

In this “post-racial” age of the United States of America, we would like to believe that there exists equal opportunity for all in employment, housing, public services, education and other core institutions upon which this great melting pot is founded. However, some believe equal opportunities for people of color do not exist in horror, science fiction, and fantasy films, and in GK, the hobby that has such films as its life’s blood. This excerpt of **HMM** exposes us to a new and active group of young hobbyists, a youth movement that most GK artists have never seen and have probably never even thought about. **HMM**’s goal is to make our hobby as rewarding, as enlightening, and as enjoyable an experience for all GK artists regardless of race, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, politics, family status, income level or intellect.

# The Hardcore Modeler’s Manual™: Volume One

## Chapter 21: BROS (Black Resin Owners Society) pp. 180-184



Sylvester Johnson

*HMM* correspondent, Sylvester (“Sly”) Johnson, recently spent 2 years learning about a growing segment of the GK hobby, Black or African American GK artists. His interview with Malcolm Xavier-Hollander, the 18 year old founder of the Black Resin Owners Society (BROS), revealed a vital and diverse club of modelers spread out across the United States, an enthusiastic group of GK artists looking to contribute to and to benefit from this great and accepting hobby of ours.

Sylvester sat down with Malcolm, a freshman at Chicago’s Columbia University where he is studying screen-writing and directing, to discuss the current state of the hobby and issues BROS seeks to address on behalf of Black GK artists. In this revealing, and at times contentious, 2011 interview, these two Black men from different generations discussed some of the issues of particular interest to Black modelers. This is an excerpt of his in-depth interview with the future film-maker and GK mover and shaker.

**Sylvester:** Malcolm, I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule for this interview. Please tell me about BROS.

**Malcolm:** BROS (also called “The Brotherhood”) is the largest African American modelers’ club in the U.S. with our membership spread out across the country. The club was chartered in 2008. We **doubled** our membership in 2009 and in 2010 we saw our club membership swell by another 33%.

**Sylvester:** That sounds impressive but what is your organizational structure and just how many members does BROS have?

**Malcolm:** Well, I live in Chicago and am the founder and President. George Stephenson of Minnesota was elected Treasurer when he joined in 2009 and Drew Roberts of Louisville, Kentucky was elected Club Security Officer when his membership application was accepted in 2010.



Brotherhood founder Malcolm Xavier-Hollander

**Sylvester:** So BROS has only three members?

**Malcolm:** That’s right. That is about 75% of the African Americans in this hobby and that’s pretty good. The fourth guy (my 15 year old brother) can’t afford the dues yet.

**Sylvester:** So what does The Brotherhood hope to accomplish?

**Malcolm:** Our primary goal is to increase the presence, visibility and coverage of kits that are based upon, or inspired by, African American characters or characters portrayed by African Americans, e.g., Levar Burton in *Star Trek*; William Marshall in *Blacula*; Kevin Peter Hall in *Predator*; Lon Chaney, Sr. and Charles Laughton in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

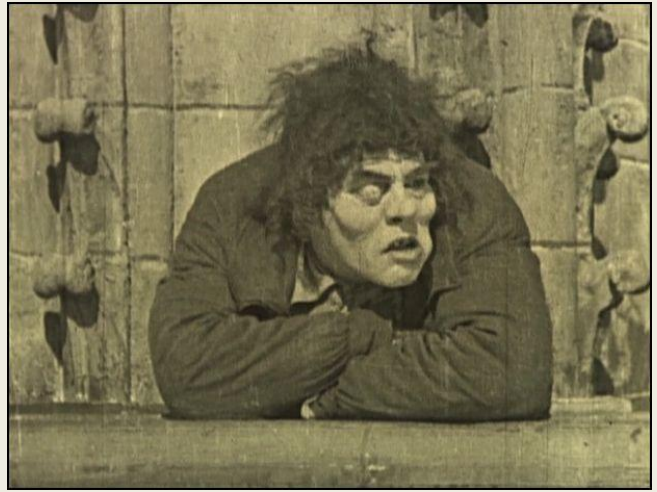


**Sylvester:** Excuse me, Malcolm but, are you saying that Lon Chaney, Sr. and Charles Laughton were Black men?

**Malcolm:** I prefer the term "African American", if you don't mind, or "of African descent".

**Sylvester:** My apologies, Malcolm. I'm old school and prefer "Black", but I understand we don't all agree on that. So, are you suggesting they were of African descent?

**Malcolm:** I can't say with certainty. Chaney and Laughton played the role with such "soul" that it wouldn't surprise me. But take a look at Quasimodo's hair. That brother was in serious need of an Afro pick. The fact is, Quasimodo was of African descent.



Lon Chaney, Sr. as Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923)

**Sylvester:** I think I have to disagree with you on that, Malcolm. Victor Hugo's novel was set in France; and Quasimodo was a French infant abandoned at birth and raised by the Catholic Church.

**Malcolm:** Let me ask you something. Did Victor Hugo ever say who the baby's mother was or who the father was?

**Sylvester:** Well, not that I recall. But, there was nothing to indicate that he was Black...I mean, of African descent.

**Malcolm:** Now I have to disagree with you. All of the evidence points to that baby being of African descent. Why do you think Quasimodo's mother abandoned him at the church when he was a baby?

**Sylvester:** She was ashamed because he was so deformed at birth!!!! Or because she knew he'd be an outcast!!!!

**Malcolm:** Wrong! It's because the baby was Black! Just imagine a cute little French girl getting pregnant by a person of African descent. What would her mother and father and her community have said?

