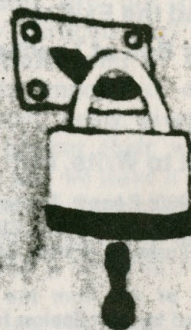


# BLACK EMERGENCY CULTURAL COALITION

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THIRD ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

1980



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*Prison Arts Programs Seek to 'Humanize' Life Behind Bars* reprinted from Art-workers News, © 1979.

*Profile: Tom Bintz* reprinted from The Agora, © 1979.

## Letters

Dear Benny,

Lincoln Hall is a school for adolescent boys entering under juvenile delinquency adjudications or on PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) petitions. I will be dealing with Cliff Sheer and the Cultural Enrichment Program.

I spoke with him of my desire to involve the class with the process of drawing, the involvement that produces the art. He was quite encouraging. Perhaps, the importance of self-expression can be realized in an institution, not only as an outlet but as a means of adult communication of thoughts and feelings.

Thank you,  
Susan Obrant

Dear Benny,

It is difficult to set up anything in here that's ethnically constructive, but we shall. We had an art show hooked up with outside sponsors last week. It was to be held in Binghamton, N.Y. The show was stopped by the administration — or rather our participation and the reason given was that we did not have any insurance on our paintings. It was just three of us. Our sponsor was the 'Probe' organization. I had hoped to have some photos for you of some of my paintings, but like I told you in the last one, I got crossed out of them. But I'll find an outlet somewhere even if I have to send polaroid snap shots.

I'll be very happy to receive some literature on art. They have a library here that has some old art books on

Michelangelo and Rubens and others. Right now I'm working on a portrait of a brother in here. He sits in front of my cell and poses for me. I put a large cloth across him like an Arab and I put a turban on him.

There was an artist here by the name of Mondo who gave me my first lesson, brush, and tube of paint, also a starting point in terms of conception. He really was a giant, maybe Sekou has told you about him. The tragedy about him and a lot of other gifted Black artists is his drug problem. I also write poetry and other things and I hope to send Sekou some copies in the not too distant future. I'll inform him to give you a copy.

Well, definitely let me know what I could do from this end as far as the program goes and I'll get on the case. In the meantime take care and write soon.

Yours truly,  
Akili Nali

Ralph Thompson 60735

## Board of Directors

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The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition performs a unique service for deserving individuals in correctional institutions by introducing innovative programs with fine artists nationwide. Funds, however, are limited and we are in need of your support. Please make your tax-deductible check or money order payable to:

The Black Emergency  
Cultural Coalition  
463 West Street  
New York, N.Y. 10014

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# BECC Art Programs

by **Benny Andrews**  
Co-Chairman

The BECC's aim is not to just talk about art, people, things, and events, but to do something real about them. That's why the BECC came into existence twelve years ago back in 1968, and that's why it is still so active and vibrant today. Our attitude is that problems demand action, commitment, and innovations. Times, circumstances, and priorities are continually changing, and in order for us to be of any use we must be changing with the times, always for the better for everyone.

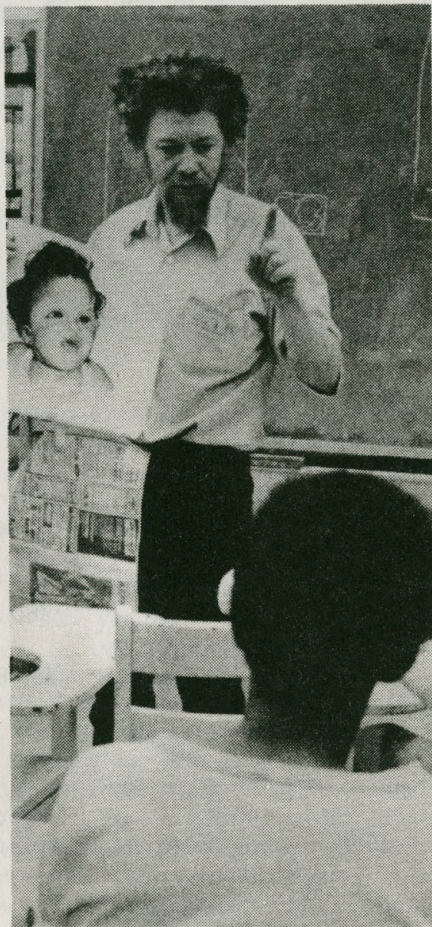
We have continued to demand that whatever we involve ourselves in — be it changes in institutional policies, broader opportunities for artists, more participation by people in the arts with the less exposed areas of the society, or the representation of all segments of our society in the cultural institutions in this country — that we be fair, tolerant, and as much as possible, considerate of the rights and aspirations of others. Nevertheless, we have not lost sight of our goal of making sure that Black people in general, and Black artists in particular, be given their long overdue rights and opportunities in a still much segregated and racist art world.

We maintain up-to-date files on Black artists, organizations, and all other relevant materials that we feel contribute to the recording of information regarding the cultural accomplishments of Afro-Americans. Our members participate in all levels of local, state, and Federal cultural activities, serving on juries, panels and as witnesses before civic, political, and educational bodies, and we offer information to young artists, curators, art dealers, and collectors concerning the location of artists and outlets for their art.

We encourage others, both individual and institutional, to broaden their participation and contribution in the art world. Any program we start, develop, and achieve success in we willingly share our information, experiences, and expertise with anyone willing to make constructive

use of it. We have assisted institutions, in setting up various art programs throughout the country, and we have encouraged individuals to start up art programs in their own areas.

The BECC has a broad constituency of workers in all sections of the



**Benny Andrews teaching at the Manhattan House of Detention.**

country. We always stressed the importance of the BECC looking out for the interests of the Black art community. We have also always welcomed and made use of non-Black participants. Some of our most successful endeavors have been spearheaded by white artists. Programs in institutions throughout the country are often run by dedicated white artists. In fact some of the institutions that we maintain art programs in are predominantly white.

The BECC has always seen itself as an organization of dedicated artists working for the good of all, regardless of race, religion, or sex. It is imperative for us to be able to cross all restrictive lines, and make art a property of everyone, not just a selected few who serve some narrow organization or institutions' purposes.

We have also worked hard to bring creative and individual artists into areas where they can serve a public that is often left out of the overall plans of the traditional institutions. Our programs are not orientated around any particular art styles or any one artistic point of view. We believe in the importance of the individual artists being given opportunities to present their works and ideas freely, and we leave it to the audiences to make final choices about what they individually like and dislike from as broad a range of choices as possible.

Over the last two years we've embarked on a series of art programs around the country involving talented artists who have served in the nation's prisons. We are pairing these former talented inmates with other artists and setting up art programs in juvenile centers with the aim of moving these youngsters away from paths that often lead to their becoming prisoners themselves. So far we've been very successful and our honor roll of teachers include several outstanding former inmates who are spearheading this series of art programs.

The BECC, or any other organization for that matter, does not exist in a world of its own. We need the help of everyone interested in helping make this a better society for the entire citizenry, and along with our proud history of achievements we ask for your support in whatsoever way you can give — be it financial, spiritual, philosophical, or whatever.

In the meantime the BECC will be finding ways to open up new avenues of communication and ways to help others in our endless quest to make it possible for everyone to share his or her culture with everyone else.