

“Terry not graduate,” Johnson adds. “Stayed at Pearl Buck.”

Johnson tells the story: In 1949, his mother, in labor with triplets was turned away — an African-American family — from the hospital and was forced to give birth at home. There were complications. Of the three boys, only Jerry is typically developing, but this reality doesn’t seem to slow Johnson down in the least.

From 1970 to 2010, Johnson held the same job, detailing cars and working as a janitor at Wentworth Buick, where he never missed a single day of work. The owners Dalene and Ken C. Schram — Johnson’s careful I get the spelling of their names right — became like a second family to him.

When his mother passed away, Johnson, with the support of OSLP, became the fulltime caregiver to his

brother Terry. And his art seems to be instrumental in that process, as Johnson was charged with looking after himself, his brother and the majority of their day-to-day needs.

Johnson shows me examples of the hundreds of the calendars and menus he’s created, hand-drawn planners with healthy food options listed, artistically embellished and including notable additions like “flu shot” on a given Tuesday, or Halloween.

His art is essential in organizing his memories and his plans, Andrade suggests, as a way of capturing experiences and preparing for the future.

Johnson likes to draw or paint events that haven’t happened yet, such as Perry, Terry and Jerry Johnson on their 70th birthday in 2019.

“For him, dates are really important,” Andrade says.

“He has such an amazing memory. He can tell you the day people were born just by giving him the day and year.”

Andrade says Johnson likes to get to know people by getting to know their past.

Then Johnson starts to ask me questions.

