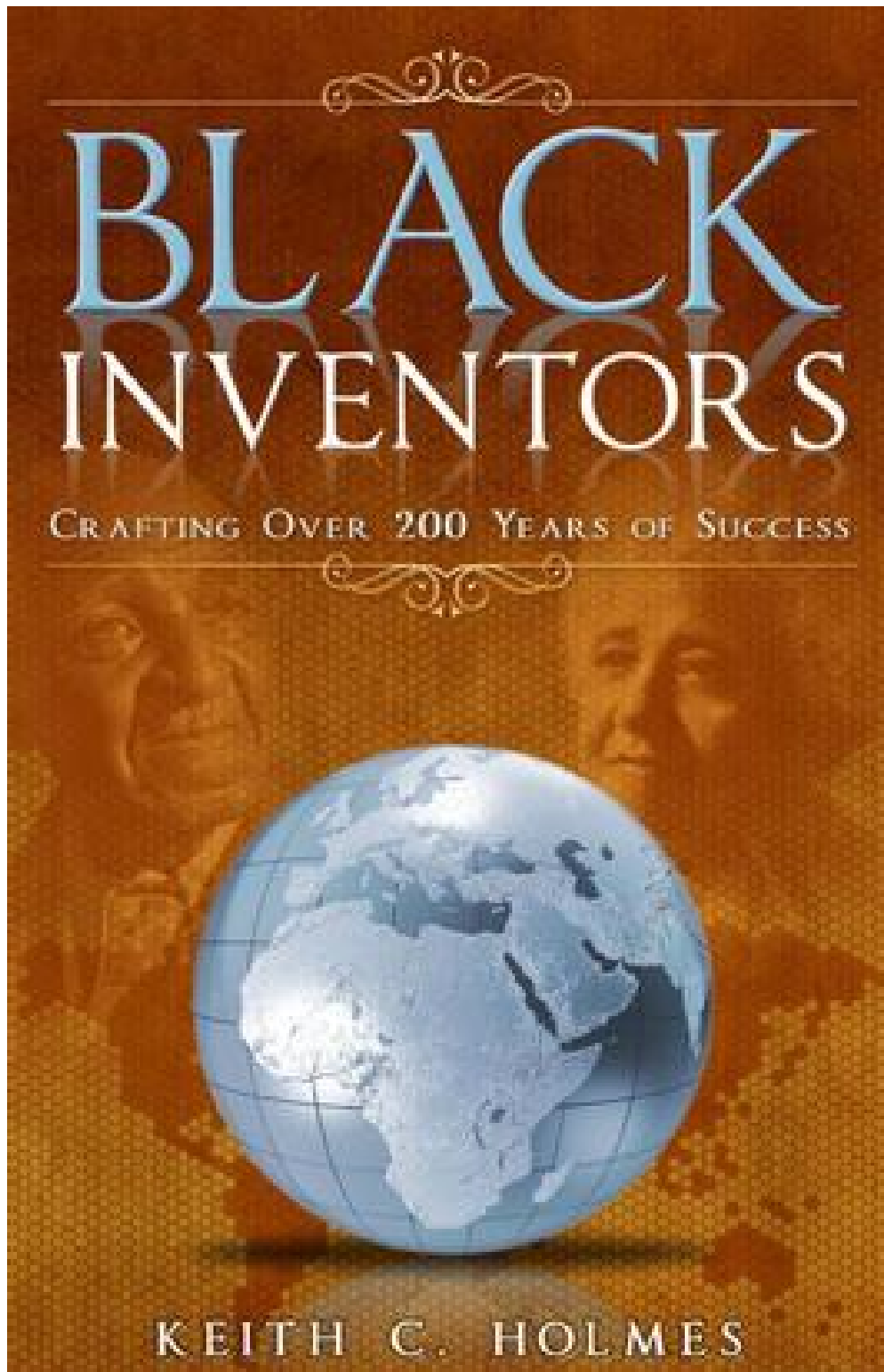


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When people see luminosity, for instance, they may think of Thomas Edison but it was his right-hand man, Louis Latimer, an African-American, who developed the filament for the light bulb, allowing it to function for more than three days. He also created the electric lamp, did trailblazing work in incandescent lighting, and diagrammed the telephone for Alexander Graham, among other things. The three-way automatic traffic signal was created in 1922 by

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Garrett Morgan, an African-American, who also invented the gas masks which saved multiple lives during wars. George Washington Carver revolutionized American agriculture through his work on crop rotation, replenishing nutrients in depleted soil, peanuts, soybeans, sweet potatoes and pecans. Jan Matzeliger created the shoe lasting machine that allowed the mass production of shoes. Dr. Charles Drew MD gave us blood plasma that saved hundreds of millions of lives, just to name a few. All four of these Black men were inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame for their innovations and inventions.

