**1. “Inspirational Vision”**

I plan on continuing to teach and inspire youth and adults of all races about the importance of Black History and culture based on my artistic expression. I’m seeking funding for my upcoming project where I will use several media aspects to create an exhibition consisting of six components of artistic educational material: large wooden shape blocks, 8 foot sculptures of black contemporary role models, box-frame low-relief images, 4 video screens, text based and surreal informational imagery, 40” x 50” inch abstract images on canvas, a late model Lincoln Continental, and a poem on canvas that provides a backdrop describing the art work and inspiration of the exhibition. The project is currently titled “Inspirational Vision: A Conceptual Presentation.”

All people need to be educated about Black History and the arts are a well-proven teaching tool. The arts are part of the foundation of a good education because they allow youths and adults to learn in alternative ways through their imagination and senses. Through Black History education, youths and adults have the opportunity to learn about, accept and appreciate different races, cultures, and situations.

The continued absence of the black male from the family unit is based on incarceration, unemployment and death which have caused many young men to raise themselves. Sometimes this experience opens them up to create negative perceptions about women and instigates youth down the path of engaging in illegal activities to gain quick fame, only to live a short life. Social issues and the lack of education help create these ongoing problems. The Hip-Hop culture also inspires young adults of many races into employment based on music and clothing. In a way youth are striving to be the new generation of entrepreneurs at the cost of imitating negative role models which unconsciously can cause low self-esteem, poor self-awareness and a negative view of themselves in their community and world. It is my belief that providing education, through art, on contemporary positive black role models based on positive Black History is an effective way to strengthen the community and perceptions youth have of themselves and eliminate or reduce the up serge of racial tension that continues to grow.

Students of color need roles models of color and I will use five black figures in this exhibition as my focus: Marcus Garvey, Billie Holiday, Pam Grier, Bob Marley and Colin Powell or the personalities that will be created for this exhibition. I will also create my personal installations titled “One Nation under a Groove,” and “Lincoln Continental” which displays my family car, a graffiti painted and burned 1988 Lincoln Continental. Also a personal painting titled “Banana Pudding I and II” representing my favorite desert. It is my hope that this exhibition will educate the public and inspire artistic and individual goals. I want to build an exhibition that combines art and education thus empowering all individuals to recognize the importance of Black History and culture.

The exhibition’s first artistic vision would be a 3’x 4’ abstract diptych painting titled “Banana Pudding I and II” which is also my favorite homemade dish created by my mother many times from scratch. It’s so delicious it’s sinful. Her unique blend is adding lightly fried vanilla wafer cookies before they’re baked in the actual dish.

**2**. The next art piece is a 4’ x 6’ monitor showing a video titled “One Nation under a Groove.” This is a video of me painting an abstract image on 20’ x 40’ canvas inspired by those who deal with depression due to poverty situations and racism. It presents a surreal reality of the heartache we are all forced to deal with and I hope it will encourage those who are forced into negative situations.

The next installation will include a poem I wrote and painted on a 40’ x 50’ canvas in the shape of a flag which will be hung from the ceiling and draped on to floor explaining the goals and passions of Marcus Garvey. It will express the ambition we all have with the strength which is needed when are goals are not completed. Marcus Garvey expressed that black people should help and educate each other about themselves based on their ancestors and their history.

The next image presents Pam Grier as one of the most successful black actress during the black films of the seventies. Her films helped inspired the woman’s movement of the seventies and the characters she portrayed were strong, dominant and triumphant. These characteristics help inspire shows such as Get Christie Love, The Bionic Woman and Police Woman. The image is a 25” x 157” installation of repetitive frame images in box-frames of a portrait painting of Pam Grier similar to Andy Warhol’s Marilyn.

An installation showing a combination triptych figurative painting of Bob Marley the lyrical genius arising out of the floor with video monitor covering a 30” x 80” area showing children talking about Bob Marley is the next image. An Audio of me rapping a self-written poem about black men being inspired and helping others giving specific praise to the music and the passion of Bob Marley.

