

# Study of Black wine entrepreneurs now has a part two

**By Ellen Bhang**  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

The latest installment of a groundbreaking study about Black wine entrepreneurs shines a light on progress made — and promises yet to be realized — toward fostering a more inclusive wine industry.

“This has become a passion for me,” says the report’s author, Monique Bell, PhD, commenting on the recent publication of “Terroir Noir: 2023 Study of Black Wine Entrepreneurs” available at [www.moniquebell.com/](http://www.moniquebell.com/). The professor of business and marketing at California State University, Fresno is delighted that the wine world is paying attention. This summer, Bell presented her findings at the 10th International Symposium of the Institute of Masters of Wine in Wiesbaden, Germany, one of several speaking engagements she has undertaken since launching the project.

The 2023 report follows Bell’s inaugural 2020 research exploring the motivations and experiences of Black wine business owners as they navigate a largely white industry. Black-owned wineries account for 1 percent or less of all US wineries, according to a 2021 study; and until Bell undertook her research, Black wine entrepreneurs were nowhere to be found in the academic literature. Amid the backdrop of a pandemic and a resurgent Black Lives Matter movement, the researcher conducted the first trade analysis of its kind focused on this small but consequential population of professionals — a demographic that is already reaching a diverse audience of new wine consumers.

More than 100 respondents participated in the 2020 effort, with 78 completing the entire survey in 2023. Nearly half of respondents produce wine, while the balance includes marketers,



ELLEN BHANG FOR THE GLOBE

**Black-owned wine brands to help you celebrate the holiday season.**

sommeliers, retailers, wine writers, and event organizers, all of whom own wine-centric businesses. Most respondents — nearly 80 percent of whom identify as female — are based in the United States, while some reside internationally. Most operate self- or family-funded businesses, and of that subset, many are intent on leaving a legacy for the next generation.

Both reports provide moment-in-time snapshots of an important subset of BIPOC professionals, as well as deepen understanding about experiences of bias and racism. “Many times, unless you are part of an underrepresented group or have had experiences of being that outsider or other, it may be challenging for you to believe that some of these injustices are actually occurring,” Bell explains. “So it’s important to know first, ‘Where do we stand? What’s the current state of affairs?’ so that we can set goals for where we want to be — and also to take it from the abstract and make it concrete for

people who may not have had these experiences.”

The 2023 report reveals that limited capital remains the number one barrier to Black wine entrepreneurs’ success, followed by obstacles related to navigating distribution channels necessary to get products to market. Both challenges were also cited as top concerns in 2020.

Notably, the latest report sheds light on respondents’ perceptions of diversity and equity commitments made in the wake of 2020’s social justice protests. Have wine corporations, financial lenders, and foundations fulfilled their pledges to make the industry more accessible to BIPOC professionals? One respondent assessed those promises as “performative at best, keeping capital, distribution, and retail opportunities with the largest corporations.”

While more than half of respondents said they benefited from recent diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, more is required to advance systemic change. Wine industry sectors, for example, should dust off their strategic plans and continue to track whether they are making progress toward pledged goals. Wine enthusiasts can support and participate in grassroots mentorship and educational opportunities, like those launched by Urban Grape and Wine Unify. Finally, consumers can ask their local retailers to stock Black-owned brands, purchase them, and enjoy them regularly.

“Each of us can take our own piece of the puzzle and make a difference hyperlocally,” Bell says. “You can get in wherever your expertise or passion is, and make change — step by step, a piece at a time.”

Making change has never been so delicious. Here are two of my favorites — just in time for Thanksgiving and a bright holiday season.

**McBride Sisters Collection, Sparkling Brut Rosé** This charming sparkler is produced by entrepreneurial sisters Robin McBride and Andréa McBride John who have built the United States’ largest Black-owned wine company. Crafted from New Zealand Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and a splash of Merlot, this bubbly pink is a charmer, offering pleasing effervescence, bright acidity, and flavors of strawberry

and Meyer lemon. *12.5 percent ABV. Low-\$20s. Distributed by Martignetti Companies, Carolina Wine & Spirits. Available at Star Market, Belmont; Marty’s Fine Wines, Newton; Urban Grape, Boston South End.*

**Maison Noir Wines, “O.P.P.” (Other People’s Pinot) 2021** Year after year, award-winning sommelier-turned-winemaker André Hueston Mack turns out

this silky Oregon pinot noir, a winsome package of cherries, berries, and forest-floor leafiness with a hint of oak. *13.5 percent ABV. Mid-\$20s. Distributed by Burlington Wine & Spirits, Burlington; Triangle Point Market, Dorchester; Charlestown Liquors, Boston.*

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## Schreiber a whiskey pitchman

►SCHREIBER  
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**As an actor who’s played a diverse collection of roles, I’m wondering if you had a preconceived notion of a whiskey pitchman, and how you think you’re doing at it.**

It makes me self-conscious. To be honest, even the BlueCheck work makes me self-conscious. The idea that my celebrity can do something beyond get me work in the entertainment industry has actually been kind of a comforting thought. It’s been really nice. On a personal note, just to be able to show my kids what’s happening in Ukraine, and to give them a sense of perspective, and what it means to have some compassion and have some sense of perspective on the world. And we can do our part.