From the potato chip to the ironing board, from refrigeration systems to sound equipment like the microphone chip, many objects that we use daily were created by Blacks. This is what Keith Holmes' book is all about as he provides a glance into the socioeconomic and political history of Blacks.

Hence, *Black Inventors: Crafting Over 200 Years of Success* identifies African, African-American and Caribbean inventors from over seventy countries and five continents. The researcher Keith C. Holmes uncovered over fifteen thousand innovations, inventions and trademarks by inventors of color spanning a period from 1769 - 2011. Holmes has crafted one of the first books which traces inventions by Black men and women in the world. Thus, the book exposes inventions, patents and labour-saving devices developed by Black inventors from many countries: the U.S. (including almost all 50 states), Belize, Canada, France, Germany, Ghana, South Africa, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Jamaica, etc. The readers will also learn about the contribution of the Native Americans which brings more originality to the book.

Throughout the centuries, people of African origin, before the enslavement era, were responsible for hundreds of thousands inventions and innovations: agricultural tools, building materials, medicinal herbs, computers, businesses, etc. Holmes describes in his book these aforementioned labour-saving inventions which helped build several enterprises that generated money and jobs worldwide.

We also learn in the book that in the United States, circa 17 African-American men were inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame. Among them, two inventors, Jan E. Matzeliger, (Suriname) and Elijah McCoy, (Colchester, Canada) were not born in this nation. The book provides readers, researchers, librarians, students and teachers with the materials required to effectively understand Black inventors from a global perspective.

Historical documents emphasize that millions of Blacks arrived in the Americas under

Exclusive Interview With The Author Keith Holmes

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enslavement's yoke. However, it is hardly known, for instance, that in the Virgin Islands and elsewhere that during the 1970s-'80s and '90s, Liston Abbott of St. Thomas, USVI, was instrumental in the invention of solutions that improved television signal capacity. Thus, most authors highlight primarily Caucasian inventors. Keith Holmes introduces inventions, both past and current, that people of African origins developed and patented globally.

The book is well documented, an eye-opener. It is divided in three principal parts: the first covers the role played by ancient African inventors; the second part showcases native African inventors; and the third part presents Black inventors by geographical location in the world. The book also provides information about Black icons like Oprah Winfrey who own 61 trademarks. The father of cell phones, the African-American engineer and inventor, Jesse Russell, is mentioned in the book along with other fascinating innovators.

We hope that in the future Mr. Holmes will release a book for children about Black inventors. It would also be great if a documentary could be produced on his body work. *Black Inventors* is well documented and should definitely be translated into several languages. The book was part of our top 20 last summer:

<http://megadiversities.com/index>.

Mr. Holmes did book signings and lectures in Barbados, California, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ontario (Canada), Virginia and Washington, DC. Holmes has appeared on "Ancestral House", "BBC-Gloucestershire Caribbean Connection", BlogTalkRadio "Harold Rush: Interview: Black Inventors, Crafting Over 200 Years of Success", "CBC, Morning Barbados", "WBAI-FM, the GBE", "WEAA-AM, Caribbean Affair", "WHCR-FM Harlem Community Radio and Sports Talk Show", "Medgar Evers College Radio", etc. The author is an Advisory Board Member at The Museum for Black Innovation (for this museum, Mr. Holmes advises and engages communities in promoting innovation and intellectual property protection through speaking engagements and book promotions, particularly featuring Black inventors throughout the world) and Entrepreneurship. He is the founder, owner and CEO of *Global Black Inventor Research Project, Inc.*

The author was a panelist at A Town Hall for Black Men: Dreams, America and the Global Challenge NYU, in 2011. Holmes has published several articles in:

The New York Observer

, June 1992,

The Black World Today

, Feb. 2002,

Barbados Free Press

, 2007,

BHM Global News

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Journal African American History
(Winter, 2010),
www.metroatlantablack.com
, 2012,
www.oxfordjournals.org
, etc.

The author is of African-American, Native American and Jamaican ancestry. Keith Holmes was born in Queens, New York and lives in Brooklyn. In 1972, he went to the State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick as a Liberal Arts Major. In 1980, he earned a certificate in computer programming and system designs at the Control Data Institute. For 25 years, he worked professionally in the satellite communications industry, and since 1977 he has worked with computers, from main frames to personal computers. He has lectured in Barbados, California, Canada, Illinois, New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington, DC. Holmes is currently working on several projects regarding Black inventors.

