

THE HOME FRONT

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A Modern Sunday Salon

Guests debate Kanye over cosmos at a renovated Cambridge Victorian

BY NANCY KEATES

Cambridge, Mass. **EVERY SUNDAY NIGHT**, when Henry Louis Gates Jr. arrives at the home of friends Marcylyna Morgan and Lawrence Bobo, he knows to expect two things: heated discussions and a chilled cosmopolitan.

"As soon as my foot is in the door, Larry starts making my cosmo," said Mr. Gates, director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard. He said the "Larry and Marcy salon" is "warm, open, inviting, generous, comforting and constant, like them."

In 2008, Ms. Morgan, a 50-year-old Harvard professor who founded and directs Harvard's hip-hop archive, and Mr. Bobo, the 52-year-old acting chairman of Harvard's African and African American Studies department, finished a year-long, extensive renovation that married the traditional exterior and pine floors of an early 1900s Victorian with a more modern interior. The back of the six-bedroom house was opened, a back



Clockwise from top left: Harvard professors Lawrence Bobo and Marcylyna Morgan, the living room, the exterior, Ms. Morgan's office; the mahogany-lined kitchen, below.

stairway and walls removed to create a large master-bedroom suite and a sunny, wide-open first floor with floor-to-ceiling glass windows as well as doors leading to a large backyard.

Bright colors and a mix of modern and traditional furnishings emphasize the mix of new and old: purple leather Ligne Roset rocking chairs, turquoise upholstered dining chairs, Tiffany lamps, red and blue Oriental carpets. The walls are painted in colors with names like "Yellow Mari-gold," "Red Rock" and "Oregon." "It really reflects their personalities. The way the rooms flow into each other was generated by what I saw in them," said the project's Cambridge-based architect, Maryann Thompson.

Ms. Morgan said her goal with her home was to create a sense of community. Every week she stages Sunday Suppers, inviting friends like chef Jody Adams and colleagues at Harvard to butt heads over a meal usually of traditional American food. One recent discussion centered on

Kanye West's latest album—some called him immature, though Ms. Morgan defends hip-hop as a way young people can assert their roots, concerns and anxieties. Another non-stop subject of conversation at recent dinners has been about whether the country is entering a "post-racial" period—the subject of the book Mr. Bobo is currently writing.

"We talk about very serious business over good wine, good food and with lots of humor," Ms. Morgan said.

In a renovated attic on the third floor, Ms. Morgan keeps her collection of several hundred hip-hop, jazz, R&B and classical music CDs—she said she purchases CDs because it supports the music industry. Mr. Bobo works in an office in what was the home's master bedroom. His large wooden desk is covered and surrounded by a collection of antique Montblanc pens, West African Bobo masks (he collects them because they share his name) and odd-looking sculptures of goats and rams in clothing by artist Sergio

Bustamante.

Throughout the house, black and white photos of African American men by Kwaku Alston hang next to large abstract paintings by Philadelphia artist and friend Murray Desser that look like fields of flowers and sun-reflected oceans. Colorful, race-related collages by Suesan Stovall with phrases like "I am not a mule" and "Get your hair did" are in almost every room.

Ms. Morgan and Mr. Bobo met in 1990 when they were both at the University of California Los Angeles; they married four years later and moved to Boston to take positions at Harvard, living in a condo in the Back Bay. In 2004, then-Harvard President Larry Summers vetoed a unanimous vote by the African and African American Studies Department to offer Ms. Morgan tenure. The couple decamped for Stanford University and a ranch house in Palo Alto.

When Harvard offered them both tenured positions in 2007, the couple decided to return, but they didn't want to go back to a condo. Mr. Bobo insisted they find a house that was move-in ready. Instead they bought their current house, which cost \$2.2 million and needed renovating. The couple said the renovation cost several hundred thousand dollars more.

"The things you do for love," said Mr. Bobo. Down the street, a 4,500-square-foot five-bedroom home is on the market for \$2.8 million.

The morning of the Super Bowl, a few days after a blizzard, the icy streets were made even narrower by high piles of snow. Nevertheless, Ms. Morgan was up at 6 a.m. preparing what she called an "intentionally unhealthy" meal: The fried chicken was marinating on the black granite kitchen countertops, the potato salad was waiting in the mahogany-paneled fridge and the cocktail bar, with its six silver shakers, was fully stocked.

"We want to be ready for Skip," joked Mr. Bobo, referring to Mr. Gates by his nickname.