A construction installation of Colin Powell would present the attributes of the former Secretary of State displayed on three surrealistic eight foot figurative sculptures depicting the period of his life served in the Vietnam War, with hanging abstract images of planes and his unit standing near him and presenting themselves as inspirational figures. The second figurative sculpture in the installation would depict Powell as the airborne Commander with image’s of birds and symbols that describe a hero in flight while presenting him as a warrior of his division and a model for black Americans. The final piece of this exhibit would express the dominance and ambition that Secretary Powell presents today with the element of dark dimension blocks with information about the Gulf War printed on them. Images of factorial information from the war will engulf the installation without reference to guns and violence.

Billie Holiday and her song “Strange Fruit” inspires the next installation which consists of a 20” x 30” canvas with hands abstractly painted and a portrait of Billie Holiday in the middle. Two large hands made out of wood holding a microphone would be placed in the middle of the installation which would give the whole image a three dimensional inset. An audio speaker would be set up providing noises of screams and people being beaten and torture as I speak /rap my poem about life and living. The poem is titled “ A Burgundy Stain.”

The “Lincoln Continental” installation displays a 1988 Lincoln Continental which has been a part of my family and passed down from my mother to my youngest brother.

**3.** Itwill be on display partially burned out, rebuilt and covered in a written poem painted in graffiti style. It will be shown on a clean white tile floor representing innocence. The reason to present this image in a surreal composition is to explain the changes a car goes through while the floor remains clean representing the humanity we need to hold on to in our lives. Regardless of the goals and purposes we all work toward and prepare for with no guarantees. We all have to be aware of the confidence we must gain in life and understand the lesson that is learned regardless of the down falls.

A video monitor showing footage and documenting the preparations of installations, construction and information about this exhibition will also be presented. It will show those people who have encouraged and inspired me through my artistic and personal struggle. It will present information from my past solo exhibitions and artistic projects and show personal and professional friends that continue to inspire my future art projects while they explain and provide information about themselves and their connection to me and my artwork. The video will also have my mother and siblings expressing my focus as an artist and leader in my community and family.

Each project and installation is set up and displayed in the order of importance and area of personal inspiration. “Banana Pudding I and II” is used because it is my mother’s specialty and my favorite dessert. “One Nation Under a Groove” being a symbol of inspiration, will hopefully help inspire those who are suffering and who are victims of poverty and racism. Marcus Garvey is represented because he was a political and dominant figure that inspired and taught blacks to be independent and to support each other through the most difficult times. Pam Grier was chosen because she was the first black woman to grace the cover of Ms. Magazine and continues to inspire woman of all races as she continues to work in films and television programs.

Bob Marley’s is included because his music is now inspiring a new generation and his political efforts have been compared to Martin L. King Jr. as an influential leader in Jamaica. Colin Powell is depicted for his political efforts and strong military background. Billie Holiday, being a highly recognized blues singer, is here because she expressed the pain and suffering of life especially when dealing with racism. The “Lincoln Continental” installation displays the family car representing my family and the importance of family, while explaining the struggle we all deal with to maintain peace while hoping for growth. And finally, to tie the exhibit together, I present the video documenting everything the exhibition represents while co-workers, family and others explain how my art work has affected them and the efforts I’ve made in helping my community and inspiring my students.

Conclusion  
Exhibitions, programs and workshops on Black History and culture are helpful to understanding America’s history and are important to our future as Americans. Artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Jacob Lawrence use words as an expressive form of art which many understand. Their inspiration in art will be represented in this exhibition based on the impact they have had on my work. I plan on using art and education by allowing them to be combined with other elements of artistic expression while educating about the leaders who provided leadership and how they inspire a nation, regardless of race and sex.

**4.** My impression of student interest in education through art is based on my experience as an educator and artist. People of all nationalities can benefit from this exhibition especially those whose ancestral stories of success have often times not been shared with the world. Education will be the inspiration and foundation of the exhibition. Many of the icons and dedicated individuals expressed in this exhibition have helped shape this country based on their talents and vision. Their achievements will be the guide for all individuals to grasp education openly, with specific and positive goals to follow.

roland houston

riverdog0000ds@gmail.com