

A native of Pittsburgh, Lenwood “Leni” Sloan grew up with a passion for learning and the arts along with a deep commitment to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. As a self-described “artist,” he has combined a passion for theater, film, and dance with prophetic historical insight to create storytelling projects of lasting civic value. His artistic oeuvre can be characterized as a gripping and gritty historical realism mixed with a dose of fiction to address the civic condition of a community. The artist is a catalyst, a connector, and ultimately a transformative storyteller.

Lenwood’s activism is about empowering local communities to invest in social transformation that is equitable and just through a process of public engagement in venues such as lyceums, chautauquas, forums, and salons. Here, the artist acts as a “crossing guard” who exercises the grace

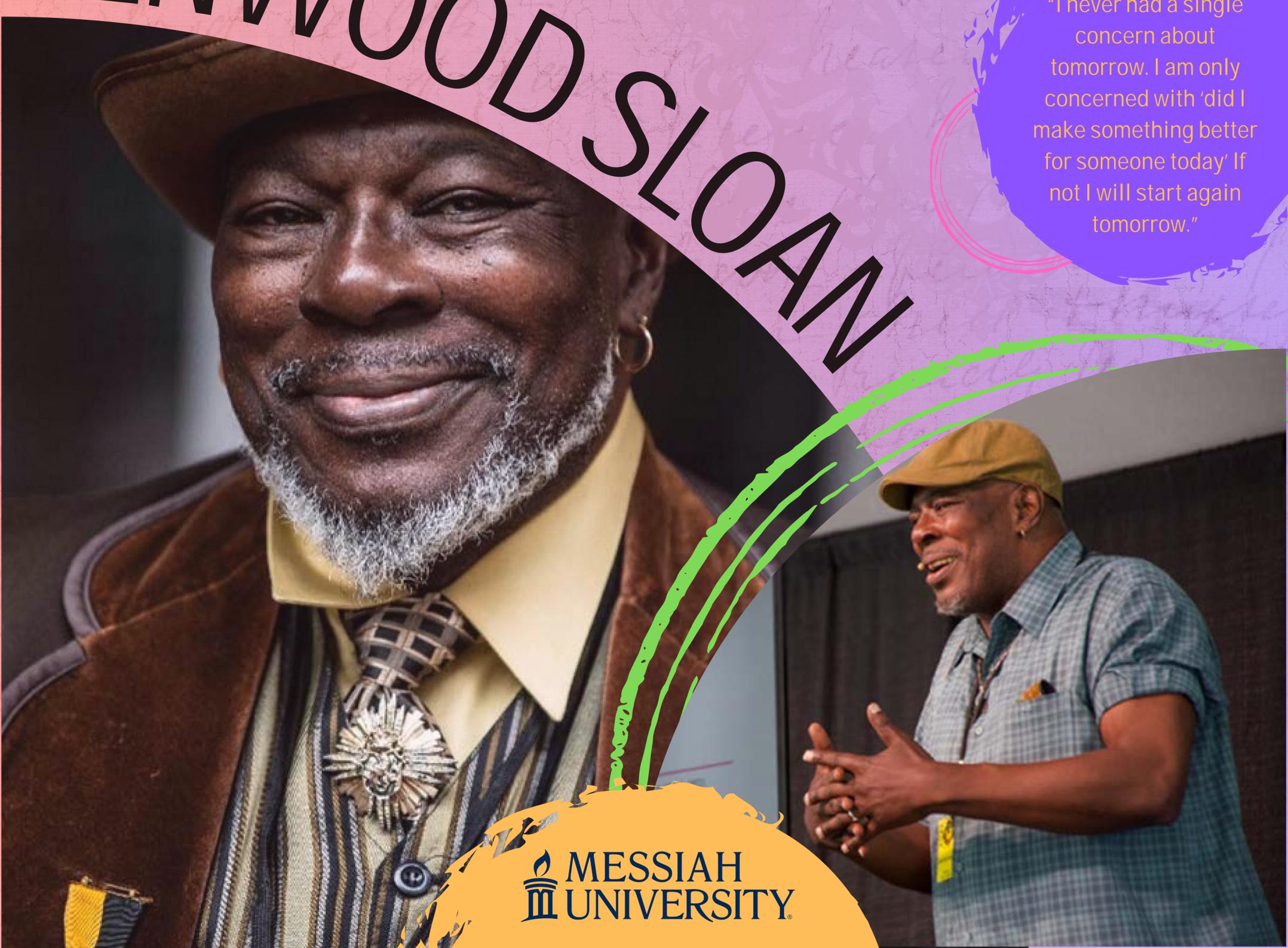
and patience needed so that all can cross safely to new inclusive spaces in a spirit of “cooperation, collaboration, and co-creation.”

The artist practices storytelling—a form of “edutainment,” or “assumptive dialogue” to trace out the “fascia” of culture, language, and values that make up the rich texture of the life of ordinary people.

Lenwood’s artistic repertoire includes a number of plays, exhibitions, documentary films, and public-facing community art projects that have been highlighted in public arts installations, site specific visual art, theaters, museums, schools, libraries, commemorative events, memorials, historic reenactments, and public rallies. He has been involved in award-winning television productions, and performances such as the Vou Dou Macbeth, the Creole Mass, Her Talking Drum, Sweet Saturday Night, Thirteen Lessons, Wheels and Butterflies, Jubilee Minstrels, and The Wake.

# LENWOOD SLOAN

“I never had a single concern about tomorrow. I am only concerned with ‘did I make something better for someone today’ If not I will start again tomorrow.”



His institutional footprint can be found among organizations within and beyond the United States. They include the African-American Diaspora Network, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, the Pennsylvania Capital Preservation Committee, the Arts Tourism Partnership of New Orleans, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the California Arts Council, Dallas Theater Center, Dillard University, the National Endowment of the Arts, San Francisco State University, and the University of Limerick. He currently serves as the Director of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism's

(IIPT), the Harrisburg Peace Promenade, and the Commonwealth Monument Project.

His work is a powerful testimony to how creative imagination and a tireless commitment to equity and inclusion can redress the injustices of the past and help nurture communities to health and wholeness. Lenwood Ottis Sloan remains a living legend and activist extraordinaire who has worked with his neighbors to create and curate a legacy of what he calls "cultural policy cookbook[s] about art in public places."

"When truths are continually challenged and expanded in a dynamic telling and retelling of the past, through diverse perspectives and voices, history can itself be a kind of dialogic and democratic process."



Over the past decade, students and educators at Messiah University have been privileged to collaborate with Lenwood Sloan on several projects involving the public arts, heritage tourism, and place-making. This has included the installation of a bronze memorial to commemorate the lives of notable African Americans and Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward on the grounds of the Pennsylvania State Capital.

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