Overall, the book shatters the ongoing myths about Africa whose history is limited to its continent's colonial past, and about Africans who have contributed little to the development of world science, technology and agricultural innovations. *Black Inventors* demonstrates that the inventors, innovators, designers and labourers of African descent, in Africa as well as throughout the African Diaspora, were instrumental in the development of western technology. *Black Inventors, Crafting Over 200 Years of Success* is available in over 800 national, state, university and public libraries (over 150), as well as in museums, schools and bookstores in 27 countries (primarily in North America).

Black Inventors

was selected as part of the reading list by the National Council of Teachers of English for the National African American Read-in since 2010.

Aforementioned, the author lives in Brooklyn, NY. He is married and is the father of four children, three of whom went to university; the youngest is aspiring to do the same.

Here, Mr. Holmes spoke to us, chiefly about his book, and shared his knowledge about the inventions by people of color. This interview was done from Canada.

P.T. Share with us your background. How did the idea to pen a book on Black inventors come about, and why was it important for you to take this journey?

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K.H. Your question is really interesting. My background is in the computer (PCs, etc.) and satellite communication (uplinks, downlinks, fiber and microwaves) fields since the seventies. I started my journey to research data for my book in the late eighties. I must also acknowledge the work of the trailblazer, Henry E. Baker, an African-American patent examiner who, in 1913, published *The Colored Inventor, A Record of Fifty Years*.

Baker went to the United States Naval Academy and worked as a copyist with the United States Patent Office in the early twentieth century. He was a trailblazer regarding the idea that people of color throughout the world filed for patents. His book laid the foundation for researching Black Inventors, as it was the first book to explore and cite the various innovations by people of color. I wanted to take the torch ignited by Mr. Baker by providing a global perspective of Black inventors.

Yearly, hosted in Brooklyn, New York, there is an International African Arts Festival. Hundreds of thousands of Blacks worldwide sell their food, clothing, jewelry and books at this event. So, we see authors, publishers and merchants from Africa, the Caribbean, Canada and the United States. In 1988, I found a very insightful book at the festival titled *Black Inventors from America* by Burt McKinley. This writer was a researcher who penned about Black inventors from the 1800s to the mid-seventies. I was fascinated. I went to my mentor, Dr. Ra Un Nefer Amen, who is an author and founder of Ausar Auset Society, a Pan-African religious organization. He wrote the book

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(which has 7 volumes) among others. He suggested that I could write a book about Black inventors seeing that I was so taken by this subject; this is how I embraced it. I began my work in Harlem, NY, at the Schomburg Library for Research and Black Culture, one of the largest holders of information about Black people in the U.S. I looked into the folders, microfiches, reference books and so on. For a year, I made several research trips to Howard University University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center in Washington, D.C. I also made research to the New York Patent Library. I observed that the focus was often on African-Americans when I conducted my research. It was important for me to expand that to the Americas, Oceania, Africa and Europe. I realised there was a scarcity of books about people "of color" in other parts of the world and I definitely wanted to reverse this situation by providing a global perspective. I also wished to provide more role models to the Black youth including my own children, because personally during my formative years I was only exposed to usual names we hear yearly at Black History Month -- Dr. George Washington Carver, Elijah McCoy, etc. There are so many more Black inventors in my country and abroad so I wanted to bring a different perspective to this scene. Since the year 2000, the Internet really expanded and it became a great tool for me to thoroughly search the contribution of Black inventors worldwide.

Overall, the result of my twenty years of research allowed me to cover inventions from 70 countries with the inclusion of 15, 000 patents, innovations and trademarks. I wanted to provide a global view of Black inventions and present an opportunity for Black kids to have role models

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who look like them from their homelands. They need to know that they can do a wide range of things with their lives. Media are a powerful force in our society. They shape minds and have a major impact on the dreams and visions (or lack of) for our children. It is not realistic for all of them to aspire to be athletes or entertainers. Not all of them will be involved in show business. For instance, the odds of becoming a successful hip-hop artist or rapper are 1 in 10,000. Many have the potential to thrive in a variety of realms. In addition, I think it is very important for Black kids to know that their past is not limited to colonisation and enslavement.

In this regard, the focus of my book is to introduce readers to the facts, that Black inventions made by men and women, both past and present, were developed and patented globally. This also means that there are innovators in every civilization whose ideas have been turned into inventions. In the past, the highlight has been on American and European inventors. Currently, the new giants in the patenting process are Brazil, China, India, Japan, Nigeria, South Africa and South Korea.

When citing inventors, as mentioned, few books name the accomplishments of Black inventors outside of the United States. That list often excludes Black inventors from Africa, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, Europe, Russia and the United Kingdom. The Internet, the access to library resources and good communications are the keys to unlock the past. The significant role of Black people is now being unearthed.

