stories of how some of these giants helped them or even changed their lives. After seeing the outcome of this project, I want to do it again for February 2025.”

He also might consider expanding the scope of the project.

“This project was created to highlight Uniontown, but after seeing the response it got, I would love to highlight other towns throughout Fayette County in coming years,” he said.

To learn more about Giants of Uniontown, visit the Aopvisuals Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/alwaysonpointvisuals](http://www.facebook.com/alwaysonpointvisuals).

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org](http://www.fayettecountypa.org).

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