**I’d love to chat more about the whiskey as well, but can you give me a little background on how you got involved with BlueCheck Ukraine?**

I think the story that a lot of people tend to go to is that I have Ukrainian ancestry on my mother’s side, my mother’s paternal grandparents are both from Odessa, my grandfather as well. But that really wasn’t it. For me, it was more actually doing eight years of [“Ray Donovan”] and sitting on the couch with my kids and watching this war unfold and seeing guys who look like teachers, you know, not too dissimilar from me, sort of hugging their wives and children and getting on buses to be deployed in a ground war, which is something that in our time is just unthinkable. And also understanding a larger context of [Vladimir] Putin’s ambitions in Ukraine and for that matter, many regions in Eastern Europe, it’s something that affects us profoundly as Americans. And I think we’re so mired in our own issues here, and we’re so polarized that we don’t realize how important this is. And it’s something that, politics aside, it just seemed horrific that parents and children and husbands and wives were being separated. And the odds seemed completely unfair at that time. Of course, the Ukrainians have proved this wrong over the past year and



“The warmth of it has always been really powerful for me. In our blend, I think there’s a kind of caramel, buttercream thing that I just love.”

LIEV SCHREIBER, on *Sláinte Irish whiskey*

few months. They’re incredibly strong, incredibly resilient, and I actually have no doubt that they’re gonna win. I think it’s just really a question at this point of: at what cost?

**Can you talk me through what work specifically BlueCheck Ukraine is doing, and where donations are going?**

The big idea behind BlueCheck is that we believe in localization of aid. In other words, if a rocket hits your house, nine times out of 10 it’s your neighbor who’s gonna rush over and pull you out of your house and give you a place to stay. Not to cannibalize the large international NGOs, but the reality for them is because they have so much overhead, and often because of insurance reasons aren’t even able to operate in country, they end up contracting the same people that we go directly to. So when those people get a portion of your money, they get it often for a very long kind of holding period. What BlueCheck does is it gets the

money directly to the local NGOs on the ground in Ukraine who are doing the work. And we do it very, very quickly.

**If I can shift us back to whiskey for a moment, do you have any formative drinking memories, whiskey or otherwise?**

Well the big story is, I didn’t grow up with my father. I grew up with a single mother, and my father came back into the picture in my life when I was 19, and I was in college, and he came to visit me at college and he brought a bottle of Irish whiskey. And the two of us proceeded to drink about two-thirds of the whiskey. And that was kind of a very emotional night and formative experience, both for me as a son, as a father, and as a whiskey drinker. And that association never left me. It’s just when I smell it, or I taste it, it has that warmth, it has those memories. And it has that association with family and, oddly enough, kind of sorrow, which my father was a very poetic kind of guy, so I have a feeling that was sort of intentional. He wanted to share that bottle with me and talk about how hard it was for him that he hadn’t been in my life. That’s the kind of thing that it’s hard to shake.

I started out as a theater actor and I had this routine where before I would go on stage — because I had this relationship with my grandfather, I was very close to my grandfather. After my grandfather passed away, I had this routine in my warmup where I would have just a tiny

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## 2024 Boston Wine Competition Winner Announcement

It is with great pleasure to announce the winners of the 2nd Annual Boston Wine Competition. The competition showcases the winemaker’s ability to balance art and science, while making sound, quality wines that consumers will love. **Congratulations!**