I want to add that I was happy to discover through my research that the earliest Black inventor in the Western hemisphere was originally from Jamaica; his name was Dugald Clarke. He created a device for the application of steam to sugar milling. More specifically, his invention was related to technology for sugar cane in 1769, and he filed for a patent that year.

To conclude, Black people have made major contributions to the founding and development of the U.S. and beyond. The number of patents held by African-Americans, particularly considering the slavery era, represents a testament to their creativeness and humanity. Most of the information related to the achievements of African-Americans is known, but because of the reluctance of the mainstream to give this information its rightful place within school's history books, I wanted to do my part as an author.

So, the primary reasons for releasing *Black inventors* are to provide role models to people of color, and to educate the general population of the achievements of Blacks worldwide in the scientific realms, etc. In other words, it was very important to emphasize the positive aspect of

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Black History, instead of focusing on enslavement, for instance. Before this tragic episode, Blacks were Kings and Queens, farmers, hunters, herbalists, metallurgists, astronomers, fisherman, skilled craftsmen, mothers and fathers, etc. in Africa. So, I wanted to present a different picture of Blacks. . I found over 5000 inventions by Nigerians alone. My book covers Black inventions from over 70 countries on the five continents. If I released my book in the early 90s it would have been 1000 pages [laughs].

P.T. There is nothing wrong with that. It would have been an encyclopedia, and there is a real scarcity of this regarding Black inventors.

K.H. It is true. However, you have to remember that to make it appealing to young people it is better to provide them quick and concise information. Moreover, a small format allows me to put the book practically in their pocket, which makes it easy to carry anywhere and read it or re-read it whenever they have time. I believe it is a great tool for students.

I also made the choice to put a book out there where librarians, teachers and so on could find information they are looking for quickly. The data is structured by countries, etc. It is like a reference book which gives a broad view on the subject, and people can look deeper if they want to pursue their research further.

P.T. How long did it take you to do the research and to write your book?

K.H. I started researching in 1988 and I finished twenty years later because I had to work full time, raise my family, create my publishing company and so on. For the book I had to go to other states for research purposes such as the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center at Howard University in Washington D.C. I also sought a number of articles, books and databases from other countries to provide a global view on five continents.

P.T. Your book is divided into three main parts: the first explores the role played by ancient African inventors; the second covers Native African inventors; and the third delves into Black inventors by geographical location, worldwide. Can you elaborate on that?

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K.H. Firstly, it was important to look back at the great accomplishments of ancient African inventors involved in the development of the continent. I wanted to expose the important contribution of the great Kamit civilisation in Egypt. This civilisation was very advanced; they had mathematics books, physics, hieroglyphics alphabet, astronomy, medicine, agriculture, architecture, etc. They knew how to store food, they designed the attires, they had outstanding knowledge related to the mummification process, etc. The Kamit people were negroids involved in all aspects of civilisation (some were kings, pharaohs, priests, writers, etc.) which means there were inventors in this ancient kingdom, likewise in other civilizations such as the Shungai empire of Ghana, Nubia, the Songhai Empire, a state located in western Africa. These societies developed their own technologies. They knew about the benefits of herbs for medicine, etc. Many western pharmaceutical companies go to African countries and patent these plants. Incidentally, in South Africa alone over 20,000 plants have been identified for their medicinal properties. Imagine the extent and knowledge that Africans developed in their understanding and use of plants throughout Africa. We are talking about something similar to Traditional Chinese Medicine. I can also add that one the earliest universities in the world was in Timbuktu (Mali).

Secondly, my book emphasized Black inventors' who have ancestral links to Africa. African inventors with traditional African names were easier to identify in my research. I listed patents granted to Blacks living in predominately Black countries. For example, Ghana developed its own innovation technologies. Many Africans used their innate intelligence; some had no formal training. With my discoveries, I truly believe that the new millennium will promise to usher in a tidal wave of new inventions from African, Caribbean and South American countries. Nations like Argentina, Brazil, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, South Africa, among others, are paving the way for a number of new inventions each year.

Thirdly, my book documents a large number of inventions, patents and labour-saving devices produced by Black inventors worldwide. The readers will find tables in the book, which illustrate their global contribution. Africans have their own unique expertise which Europeans required to make their colonial ventures successful. Africans had the knowledge to grow and cultivate crops in tropical and semi-tropical climates. African rice growers, for example, were captured in order to bring their agricultural knowledge to the Americas. African men and women possessed a wide knowledge of the use of plants, herbs. Multiple West African civilizations had goldsmiths and expert metal workers on a grand scale. These slaves were abducted to work in Spanish and Portuguese gold and silver mines throughout Latin America. Black women who were also enslaved had strength. Their maternal and nurturing capabilities were used in some of worst conditions to care for their own children and to help raise the children of their enslavers.

