

CONVERSATIONS



FRANK PROVENZANO

General Theus builds morale by promoting the arts

For Lucius Theus, the battle lines have been redrawn. Twenty years after retirement as an Air Force general, Theus maintains the firm countenance and extraordinary focus that allowed him to rise to the military's highest ranks. A few weeks ago, Theus traveled to the White House where he attended a ceremony honoring his one-time colleague, four-star general Benjamin O. Davis Jr., former leader of the legendary Tuskegee Army.

Duty called, Theus responded. It's a habit he can't break.

From a kid who grew up in a poor Chicago suburb during the depths of the Depression to his place in the initial wave of African Americans who integrated the armed services in the early 1950s, Theus has never backed down from a challenge.

But he doesn't get too sentimental. The still waters behind Theus' eyes



STAFF PHOTO BY GUY WALKER

Sense of duty: Lucius Theus is Southfield's diplomat of the arts

reflect an unshakable will and a righteous certainty. Shortly after settling in Southfield in the late 1970s as a top financial executive for Bendix Corp. he turned his attention to improving the morale of the troops — ah, employees.

His laser beam attention focused on the arts.

Taking charge

Visual art exhibits were presented in the Bendix lobby. "I felt that a business has a responsibility to its employees. Having art in the work environment is necessary to round out one's life."

Duty called, Theus responded. You see the pattern.

This weekend, Theus will be on hand at the fine art auction to benefit the Southfield Federation for the Arts. He serves as president of the federation's executive board.

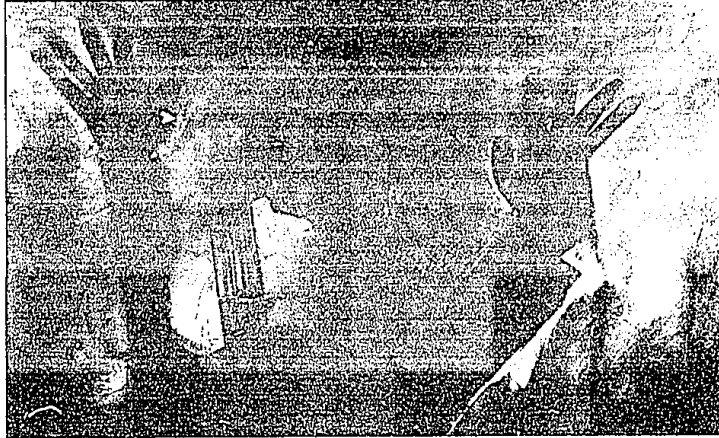
In the early 1980s, Theus helped to establish the federation, a multicultural organization that represents more than 80 arts groups in the region.

For nearly 20 years, the federation was intent on developing an arts center. The wait ended when the Southfield Centre for the Arts opened in June 1997.

Art as a means

Appropriately, the centre calls itself

Please see CONVERSATIONS, C2



Held hostage: Richard Kozlow painted this blindfolded man (above), arms grasping in terror, as part of his "Victims" series. The smokestack in the background and corpses in the foreground of this haunting painting (below) are a reminder of the Nazi's solution for the existence of Jews.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

BREAK SILENCE IN BLACK AND WHITE

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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The atmosphere in the Alfred Berkowitz Gallery at the University of Michigan-Dearborn is intense. Surrounded by the stark black and white paintings from Richard Kozlow's "Victims" series, Sidney Bolkosky talks about the 175 Holocaust survivors he's interviewed in the last 18 years.

Grim figures crying out from the dark, smokestacks spewing human remains, Kozlow's paintings seem to compound the suffering the University of Michigan-Dearborn professor talks about.

Be prepared to spend some time here after touching the screen of the interactive computer station bearing witness to the atrocities. A simple question from Bolkosky is all the survivors need to pour out their stories about life in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. For years, survivors kept their silence. Bolkosky breaks through that by studying a map of the area where



Richard Kozlow

survivors once lived. He mentions the name of a street in Krynitz, releasing the memories that freely flow in waves of emotion.

"It's very painful, wrenching for them," said Bolkosky. "It's not cathartic or therapeutic. For nights before and after talking to me the survivors have nightmares."

One survivor, who entered Auschwitz at age 14, could find no words for the hard wood slats they slept on. Bunks could be misconstrued as those found at summer camps. Beds would not do either. There was nothing soft at Auschwitz. Words were not what they seemed. Gas chambers masqueraded as bath houses.

"One of the reasons survivors didn't talk for so long is because no one

"Diversity: Victims & Survivors"

WHAT: Paintings from Richard Kozlow's "Victims" series, and selected interviews from the University of Michigan-Dearborn's Holocaust Survivor Oral Histories, an archival collection assembled by history professor Sidney Bolkosky.

