

What's in a Name – Positive Black Images

By Editor · 04/20/2023

Meet Dexter R. Merritt Sr., the founder and CEO of [Positive Black Images](#), a fine art publishing and distribution company located in Gaithersburg, Maryland.



Dexter R. Merritt Sr.

After graduating from college in 1985, Mr. Merritt left Mississippi and settled in Dallas, Texas for eight years. As is the case with many graduates, he rented an apartment the first couple of years and subsequently purchased his first home a few years later. Upon doing so, he became intent on finding art that reminded him of the life he had left behind. He wanted pieces that reflected the nostalgia of the Mississippi Delta, and he wanted a collection that was representative of the African American experience. Additionally, he wanted to display art that could effectuate positive change.

Mr. Merritt visited several galleries in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. While he found several pieces that he liked, he also noticed a certain scarcity in what he was looking for and was subsequently able to find. As Mr. Merritt traveled from one gallery to another, he had the good fortune of meeting several talented artists. As he developed relationships with various artists, it became apparent that the perceived scarcity of the art he was seeking was not the end; it was the beginning. Mr. Merritt decided to be a part of the solution and work with local artists to help create the products he desired. As a consequence, in 1989 he founded Positive Black Images.

For 15 years, while working at large information technology companies during the day, he operated his part-time mail order business in the evenings and on the weekends. As the Positive Black Images business grew through the 1990's and early 2000s, Mr. Merritt continued to assume positions of increased responsibility in corporate America. In 2004, it became apparent that he could no longer traverse both worlds and maintain a healthy work life balance. As a consequence, he placed a strategic pause on the part-time business and committed himself to a full-time career in engineering, program management, and portfolio management until his retirement in 2020. Mr. Merritt stated, he was blessed and thankful to have celebrated 35 plus years of service in his profession.

Mr. Merritt believes that people in general are not limited to one calling. We all have multiple interests, and they can evolve over time. In that spirit, he transformed the prior mail order business to function as an eCommerce site. Their collection of fine art and gift accessories includes open and limited-edition prints, full color and black and white reproductions, a full line of greeting cards, and other accessories. Positive Black Images takes pride in offering its customers the finest in African American art. They are particularly proud to offer a collection that is representative of the African American experience. All of the art has a purpose, and it tells a story.

Success Comes In Cans – I Can, You Can, We Can



Photo Credit: Positive Black Images. Left to right: I Can by Alix Beaujour, You Can by Arthello Beck Jr., We Can by Arthello Beck Jr.

The 1st series they published was "Success Comes In Cans – I Can, You Can, We Can". "I Can" by Alix Beaujour illustrates a young man as he studies by the light from a kerosene lamp with a ray of brightness illuminating one of his eyes. A black and white picture of Frederick Douglas can be seen in the background because during that time, there were no color photographs. "I Can" creatively communicates Mr. Merritt's father's determination and passion for education, dating back to his formative years. To truly appreciate his passion for education, you must first understand his philosophy of education. Dr. Merritt said, "Be it formal or informal, education is essential for one's own survival and the survival of others. Openness and ambiguity encourage thinking; likewise, specificity limits thinking. Education comes in two forms. One form of education enables us to earn a living; the other enables us to live. It is paramount to realizing one's full potential." It was only fitting that "I Can" be the 1st painting in the "Success Comes In Cans" series.

"You Can" by Arthello Beck Jr. illustrates a schoolteacher as she inspires the younger generation to realize their full potential. This painting creatively communicates Mr. Merritt's mother's passion for educating others as a young teacher. To truly appreciate her passion and commitment to her students, you must first understand Mrs. Merritt's commitment to her family and the communities she served. Mr. Merritt said that nurturing and educating others came naturally to his mother. It was only fitting that "You Can" be the 2nd painting in the "Success Comes In Cans" series.

"We Can" by Arthello Beck Jr. illustrates a family giving thanks before dinner. The Success Comes In Cans series illustrates that success in part can be achieved through educating yourself, taking the time to educate and mentor others, and family unity. It was only fitting that "We Can" be the 3rd painting in the "Success Comes In Cans" series.

Learn more about the company and browse their collection of fine art products by visiting www.positiveblackimagesfineart.com.

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