**Sylvester:** I think you are making some assumptions that are not at all supported by Hugo's novel or the movie versions of the story. What other evidence is there to support that conclusion?

**Malcolm:** In our own American history, how were slaves treated? They were forced to work menial jobs, paid nothing, mistreated and even whipped. Isn't that exactly what happened to Quasimodo? Would they have done that to him if he had not been a brother?

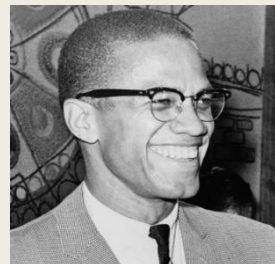


**Sylvester:** But he had red hair!!

**Malcolm:** So did Malcolm X!!

**Sylvester:** ...and white skin!!!

**Malcolm:** So did Michael Jackson!!!



Malcolm X



Michael Jackson

**Sylvester:** Hmmm! Good points! So, we were discussing your organization's goals.

**Malcolm:** Yes, our second goal is to lobby the movie industry to produce science-fiction and horror films with African American characters that survive at the end of the film, unlike William Marshall in *Blacula*, Louis Gossett, Jr. in *Enemy Mine*, Denzel Washington in *The Book of Eli*, and Natalie Portman in *Black Swan*.

**Sylvester: Natalie Portman? Black Swan?**

**Malcolm:** She's the only sister other than Halle Berry to win an Oscar for Best Actress.

**Sylvester: Malcolm, I'm pretty sure Natalie Portman is white!**

**Malcolm:** That's what Hollywood wants people to think. But how many white girls do you know named Natalie? Her grandfather was a Pullman Porter in the 1940s (an all-Black occupation in those days). To honor him and in order to get dignified roles in films, she changed her name from Watkins to "Portman", a combination of Pullman and Porter. And, the role of the "black swan" was written for an African American dancer. That's why she dies at the end of the film...because she's Black!!! Name a horror or sci-fi movie where a significant African American character lives at the end.



**Sylvester: In John Carpenter's The Thing, Keith David's character, "Childs", lives at the end.**

**Malcolm:** Are you kidding me? Do you think a brother in Antarctica with no heat has a chance to survive? I've seen brothers freeze to death during winters in Chicago! We aren't made for cold weather! If you hear a news story about some fisherman falling through the ice and dying, it had to be a white guy; brothers aren't about to be sitting on a frozen lake and certainly not in Antarctica and with a hostile alien organism!!!

**Keith David as Childs in John Carpenter's The Thing (1982)**

**Sylvester: Those are all very good points. So tell me, what possible reason could Hollywood have for setting up these scenarios that have African American characters dying at the end of the film?**

**Malcolm:** "To keep the Black man down" by limiting employment opportunities for African American actors.

**Sylvester: How does that limit employment opportunities when African American actors are in those films?**

**Malcolm:** If a brother or sister is dead at the end of the first film, how can he or she be in the sequel?

**Sylvester: Well, how about William Marshall in Blacula? He died in the original film and still had a sequel, Scream, Blacula, Scream!**



**William Marshall as Blacula**



**Tony Todd as Candy Man**

**Malcolm:** Maybe you haven't noticed but racism has come a long way since the 1970s. What dead African American character has gotten a sequel in the last 25 years? Name one!

**Sylvester: Candy Man! Candy Man! Candy Man!**

**Malcolm:** Well, you got me on that one. I have to admit, for an old school brother, you know your horror movies.

**Sylvester: Thanks. Now tell me about your organization's third goal.**

**Malcolm:** ...to increase the presence of African American subjects in GK magazines and to increase the presence of African American celebrities at GK conventions.

**Sylvester: So, what is The Brotherhood's issue with the magazines and conventions?**

**Malcolm:** Have you ever seen an African American subject on the cover of *Amazing Figure Modeler* or *Kitbuilders* magazines?

**Sylvester:** Well, by your reasoning, wouldn't the Predator be an African American subject since he was played by Kevin Peter Hall, an African American actor, in the first two films? And think about all the magazine covers that feature Predators and how many articles about building Predators have been published in those magazines.

**Malcolm:** OK, you got me on that one, too. But how many African American celebrities have appeared at the various GK conventions? None!

**Sylvester:** OK, Malcolm. You got ME on that one. But what can The Brotherhood do about that?



Halle Berry at JerseyFest?

**Malcolm:** BROS will call for its membership to boycott the WonderFest convention in Louisville, Kentucky and the JerseyFest convention in Newark until those conventions bring in Halle Berry or Natalie Portman as a guest. We'd even settle for Vanessa Williams; I have an old magazine cover I'd like her to autograph for my dad.

We will also call on our entire membership to boycott *Amazing Figure Modeler* magazine until they feature an African American subject on their cover, a subject *other than* Predator.

**Sylvester:** Do you think such a move will be endorsed by BROS "membership"?

**Malcolm:** I am confident that we can get at least 2/3 of The Brotherhood mobilized to support this boycott.

**Sylvester:** Tell you what, if you can get Halle Berry to WonderFest or JerseyFest, you'll have brothers and sisters, and white folks, too, from all over the planet joining The Brotherhood.

**Malcolm:** If you are into garage kits, you qualify to join The Brotherhood! We don't care what you look like. We just need you to start paying your dues.

The opinions expressed above do not necessarily reflect those of *The Hardcore Modeler's Manual™* or Black Heart Enterprises. We hope this discussion will help shed some intelligent light on this sensitive and important garage kit issue.

Check back next month for another exclusive excerpt from Lacey Mautler's *The Hardcore Modeler's Manual™: Volume One*.