



MOREHOUSE

COLLEGE



photo of Pete Rock 'In Conversation' courtesy of Sam Gehrke

The *Identity, Art & Democracy* Lab
an active psychology space for affirming narratives and social justice

The Lab

Too many popular narratives concerning Black people are negative. And because of the psychological sense-making that narratives provide, these negatives often inform behaviors relating to people of color. The challenge, then, is to make available broader and thicker narratives that allow for a more complicated look at Black folk, and people in general.

The Identity, Art and Democracy (IAD) Laboratory was established to better understand “the self” by being in conversation with artists — those who put center their performance of identity. The assumption is that with these accessible personalities, there is an opportunity for us to push beyond stereotype with fuller stories of and relating to the person.

The Lab studies identity, art and their intersection as examples of representation and resistance. We are particularly attentive to Black men, the construct of visibility and have interest in examining how this psychological work is an expression of freedom. Of note is that even with interest in the identities of Black men because of what these selves might explain of the larger American context, persons across the gender spectrum will be engaged to help us understand identity better. Also, though artists and their stories are a primary focus, the art produced and the orbit that emerges necessitates the inclusion of non-artists in our research practice as well. We convene students, academics, artists, politicians and organizers with the goal of moving from passively consuming art to activating it and new contours of freedom.

Lab work cycles through three distinct iterations:

- 1] **individual conversation**, *data collection that yields the narrative;*
- 2] **collaborative analysis**, *diverse working groups that establish themes and interventions;*
and
- 3] **application**, *the implementation of projects as defined by narratives and working group conclusions.*

Our Lab is an advocacy/participatory research space. This means that inquiry is done in collaboration with the researched, and that theories are positioned in ways that have us asking about strengths, not deficits. The questions that we confront are measured within a framework that is not only concerned with counting and summarizing, but that places equal emphasis on socially constructed understandings and the type of pragmatism that generates novel thought and solutions.

Identity Orchestration anchors our grounded theory approach. The affiliated program of study highlights the structural and cultural causes of Black inequality by way of first person narratives, but, more importantly, examines solutions to inequalities that are built into contexts for many people of color. No doubt, other lenses and modes of investigation will emerge as pivotal, but the central components of Identity Orchestration — Burden of Proof, Identity Dilemma Articulation, Unadulterated Presentation of Self and Acute Identity Expression — will remain fundamental.

Lab Partners



David Wall Rice / Morehouse College, Associate Professor and Chair, Psychology / **Lab Lead**

David earned a BA in psychology from Morehouse College, a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University, and both a master's and a PhD in personality psychology from Howard University. David's primary area of study focuses sharply on identity and self constructs as informed and underscored by music culture, media, politics and faith. His program of research looks at theoretical considerations of identity and the self by placing emphasis on the visibility of Black men and Black boys beyond stereotype. With this approach, psychological strengths are privileged in identity construction, not deficiency models. David has held research positions at The Institute for Urban and Minority Education at Columbia University and at the College Board; he was a scholar in residence at Princeton University, a visiting fellow at University of Maryland, College Park and recently completed work as a Sojourner Truth Fellow at the University of Michigan's Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. [David frequently applies his research](#) to social critique and commentary across media outlets, has conducted identity conversations with persons ranging from Kathleen Cleaver to Rick Ross to former Vice President Biden, and is currently working on his second book – *The Buddy Narrative*.



Corey Smyth / CEO, Blacksmith Holdings / **Lab Fellow**

Having established his management company in 1991, Corey Smyth is widely respected for the depth of purpose he places central with the artists he represents. While still a student at Morehouse College, Corey worked projects with accomplished music producer Dallas Austin that led to an opportunity to manage Native Tongues juggernaut De La Soul. He then effectively positioned the social conscious lyricism of Mos Def and Talib Kweli, among others, and began working with comedic thinker Dave Chappelle in curating music for his iconic sketch series and then with the the film *Block Party*. [Still a business partner with Chappelle](#), Corey manages hip-hop wunderkind Vince Staples and is responsible for bringing to light counter narratives of affirmation with the documentaries *Soundtrack for a Revolution*, *The Black Power Mixtape, 1967-1975* and *Concerning Violence*, a documentary based on Franz Fanon's groundbreaking *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Lab Projects

With our present data collection phase, we are developing an 'in-conversation' Podcast that highlights parts of the narratives we collect so that our research impacts in real time, and is available to those who might explore their identity through the narratives of others.

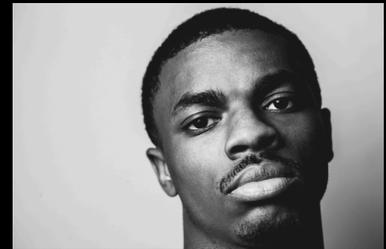
select a name below and be directed to samples of the identity work we've done so far



[dream hampton](#)



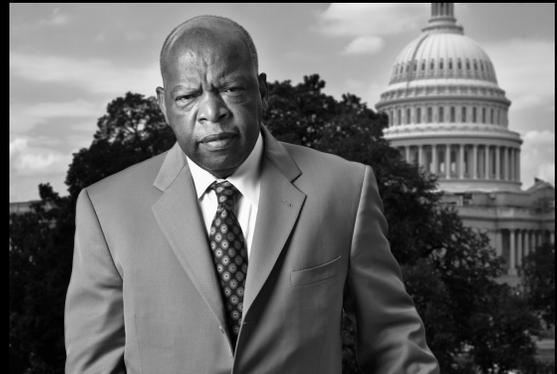
[Pete Rock](#)



[Vince Staples](#)



[Ice Cube](#)



[John Lewis](#)



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