### BEST IN SHOW

**Best in Show Red**  
Carol Shelton Wines Rocky Reserve Zinfandel 2019, Dry Creek Valley, CA

**Best in Show White**  
Gloria Ferrer Carneros Cuvée 2013, Carneros, Sonoma, CA

### BEST IN CLASS

- Best in Class Sparkling**  
Gloria Ferrer Carneros Cuvée 2013, Carneros, Sonoma, CA
- Best in Class Pinot Gris/Grigio**  
King Estate Pinot Gris 2022, Willamette Valley, OR
- Best in Class Sauvignon Blanc**  
Paddy Borthwick Sauvignon Blanc 2023, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Best in Class Riesling**  
Keuka Spring Vineyards Humphreys Vineyard Riesling 2022, Finger Lakes, NY
- Best in Class Albarino**  
Brecon Estate True Acacia Head Albariño 2022, Central Coast, CA
- Best in Class White Blends**  
Carol Shelton Wines Coquille Blanc 2021, Paso Robles, CA
- Best in Class Moscato**  
Quady Winery Electra Rose Moscato 2022, California
- Best in Class Chardonnay**  
Carneros Wine Company Fleur de California Chardonnay 2021, Carneros, CA
- Best in Class Rosé**  
Wood Family Vineyards “Pink Pearl” Rosé Grenache 2022, Livermore Valley, CA
- Best in Class Pinot Noir**  
Paddy Borthwick Left Hand Pinot Noir 2021, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Best in Class Merlot**  
Merriam Vineyards Windacre Vineyard Merlot 2019, Russian River Valley, CA
- Best in Class Cabernet Sauvignon**  
Meyer Family Cellars Bonny’s Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2019, Oakville, CA
- Best in Class Cabernet Franc**  
Lagana Cellars Walla Walla Valley Cabernet Franc 2019, WA
- Best in Class Nebbiolo**  
VJB Cellars Nebbiolo 2019, Sonoma Valley, CA
- Best in Class Zinfandel**  
Carol Shelton Wines Rocky Reserve Zinfandel 2019, Dry Creek Valley, CA
- Best in Class Malbec**  
MyStory Bourbon Barrel aged Malbec 2019, Paso Robles, CA
- Best in Class Tempranillo**  
Paul O’Brien Winery Tempranillo Umpqua Valley 2018, Oregon
- Best in Class Tannat**  
LaBelle Winery Tannat 2021, CA
- Best in Class Red Blend**  
Brecon Estate Feral Underclass Red Blend 2021, Paso Robles, Adelaida, CA
- Best in Class Petit Verdot**  
Muse Vineyards Petit Verdot 2020, Shenandoah Valley, VA
- Best in Class Syrah/Shiraz**  
Baldassari Wines Syrah 2019, Bennett Valley, CA
- Best in Class Bordeaux Blend**  
Wellington Cellars II Patrone Bordeaux Blend 2020, Sonoma Valley, CA
- Best in Class Petite Sirah**  
Meyer Family Cellars Summerwind Vineyard Petite Sirah 2019, Yorkville Highlands, CA

### PLATINUM

- Baldassari Wines Syrah 2019, Bennett Valley, CA
- Brecon Estate Feral Underclass Red Blend 2021, Paso Robles, Adelaida, CA
- Brecon Estate Malbec 2021, Paso Robles, Adelaida, CA
- Brecon Estate Reserve Petite Sirah 2021, Paso Robles, Adelaida, CA
- Brecon Estate True Acacia Head Albariño 2022, Central Coast, CA
- Carol Shelton Wines Coquille Blanc 2021, Paso Robles, CA
- Carol Shelton Wines Coquille Rouge 2020, Central Coast, CA
- Carol Shelton Wines Rocky Reserve Zinfandel 2019, Dry Creek Valley, CA
- Gloria Ferrer Carneros Cuvée 2013, Carneros, Sonoma, CA
- Gloria Ferrer Royal Cuvée 2015, Carneros, Sonoma, CA
- Gloria Ferrer Sonoma Brut NV, Carneros, Sonoma, CA
- Iris Vineyards Arete Pinot Noir 2021, Willamette Valley, OR
- Keuka Spring Vineyards Dry Riesling 2022, Finger Lakes, NY
- Keuka Spring Vineyards Humphreys Vineyard Riesling 2022, Finger Lakes, NY
- Keuka Spring Vineyards Saperavi 2021, Finger Lakes, NY
- King Estate Brut Cuvée 2018, Willamette Valley, OR
- King Estate Pinot Gris 2022, Willamette Valley, OR
- LaBelle Winery Tannat 2021, CA
- Lagana Cellars Walla Walla Valley Cabernet Franc 2019, WA
- Merriam Vineyards Diana’s Vineyard Pinot Noir 2020, Russian River Valley, CA
- Merriam Vineyards Lower Pond Vineyard Malbec, 2020, Alexander Valley, CA
- Merriam Vineyards Russian River Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2020, Russian River Valley, CA
- Merriam Vineyards SNED Red Blend 2021, Russian River Valley, CA
- Merriam Vineyards Windacre Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2019, Russian River Valley, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars Bonny’s Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2018, Oakville, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars Bonny’s Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2019, Oakville, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars Fluffy Billows Cabernet Sauvignon 2021, Oakville, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars Le Bon Bon Cabernet Sauvignon 2019, Oakville, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars Monument Tree Pinot Noir 2021, Anderson Valley, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars Summerwind Vineyard Petite Sirah 2019, Yorkville Highlands, CA
- Muse Vineyards Cabernet Franc 2016, Shenandoah Valley, VA
- Muse Vineyards Petit Verdot 2020, Shenandoah Valley, VA
- MyStory Bourbon Barrel aged Malbec 2019, Paso Robles, CA
- Paddy Borthwick Left Hand Pinot Noir 2021, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Paddy Borthwick Paper Road Pinot Noir 2022, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Paddy Borthwick Pinot Gris 2023, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Paddy Borthwick Pinot Noir 2021, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Paddy Borthwick Right Hand Pinot Noir 2021, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Paddy Borthwick Sauvignon Blanc 2023, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Paul O’Brien Winery Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2021, Oregon
- Paul O’Brien Winery Tempranillo Umpqua Valley 2018, Oregon
- St. Eva Hill Vineyard Zinfandel 2019, Paso Robles, CA
- VJB Cellars Estate Aglianico 2019, Sonoma Valley, CA
- VJB Cellars Nebbiolo 2019, Sonoma Valley, CA
- Wellington Cellars II Patrone Bordeaux Blend 2020, Sonoma Valley, CA

