Prince Rogers Nelson
1958–2016

"I am #transformed." — Prince
### CONTRIBUTORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Title/Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mark Anthony Neal</strong></td>
<td>Professor, Duke University</td>
<td>&quot;When a Man's Color Is Purple,&quot; p. 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Van Jones</strong></td>
<td>Political Analyst/Co-Founder, Dream Corps</td>
<td>&quot;Dear Prince,&quot; p. 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lynn Norten</strong></td>
<td>President of Lynn Norten Media</td>
<td>&quot;Prince: The Ebony Experience,&quot; p. 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mary Theresa Pryor</strong></td>
<td>Founder of Urban Socialista</td>
<td>&quot;Sign of the Times,&quot; p. 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bomani Jones</strong></td>
<td>ESPN Host and O.P.-Ed Writer, &quot;Sexy MF,&quot; p. 103</td>
<td>&quot;Prince's Greatest Gift to the World Was...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miles Marshall Lewis</strong></td>
<td>Editor and Author of Scars of the Soul Are Why Kids Wear Bandages</td>
<td>&quot;When They Don't Have Bruises,&quot; p. 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The Beautiful Ones,&quot; p. 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;How the '90s Changed Everything,&quot; p. 120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WHEN LIFE TESTS YOUR pH BALANCE...

**ONLY ONE WASH HAS LACTOPOREBIOTIC™**

**PERSPIRATION**

- Yoga Pants
- Sex Things
- Hormonal Changes
- Dryness
- Irritation
- Soap
- Wet Bathing Suits
- Spin Class
- Body Wash
- Skinny Jeans
- Pregnancy
- Panty Liners

**PH BALANCE**

- Clinically proven to help maintain a healthy pH
- Contains LactoBiotic™, a probiotic that supports healthy intimate skin
- pH balanced formula
- Hypoallergenic

---

**Vagisil**

CLINICALLY PROVEN TO HELP YOU MAINTAIN A HEALTHY pH

---

**Ebony.com**

**June 2018**
I'm Your Messiah... and You're the Reason Why

PRINCE COMMANDED ONE OF THE LAST GREAT OUTLAWS FOLLOWING IN MODERN MUSIC HISTORY: HOW THE ANATOMY OF A PRINCE FANATIC RUNS DEEP. By ZAHEER ALI

WITHIN HOURS OF THE NEWS of Prince's passing, fans began to gather at the gates of Paisley Park Studios, the site of his death, but also where he worked for much of the past 30 years. Far from a typical memorial site, the expansive creative complex, the site of his founder and operator, a central piece in the cosmology of the most artistic Prince fans and loyalists. It's the gravitational center of a sound, language, style and community that Prince built and pressed over as a patron saint.

"In a World Like This," he sang, "I saw you messin'." In love, he would later change in his performances to "He's your messiah," but the line variation could not undo the emotional damage he inflicted. Redacted texts adopted this gender-bending fashion (pears, curls and ruffles); writing style ("guy" for "I", "you" for "you"); image and concepts ("May u live 2 see the dawn"); he tested the faith of listeners by pushing the boundaries of his musical language, striking rock into funk and funk into punk, creating such a unique sound that those who appreciated it (and became immediately hooked) on something only Prince could provide. As he grew in his spirituality, he realized the messiah role as sacrificing and expressed disapproval of the word "fan" ("short for fanatic"). He wanted listeners designing instead the word "fan" (for "family"). As he became himself at the core of his music industry and its marketing music, Prince ran away from him his "NPR family" to purify his art and get the word out, breaking down every more barriers between artist and audience.

In 1995, he set up the 1000-FUNK TelePhone mail order service. Then, through America Online (after 2000), he would occasionally drop into the Love U: Answer that email to talk directly with his fans. In 2001, he built the most ambitious project yet: the NPG Music Club, his members-only music download service, priority access to concert tickets, admission to sound checks and aftershow and music festival-style celebrations of Paisley Park Studios. The perks alone were enough to solidify the artist's hold on his deeply beloved audience. But it was the level of fan involvement and engagement that inspired even greater loyalty and sense of involvement in his projects. Paisley Park is in your heart, he once sang, and fans put their hearts and souls into the venue and all it signifies. The death of his creative spirit just a loss of a legendary showman but the foundation of a community.