P.T. You also exposed in your book the inventions of Native Americans. We seldom hear about their contribution, and it brings more originality to your book. Can you talk about

this?

K.H. I am glad that you brought up that point. My paternal grandmother was partially Cherokee. So, it was important on a personal and historical level to cover the contribution of Natives. The Westerners came to the Americas and found old civilizations (the first complex civilizations arose, with the earliest emerging 5000 BCE), the pre-Columbian era, which cannot be ignored.

I looked up some traditional Native American names at the U.S. Patent trademark office. I found that in the 1800s Native Americans were filing and receiving patents from the U.S. government. I wanted the readers to see that Native Americans played a direct role in the development of the Americas. When the Westerners arrived, the Natives helped them to adapt to their new environment. They taught them everything about furs, the right foods and so on to help them survive. Before the arrival of Westerners, the Americas' environment was not polluted; the Natives knew how to live in harmony with Mother Earth. They had, and still have, their own knowledge. It is important to raise consciousness with regards to historical facts. Unfortunately, we do not hear enough about it. In addition, my book will provide role models for Native American children, even if I did not thoroughly cover this subject, seeing that I focused more on Black inventions.

Growing up, I was exposed to a lot of negative images of Native American people: cowboys and Indians. They were portrayed as savages and so on. We don't see this anymore, but their contribution to the Americas is written off. So, it is important for society and the Native American youth especially to have access to information which highlights the inventions of their people.

P.T. You have two chapters in your book which focus on Black women innovators and inventors. Can you elaborate on that?

K.H. There is a tendency to focus chiefly on male inventors. I wanted to provide a more global approach and not ignore the female gender. There is a lack of recognition. For instance, you can count on your fingers the number of female scientists who have won the Nobel Prize for a discovery. Since its creation in 1901, in all categories, only 44 females have won this prestigious prize. Around the world, we find women who are chemists, engineers, mathematicians, etc. The inventions of females are not included in many books. I definitely did not want to overlook them when I was doing my research. I discovered over 400 inventions by women of color worldwide. In fact, I could write one or two books solely on that subject.

The readers will find information about female inventors, such as the African-American ophthalmologist Dr. Patricia Bath who owns 9 patents and was nominated to the National Inventors Hall of Fame. It is important to mention that an African-American woman has not yet been inducted into this prestigious organization.

Overall, I documented in my book the creativity of Black women inventors from Africa, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe and the United States. Furthermore, I provided a comprehensive view of their ground-breaking achievements.

P.T. Seeing that in all cultures there are fewer female inventors, did you encounter difficulties finding information on Black female inventors?

K.H. I have encountered some difficulties. To elaborate on your statement, I could say when we think about female inventors around the world, they possess the same skills as their male counterparts: creativity, imagination, leadership, analytical abilities, etc.. I believe many among them discovered things and men saw an opportunity to take their ideas and get patents.

P.T. [Laughs] This is an interesting point!

K.H. In my research, I emphasized the contribution of women of color in the invention scene who played a significant role. Many young females around the world have visions or imagine inventions that they would like to patent. They might not have seen enough women doing it so they are not exposed sufficiently to role models (who look like them) they can emulate. I strongly believe in this quote: "See who you are, become what you see". So, the main difficulty was to list utterly the inventions of women inventors, seeing that not all of them have the resources and support to patent their innovations.

It was important for me to contribute positively by providing information I could find about these females and opening a wider perspective. We have been conditioned to think that inventors look a certain way and are of specific gender. The reality is he/she can be African, Asian, European and so on; he/she can be of any denomination from around the world; he/she can be young or old. Nonetheless, I remain positive. I observed that more women worldwide are assertive enough to insure their inventions have a patent.

P.T. Throughout the centuries, what are the main difficulties Black inventors (males and females) have encountered?

K.H. One of the things that I quickly discovered is that Black people have been filing patterns since the 1700s. There is a myth that they did not go through this process because of a lack of money. In other parts of the world, no one knew the origins of the owners of the patents. They could easily build their businesses, manufacture their companies regardless of their origins.

The main flaw is the fact that they were not included in school books, text books, reference books in libraries, etc. We have been *miseducated*. The purpose of writing my book is to reverse this phenomenon and make the information on Black inventors more accessible.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that western countries have a system of filing patents, not all inventions are registered in patent offices likewise elsewhere in the world. So, this situation definitely presents many obstacles. Despite that, some of the inventors gained profits from their patents. However, regarding slave inventors, they could not file for patents, they had to rely on their masters who owned the patents. People need to know that even during the slavery era there were free Black people who owned their patents in the Americas.