### GOLD

- Barefoot Cellars Sauvignon Blanc NV, CA
- Carneros Wine Company Fleur de California Chardonnay 2021, Carneros, CA
- Carol Shelton Wines Wild Thing Zinfandel 2020, Mendocino County, CA
- Gloria Ferrer Blanc de Blancs Chardonnay NV, Carneros, Sonoma, CA
- Gloria Ferrer Blanc de Noirs Rosé NV, Carneros, Sonoma, CA
- Iris Vineyards House Call Red Blend 2021, OR
- Iris Vineyards Pinot Gris 2022, Willamette Valley, OR
- Iris Vineyards Pinot Noir 2021, Willamette Valley, OR
- Keuka Spring Vineyards Apret Vignoles 2021, Finger Lakes, NY
- Keuka Spring Vineyards Classic Riesling 2022, Finger Lakes, NY
- Keuka Spring Vineyards Crooked Lake Red 2022, Finger Lakes, NY
- Keuka Spring Vineyards Semi-Sweet Riesling 2021, Finger Lakes, NY
- LaBelle Winery Amherst Vineyard 10th Anniversary Red Blend 2020, NH
- LaBelle Winery Petit Verdot 2020, WA
- LaBelle Winery Seyval Blanc 2021, NY
- LaBelle Winery Syrah 2021, WA
- Merriam Vineyards Windacre Vineyard Merlot 2019, Russian River Valley, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars High Ground Syrah 2013, Yorkville Highlands, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars High Ground Syrah 2019, Yorkville Highlands, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars Old Chatham Ranch Sauvignon Blanc 2022, Yorkville Highlands, CA
- Meyer Family Cellars Spitfire Cabernet Sauvignon 2021, Oakville, CA
- Muse Vineyards Chardonnay 2021, Shenandoah Valley, VA
- Muse Vineyards Gio Red 2019, Shenandoah Valley, VA
- MyStory Red Blend #3 2020, Paso Robles, CA
- Native Flora PMS Red Blend 2018, Dundee Hills, OR
- Paddy Borthwick Paper Road Pinot Noir 2022, Gladstone, Wairarapa, NZ
- Paul O’Brien Winery Oregon Territory Pinot Gris 2022, OR
- Paul O’Brien Winery Oregon Territory Pinot Noir 2021, OR
- Paul O’Brien Winery Oregon Territory Pinot Noir 2021, OR
- Paul O’Brien Winery Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2021, OR
- Quady Winery Electra Rose Moscato 2022, CA
- Quinta das Arcas Arca Nova Vinho Verde Alvarinho 2022, Portugal
- Quinta das Arcas Herdade Penedo Gordo Alentejo DOC Tinto 2021, Portugal
- St. Eva Hill Vineyard BioFusion Red 2019, Paso Robles, CA
- Theopolis Vineyards Cortada Alta Vineyard Pinot Noir 2022, Santa Lucia Highlands, CA
- Theopolis Vineyards Estate Grown Petite Sirah 2021, Yorkville Highlands, CA
- Theopolis Vineyards Pinot Noir 2022, Yorkville Highlands, CA
- Wellington Cellars Estate Zinfandel – 1924 2019, Sonoma Valley, CA
- Whitehaven Sauvignon Blanc 2022, Marlborough, NZ
- Wood Family Vineyards “Big Wood Zin” 2021, Livermore Valley, CA
- Wood Family Vineyards “Muy Bueno” Zinfandel 2021, Livermore Valley, CA
- Wood Family Vineyards “Pink Pearl” Rosé Grenache 2022, Livermore Valley, CA
- Wood Family Vineyards Woody’s Cab Cabernet Sauvignon 2021, Livermore Valley, CA
- Wood Family Vineyards Clone 30 Cabernet Sauvignon 2019, Livermore Valley, CA

View The Boston Wine Competition’s complete list of winners at [BostonWineComp.com](http://BostonWineComp.com)