WHEN: Through Sunday, Feb. 14. For hours, call (313) 593-5400.

WHERE: Alfred Berkowitz Gallery, third floor of the University of Michigan-Dearborn's Meridian Library, 4901 Evergreen Road, Dearborn.

RELATED ACTIVITY: Kozlow will discuss his paintings, Bolkosky the Holocaust survivor oral histories in the gallery 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11. A reception follows. The public is invited to attend the free program.

would understand what they say," said Bolkosky. "That's part of the problem, there is no language to tell it."

For nearly 20 years, Bolkosky's life has been consumed with listening to survivors. Everywhere he goes, they come up to him to talk. An hour or more later he's still listening to how they were forced to labor under starvation conditions. Kozlow's paintings show the victims' emaciated bodies. An angel of death is nothing more than a skeleton with wings. Vicious dogs sound the alarm for anyone attempting to escape.

"What you learn is how random everything was. I don't think that you can really understand what the Holocaust was about. You have to hear the survivors. They're still trying to figure out why it happened to them."

Bolkosky first uses audio tape to record interviews of survivors like Agi Rubin, who as a girl was sent to Auschwitz where her mother and brother were killed. Later, he video tapes a concise version. For Bolkosky, listening to the survivors' stories has become an obsession.

"It gets overwhelming sometimes,"

Please see HOLOCAUST, C4



MUSEUM EXHIBIT

Songs from a sacred place

WHAT: "Wade In the Water: African American Sacred Music Traditions"

WHEN: Through Sunday, March 14

WHERE: Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, 315 E. Warren Avenue, Detroit

HOURS: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday, Call (313) 494-5800 for information.

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
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"Every man prays in his own language, and there's no language that God does not understand."

— Duke Ellington

Popular American music emerged early this century, carving a tradition of catchy melodies, clever lyrics and a common man's wisdom. But there was an entirely different musical world beyond Irving Berlin, Cole

Porter and mainstream American standards. A world of resonating songs sung by Americans, segregated because of their skin color and African cultural roots, who were more concerned with spiritual survival than record sales.

Today the songs sung in cotton fields, while riding the Underground Railroad, black churches and Civil Rights marches have left an indelible

Please see SONGS, C2



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM SACHFIELD

Royal sounds: Duke Ellington's constellation of sounds incorporates and transcends many musical genres.

WHAT: Fanclub Foundation for the Arts presents "Swingtime '99," a gala benefit of fine art, food and music for seven area nonprofits.

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30

WHERE: The Fisher Building lobby, Second Street and Grand Blvd., Detroit

TICKETS: \$50 in advance; \$60 at the door; (248) 584-4150

Fanclub applauds local arts groups

BY FRANK PROVENZANO
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In case anyone missed it during last week's State of the Union message, there wasn't any proposed increase in federal money for the arts.

Then again, who's waiting? Art advocacy groups like the Fanclub Foundation of Southfield long ago took it upon themselves to use entrepreneurial ingenuity to raise funds for local arts groups.

This Saturday, the Fanclub will hold its annual gala benefit — "Swingtime '99" — with proceeds going to arts education programs provided by six local nonprofits groups.



Chores: Clinton Snider's paintings are among the featured fine art works in the Fanclub Foundation's sprawling party for art's sake at the Fisher Building.

Most of Fanclub's nearly 400 members are from Oakland County. The foundation was established in the late 1980s by John Bloom of Southfield.

A decade ago, when public funding to the arts was reduced drastically, Bloom set out to help arts groups become more self-sufficient while finding alternative funding for fledgling and established artists.

In structure and volunteer spirit, Fanclub appears much like the prototypical 21st-century private-sector advocacy group, raising awareness and funds for their cause.

"I think there's a trend toward participation," said Paul Silverman of West Bloomfield, a vice president of Fanclub.

"We're like a small-scale United Way for arts groups."

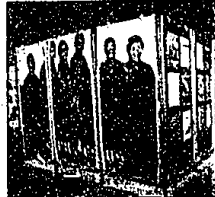
Of course, citizen participation is crucial to building support for the local art scene. But coming up with the actual money to fund arts groups is the explicit goal.

Fanclub provides average grants of about \$5,000, according to David Grossman, a second vice president of Fanclub.

This year's grant recipients include the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center, Hilberry Theatre, Michigan Opera Theatre, Michigan Performing Arts, Inc., Orchard Children's Services, Walled Lake Central High School and Young Audiences of Michigan.

Basically, the money is raised jointly with Fanclub organizing the party glitz of food from local

Please see FANCLUB, C2



Overcoming: "Wade In the Water" documents the evolution of spirituals, gospel music, quartet singing, rhythm and blues, and jazz.