History has not been kind when we are talking about Black inventors. It does not present an accurate picture of the economic benefits that Western countries received from their contributions. For instance, the inventor Norbert Rillieux (his father was White, his mother Black) was from New Orleans, Louisiana. His father sent him to *L'École Centrale* in Paris to study engineering. He specialised in steam technology and mechanical engineering. After graduating, Rillieux stayed in Paris. At age 24, he taught applied mechanics at *L'École Centrale*

. In addition, he penned a series of papers on steam engines and steam technology. He later returned to New Orleans. During this era, sugar cane was a lucrative commerce in the Caribbean and the U.S. Norbert created the Evaporating Pan and Multiple Effect Vacuum Pan, which revolutionized the sugar industry. Rillieux's devices are responsible for converting sugar cane, beet, and corn to sugar crystals, as well as making condensed milk, gelatin, paper, glues and countless other products, such as superior quality soaps. This invention alone, made by one man, has generated trillions in profits since the 19th century until now. The average American consumes 150 pounds of sugar a year, so imagine globally to what extent it is used. The pioneering work of this chief engineer in the use of steam technology is still utilized today, and his inventions are cited ninety-eight times in the United States Patent Office between 1843

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and 1857. His system was quickly adopted by all the sugar refineries in the United States, as well as in Mexico and Cuba. It represents the basic sugar refining process in use today. . This discovery allowed low production costs with an attendant decrease in retail prices, making sugar more affordable. Unfortunately, many people have never heard about Rillieux among or Black inventors, all trailblazers.

P.T. I love this interview! It is a history course in itself!

K.H. [Laughs out loud]

K.H. I have a comment for you. I am sure that you cannot live without your laptop now.

P.T. [Laughs] Yes, this is true!

K.H. Well, the African-American Marc Edward Dean, a computer science engineer, had an important impact on our lives. Without his contribution, we would not have laptops, tablets, smartphones, desktops, money transactions which revolutionized how we do e-commerce with PayPal and so on. More specifically, Dean worked on the development of bus control, allowing for the monitoring of peripheral processing devices for disk drives, video gear, speakers and scanners. He led the team that developed the first gigahertz chip capable of doing a billion calculations per second. He received countless awards and recognition, including the IBM Invention Achievement Award and the IBM Outstanding Innovation Award, patents 1981-2007 (Dean possesses over 200 domestic and international patents).

P.T. One of your last chapters is called *Where does the Black inventor stand today?* What is your assessment of the current situation worldwide? In addition, talk to us about the remaining glass ceilings you observed regarding Black inventors.

K.H. My assessment is thousands of Black inventions are made globally each year, and the biggest improvement is that now the information is available more than ever. In my own research, I was able to easily find over 5000 Nigerian inventors for instance, by researching them by their traditional African names. The U.S. Patent Office was instrumental for my

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research. I could find by countries (Haiti, etc.) the different patents' numbers.

Based on my observations the remaining glass ceilings are about how people are exposed to this valuable information. To shatter the glass ceilings, it will depend on how people are exposed and utilizes this precious information. More movies, YouTube videos, Facebook pages, Twitter and so on have to be created. The panoply of social media definitely has to be used for educating people about Black contributions in (ancient and modern day) inventions in diverse fields, technology and so on. However, we have to imagine, visualize ourselves accomplishing the things we need and want in life.

Overall, I believe that the glass ceiling can be broken by more exposure of Black contributions on a global scale -- in the schools, libraries and universities. The National library of China (which has a population of over one billion people) purchased a copy of my book. It is an important breakthrough because, unfortunately, the image of Blacks have been narrowed and tarnished worldwide. Too many people think that all Blacks can do is being an entertainer or an athlete. The odds of someone becoming a NBA basketball player are 1 in a 1,000,000 or professional footballer (soccer) are 1 in 3,000. I am not taking anything away from the incredible accomplishments in these fields; however, we historically succeeded in many other areas. So, I made sure to include in my book our contributions in the scientific, manufacturing realms and so on.

P.T. Did you find other hurdles that Black inventors have to overcome such as copy right infringement?