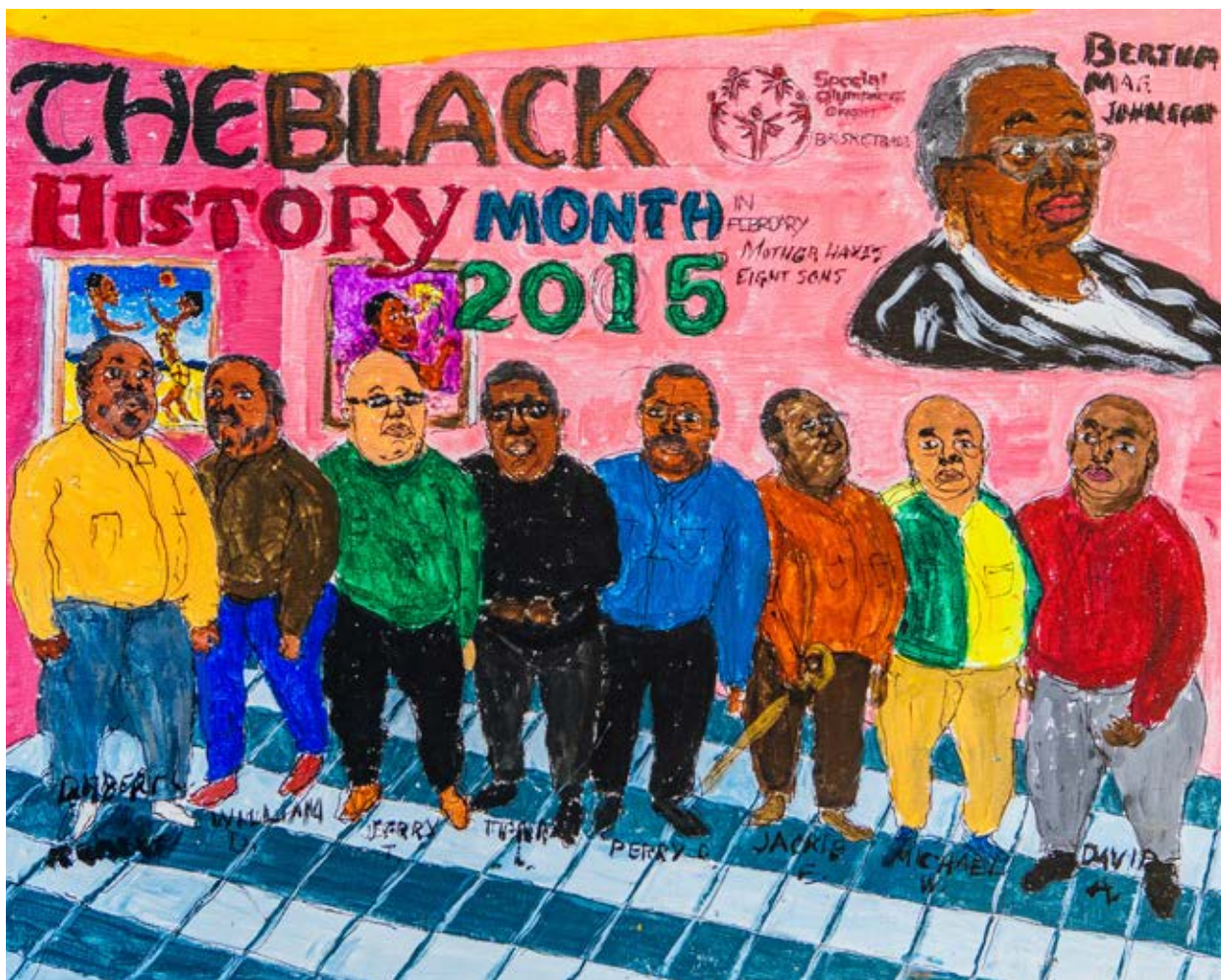
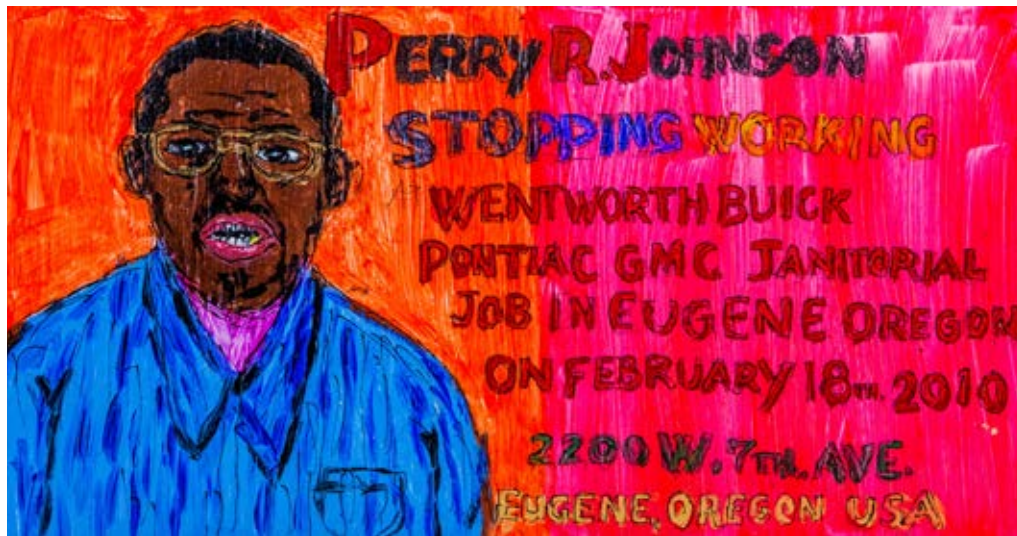
“Rachael Carnes: Mother born what year? Father born what year?”

I answer, then offer my birthday: Nov. 6, 1971.

Johnson thinks for a second, then looks at the pile of his drawings on the table. “It was Saturday,” he says.

I looked it up. He was right. ■

View artist Perry Johnson’s work 10 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, at the OSLP Arts & Culture Program’s Lincoln Gallery, 309 W. 4th Avenue. Or look for his work at other venues this fall including Full City Coffee, 295 E. 13th Avenue, and the Stellaria Community Building, 150 Shelton McMurphy Blvd. More information at artsandcultureeugene.org.



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