

that each person can find common ground with another by accessing his or her own internal rhythm."

PLAN: Arant wanted to teach a dozen teenage girls from the District how to sing, play African hand drums, and perform spoken-word poetry. She would recruit participants from local youth organizations, they would meet for 12 weeks in the summer, and the program would end with three community performances.

AMOUNT ASKED FOR: \$3,460

STATUS: approved

UPSHOT: The young women first performed at the D.C. Arts Center in September and haven't stopped since. Local organizations started calling to book the group, and it has performed more than a dozen times. "Neither the girls nor I expected that," Arant says. She received another grant from the city this year, so Arant is holding a drum circle in May to recruit new young women for the program. "The performances are the public face of the project," she says. "They're what has propelled it forward at a rate that I can barely keep up with, frankly."

—Rachel Beckman

novella, *You Will Behave*, was published by New York-based SuckerPunch Press. The novella is written completely in the second-person future, told in the voice of a mother scolding her son.

"You will behave," it begins. "You will sit right there and listen until I am finished with you, and then you will march up those steps and apologize to your sister for sodomizing her Sparkle Beach Barbie with Darth Vader's light-saber."

In this same tone, she goes on to tell him his entire life story. Getty tried to picture his mother, Virginia Getty, yelling at him through her teeth while he wrote the book. Virginia says that the

You Will Self-Promote: Getty takes a second-person chance on his career.

mother in the book is harsher than her, but she's honored to have been her son's inspiration.

"It's kind of like a caricature of my disciplining of Matt," she says.

Getty says his mom is the "biggest champion" of *You Will Behave*—which has caused some problems. She gave a copy of the book to a relative, who promptly banned it from her home to prevent her 12-year-old daughter from reading it.

In turn, Getty tried to get it banned elsewhere, too. He sent copies of *You Will Behave* to con-

Getty says.

"My hope would be you forget you're reading something in the second-person future," he says. "The only way it works is if you lose sight of the gimmick."

Up next, Getty is writing a full-length novel that he describes as a "children's book for adults." It's in the third person. He has mixed emotions about the attention he's gotten for his second-person writing. After all, his first three published works were all from that point of view.

"Is this my thing?" he says. "I don't really want it to be my thing."
—Rachel Beckman

Borough Deeper



In 1970, Cleve Overton was driving home from a shift working in a Mobil Oil boiler room on Staten Island. On the way, he pulled off the road to pick sassafras to make tea for a friend. As he was coming out of the woods, he saw a police car. The officer standing next to it looked very nervous.

"Instantly, I began to frame the situation from his viewpoint. Bearded black man in the woods with a shovel and an ax... Black man has just buried a body after dismembering the torso... dies trying to resist arrest," writes Overton.

The sassafras incident is one of the "vignetic gulps" that make up Overton's book, *In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty: A Memoir of a Black American*, which was published last November through the author's own Diaspora Voices Press. The book is Overton's attempt to prove that racism is as strong as ever on his native

Staten Island, which he considers a race-relations microcosm of the United States.

But a 208-page memoir isn't quite enough case-building for the Brookland author. This spring, Overton will return to Staten Island to collect stories from other long-timers on the toll that racism has taken on their lives, with an eye toward releasing a follow-up to *In the Shadow*. "I'm going to work on that, to prove to myself that much of the racism in the community still exists," he says.

Not that he harbors too many doubts about the issue. Overton worked as a welder and blacksmith on the island's dry docks in the '50s—as far as jobs went, he took what he could get. As an African-American, he couldn't even score a position at the now-closed Fresh Kills landfill.

Overton would later spy racism in the island's municipal sphere. In January 2000, he mounted a protest against the murals in Borough Hall—Brooklyn's City Hall—which were painted in

1940 by Frederick Charles Stahr to depict the history of Staten Island as part of a Works Progress Administration project. The pieces were meant to depict the history of Staten Island. Overton believed that the lone African-American figure, a shoeless man with a downcast expression, was presented in a demeaning way. So he painted a sign and picketed the hall in protest.

"People come across the Staten Island Ferry to see the Statute of Liberty—they will disembark at Borough Hall, tourists from many countries," he explains. "They will see only that we were disenfranchised people, like that mural says."

The murals are still intact at Borough Hall, ready to greet guided tours at its May 21 centennial party. The occasion may furnish opportunities for Overton's latest project. "Who owns our history?" he asks. "Because if I don't do this, my children won't know, or any child that grows up on Staten Island will not really know."

—Mark Richardson