K.H. Well, if you work for a company and you create something it will be owned by the corporation. You will receive a very small amount as an employee for this, even if your idea is worth a million dollars. Many inventors and innovators now make sure that they own their corporations. So, they benefit from their creations. These kinds of hurdles (regarding other entities owning your ideas) which existed in the past are vanishing. The market has changed. For instance, if a Canadian develops an innovative idea, he/she is not limited anymore to just one country. Now, more doors are open because everything is global. In Africa and the West Indies (Trinidad and Tobago is really advanced in showcasing their inventions. This country created DVDs, booklets with information on the background of various innovators), populations are creating their own patent offices. They don't have to go to Europe or the U.S. for registration anymore. So, the glass ceiling is disappearing, but there are still Black people who do not have the resources or capital to develop their innovations. They need financial support. Some people unfortunately rob their ideas, but it is less prevalent than before. Historically, especially during enslavement, as mentioned, it was the slave masters who owned the patents, seeing that the

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slaves could not register. Unfortunately, these masters benefited from the innovations of these slaves and several amassed great fortunes out of this.

P.T. As discussed earlier, very few female scientists have won a Nobel Prize, and as mentioned there is a scarcity of female inventors. What do you think it will take to increase these numbers?

K.H. More education and more inclusion in books are required. Discussions like we are having are important in the media to raise awareness. Movies should be made about female inventors.

P.T. This is a great idea!

K.H. We don't see films about women inventors. It is easier than ever to produce a movie. It is not required, like before, to have a huge budget. A documentary on YouTube can be produced about female inventors for instance. I saw two videos (*African Inventors: A quick glance – part 1 and part 2*), which showcased African inventors on YouTube and the same thing can be done about female innovators. The documentaries were a real eye opener. It was refreshing, because most of us in the Western world did not grow up seeing images of people from the cradle of humankind who are innovators. We have to remember that Africa is the second most populous continent with over 1 billion people. This means 1 billion potential ideas and innovations with technics.

P.T. What do you want the readers to take away from your book?

K.H. I want people to realise that many inventions have been made by men and women of diverse origins, including people of color. Many things which have been built are improvements to what was done in the past. For instance, we would not see skyscrapers if the Egyptian pyramids were not built. The cotton gin was not developed by Eli Whitney; he made an improvement to what existed previously. Every native populations who used the cotton gin developed their own betterment of it.

P.T. How has your book been received worldwide so far in the scientific community and

the general public?

K.H. It has been received very well by national (for example, the Library of Congress in the U.S.) and state libraries (in Britain, Wales, Scotland, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, etc.), museums (such as the Canada Science and Technology Museum), schools, etc. My book is available in 27 countries. To date no one has come back to me and disputed what I wrote. I am talking about the Ivy Leagues, such as Harvard, Princeton and Yale. Among the general public, there are people who told me they want to share the knowledge found in the book with their grandchildren and other family members, teachers, librarians, friends and so on.

To summarise, my book has been received positively in the U.S. and abroad including Canada. You can find it in every province in their libraries. My publication circulates in 6 of 10 of the world's largest library systems, 12 National Libraries, 25 of 50 top college and public libraries in Canada and the United States, 8 of 10 top libraries in South Africa, 7 of 50 State libraries in the United States, etc.

P.T. To ensure that people are more informed about Black inventors, what do you think it will take for schools to teach children about them? So far, are there some countries which have shown an interest in integrating your book in their academic curricula?

K.H. Some schools in the U.S. have demonstrated interest in doing this. In addition, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) integrated my book in some of their schools, particularly in the Afrocentric high school. You can also find our book in the public libraries of different cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, etc.

Our ebook edition serves as a convenient and accessible resource for educators, students, parents, schools, community centers, learning resource centers, libraries, museums, research centers and universities. In this regard, I can provide training to teachers, librarians and so on to help them transmit the knowledge to the students. Black history cannot be limited to February; this trend has to change.

P.T. February is the shortest month of the year

K.H. [Chuckles] Exactly! I have to say that in England, Blacks chose October to celebrate Black History Month and October has three additional days. However, Black history has to be celebrated all year long, especially when we live in a world where unfortunately the Black image is globally stereotyped. Workshops are required. We need to see more positive information

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available on Facebook, YouTube, lectures, etc. This will allow us to give an accurate view of our contribution, not just locally. In Canada alone, there are over a thousand inventions by people of color. Citizens need to know that.

P.T. Are you thinking of creating a version of your book for children in the future?

K.H. Yes, we will develop this for kids from grade 1 to 6. The book will have illustrations with big characters to make it attractive to children. We will set up an A to Z book with several countries where inventions were conceived by people of color. The kids will be able to see that inventions were made by someone from their particular nation.

P.T. This would be amazing!

P.T. Name us one to three of your favorite Black inventors of all time and tell us why.