PRINCE: A NEW GENRE BEGINS

W HEN AN ICON SUCH AS PRINCE ROGERS NELSON TRANSITIONS, he becomes a torch for both nostalgia and the power of music to unite. Proving an artist could transcend race, sex, age, and, of course, Prince—when songs that include "Controversy" (from Black or White? Am I straight or gay?)—measured around enough with the greats. The myth of his mixed-race identity even foregrounded his cinematic breakthrough with Purple Rain. But Prince's successes were connected to the politics of the marketplace, not the lived realities of race.

In ways that reflect his upbringing as a working-class Black kid from the American Midwest (an "AFL-CIO statement after his death showed he was a 60-plus-year member of labor unions), he was always a race man.

Prince owned a car as an artist and eclecticism in his era when the entertainment industry, if not American society in general, was still deeply ambivalent about Black masculinity. If Teddy Pendergrass represented the apex of Black male success in the mainstream in the late 1970s, it's notable that the men who vied for that throne in the early 80s were alternately more Sambongi and sauteed. While Rick James, Michael Jackson and Prince all sought to be Black men who regularly inhabited the bedroom walls of teenage American girls, Prince's persona was the one that pushed traditional boundaries around gender, sexuality and race.

But as Dari Chappelle and Charlie Murphy made clear a few years ago on Chappelle's Show, we shouldn't let Prince's failures obscure the fact that in art, business and philanthropy, he kept an investment in the Black aesthetics and communities that provided him with both his voice and vision.

Many have cited Prince's 1985 recording, "Baltimore," as proof of Black Lives Matter born foes, as well as his May 2018 concert that year in support of both the city and organizes protecting the police killing of Freddie Gray. But nearly a decade earlier, Prince recorded "We March," written with Marvin Gaye's daughter, Nona, in support of the symbolic goals of the Minister Louis Farrakhan-organized Million Man March. Less remembered is the artist's 2001 cover of the Staple Singers' "Where Will We Be Paid," which, over a decade before Ta-Nehisi Coates' celebrated essay in The Atlantic, was a strident call for Black reparations in the popular realm.

Prince's concern over reparations was the by-product of a musician with a keen sense of the exploitation often experienced by performers, particularly Black artists. Prince's most prominent public "statements" on race came via his dispute with his label, Warner Bros. Records, over control of his master catalog and ownership of his master recordings.

In the mid-1990s, Prince seized "slave" on his cheek and responded to queries about its appearance with the quip, "If you don't own your masters, your masters own you."

In referencing his lack of ownership of this literal physical product of his music, he echoed a dilemma confronted by entertainers dating back to Black blues musicians such as Lead Belly, whose music was transcribed by enterprising Whites for their own profit, and early soul artists including Sam Cooke, Ray Charles and others, who fought for ownership of their music publishing rights.

Even aware of historic ironies, when Prince independently released his No. 1 song "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World" on his own NPG Records in 1995, the single was distributed by Al Bell's Bellmark Records. Bell is well-known for his successful efforts to rebuild the iconic Stax label in the early 1970s, after the death of Dr. Dre and the loss of much of its catalog to Atlantic Records, who distributed its albums. It was under Bell's stewardship that Stax embarked on an ambitious attempt to "give back" by underwriting a day-long free concert at the Los Angeles Coliseum in 1971 that was known in Watts. Prince's relationship with Bell underlines the late musician's own philanthropic efforts and his interests in exploring alternative platforms for his music. Many of his monetary gifts remained anonymous during his life, including a financial donation to Trayvon Martin's family. Like his rival Michael Jackson, Prince was a supporter of the United Negro College Fund, donating profits from his 1992 single "Money Don't Matter 2 Night" to the organization.

The talented singer/songwriter/musician was known as an early adopter of the Internet as an artist platform, even as he later challenged the delivery models established by digital streaming services that continued the exploitation of artists. Prince's philanthropy and interests in emerging technologies intersected with his support of NPrince.org, a San Francisco Bay Area organization that aims to train 100,000 Black and Latino youth in coding. As fans sought to play Prince's music immediately after his death, many were surprised to find it was unworkable on the major streaming services, with the exception of TIDAL. When Prince reclaimed his master recordings, he eventually chose TIDAL as his streaming service of choice, in part because of their enhanced royalty rates for artists.

Prince was that shining example of a Black person who had won his freedom on a number of levels. In the early 1960s, the groundbreaking musician might have been referred to as a "free man of color." Today, we can remember him as the race man in purple.