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Professor's Photo Fronts Washington Post Photo Issue

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Professor's Photo Fronts Washington Post Photo Issue

Story of father's unsolved lynching gets national spotlight through art

DECEMBER 26, 2022 BY CLARA TURNAGE

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OXFORD, Miss. – As Dorothy Williams stood before a blank field holding the American flag that belonged to her father, Vanessa Charlot thought of her own connections to Williams' story.

Charlot's photo of Williams is receiving national notice after featuring as the cover image on the Nov. 27 edition of **The Photo Issue of the Washington Post** magazine.

Entitled, "The Real Americana," the issue focuses on the variety and complexity of life in the United States.

"I was excited to be on the cover, but what really makes me excited is seeing these unresolved stories being told," said the **University of Mississippi** assistant professor of journalism, whose work has been featured in The New York Times, Gucci, Vogue, Rolling Stone and Oprah Magazine, among others.

Williams' father, Isadore Banks, served in World War I and appeared to live the American dream upon returning home to Marion, Arkansas. He started a family and a successful business. But in 1954, he was found burned and chained to a tree.

His family fled to north St. Louis, starting over from scratch after losing much of the wealth that Banks had earned.

His lynching was never solved and the flag, with its frayed threads, is one of the few things Williams has left of him.

Like Banks, Charlot is a veteran and African American.

"Isadore Banks is a man who did everything right," Charlot said. "He served in the Army; he started his own business; he started a family. And they killed him.

"That's his flag. Even though the manner in which he died is ghastly and horrific, it's still part of who we are as a country.

"As a person who is also a U.S. Army veteran, the flag means a lot to me. Who gets to represent this flag and who doesn't? People fought and died for this flag, and their stories are getting left behind."

Charlot said she spent several hours listening to Williams' story before she ever turned the camera on. Williams reminded her of a grandmother, a matriarch, but Charlot said she also could have been any woman on the street.

Williams' hands, crisscrossed with age, reminded Charlot of the sharecroppers' hands she photographed in the Mississippi Delta and of the sharecroppers Banks represented in Arkansas before his lynching.

"We have to be honest about the fact that there are certain stories that are not being told," Charlot said. "When you become aware of the fact that there are stories that are not being told, you see that they are being stripped away from the beautiful tapestry that makes us America.

"I wanted (Williams) to be larger than life. I wanted to stay away from the sense of place and turn the focus on her. I wanted to show the dignity and triumph of her life because she made it. She's still alive."

In a way, Banks and his daughter reflect the ongoing racial conflict in America – both the unresolved oppression of the past and the polarization that still exists, Charlot said. In the photo, Williams looms over the tattered American flag – a woman whose family was torn apart by racial violence – but she's still standing.



A photograph by UM journalism professor Vanessa Charlot is featured as the cover image on the Nov. 27 edition of The Photo Issue of the Washington Post magazine. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

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Students Learn 'Real Politics' in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

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OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

"Irrespective of race, we all fall under this flag," Charlot said. "This is what makes America what it is. The beauty and the ugly of it. She represents the strength of what it is to be an American."

Andrea Hickerson, dean of the **School of Journalism and New Media**, said Charlot's success is raising the profile of the school.

"Beyond the achievement of having a photo showcased so prominently, her photo is a striking model of how a single photograph can speak to the complexities of American history and identity," Hickerson said. "It's profoundly moving."

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