K.H. I am going to start with one who was born in your country Elijah McCoy. His African-American parents escaped slavery in the late 1800s. McCoy was born in Ontario. He created a number of revolutionary lubricating devices that changed the machinery used in the railroad and shipping industries. His patents for self-lubricating engines allowed my country to transition to the forefront of industrialized nations between 1872 and 1915. More specifically, his main invention made it possible for transportation assets -- vehicles, planes, trains and so on -- to not have to be immobilized to be properly lubricated. Before, the engines had to be shut down for all their parts to be oiled by humans. This was a revolutionary discovery because it had a global economic impact. It allows factories to operate yearlong. In other words, McCoy's discoveries enabled American and western countries to run their machines and factories 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In this regard, McCoy is credited with creating the automatic lubricator for oiling steam engines for which he secured the first of his 47 patents.

The second inventor that I admire is [Madam CJ Walker](#). She became the first woman of any origins in America, and probably in the Americas, to become a self-made millionaire. She was also the first Black millionaire in the U.S. This is an amazing accomplishment, especially because she did it at a time when it was so much more difficult for Blacks to make it. In addition, she learned how to read very late in her life at least in her twenties, but she was smart enough to surround herself by the right people to make her business grow. In addition, she developed a

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panoply of hair products and cosmetics. She knew how to use her trade mark and market it. Walker had a global vision. Her products were sold outside of the U.S., in the West Indies, Canada and Africa. She traveled in all these places. She was definitely ahead of her time as a female. The hair care and beauty product business is a multi-billion dollar a year industry.

Walker had several hair dressing trademarks for hair salves and toilet preparations between 1906 and 1919. She had her sales staff, she did research development to make products (and factories to create her devices) to enhance the beauty of Black women, even if I think they don't need to, seeing that they are among the most beautiful females (with their diverse shades, etc.) on our planet. The hot comb (also known as a straightening comb for hair) was one of Walker's widely marketed products. Annie Malone was the first who patented this tool. However, her protégée and former employee Madam CJ Walker discovered the comb and widened the teeth. She was also the first to improve this device in the U.S. in 1900.

I also admire Madam Walker as an entrepreneur because she gave more opportunities to Black women. Walker hired her own people, over 1000 of Black females who could move up the ladder in her company. This was unheard of at the beginning of the last century. Through Madam Walker, Black women could break the glass ceilings. The majority of Black females in America were relegated to housekeeper status with a pittance salary. Many left these jobs to enroll in Madam Walker's enterprise. Walker was bold and daring. She did not care about being accused of nepotism, among other things. It was important for her to open doors for her community.

I am also fascinated by Dr. George Washington Carver, the Father of Agronomy. His innovations generated billions of dollars in income. His pioneering work in peanuts, pecans, soil and plants revolutionized the use of plants and crops. It provided an alternative to using chemicals. Dr. Carver's discoveries regarding the product development of peanuts were responsible for Congress' enactment of Section 22 of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933. This legislation protected peanuts grown and produced in my country. The pioneering work of Dr. Carver saved lives and farms. He was asked by the U.S. government to develop products with more nutritional elements, and he did. Dr. Carver managed to patent only three of his ideas. If he had patented all of his discoveries and works, they would number over one thousand. Dr. Carver is the "Father of the Peanut Industry" and the "Wizard of Tuskegee", patents between 1925 and 1927.

P.T. Talk to us about your company (its mission...) *Global Black Inventor Research Projects, Inc.*
(www.globalblackinventor.com).

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K.H. *Global Black Inventor Research Projects, Inc.* was founded in 2007 in Brooklyn. We have branches on six continents. The purpose of my company is to provide information on native innovators and inventors of color from Africa, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, Europe, Russia, South Pacific, the United Kingdom and the United States. This information will be disseminated using digital, electronic, print and voice medium for bookstores, community centers, educational institutions, libraries, museums, organizations and governmental agencies. Our company has spent over twenty years researching the innovations and inventions of Black inventors. We cite the products and patents by Black inventors from 1769 till 2011, with emphasis on the global perspective. My company will also research and give information on individuals or groups family tree. We are currently filling orders for national archives, libraries, schools, universities and bookstores.

Currently, I am working on several additional projects that provide further insight into the subject of Black inventors. We have documented numerous African inventors who have received gold medals from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Overall, I am the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Global Black Inventor Research Projects, Inc. My company specializes in the research and publication of materials regarding Black Inventors. Our research have uncovered and documented innovation and inventions by Black inventors as well as other inventors of color. We are expanding our efforts to provide lectures, book signings and include our publication into the public and private educational institutions.

P.T. Thank you Mr. Holmes for this very interesting interview. It was a real pleasure to speak to you!

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