



Àṣà ni Agbára - “Culture is Power”
27th ANNUAL COMMUNITY CONCERT



SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 2024
WARE CENTER – MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY
42 NORTH PRINCE STREET, LANCASTER, PA

PLEASE DO NOT USE FLASH CAMERAS OR VIDEO DURING THE PERFORMANCE

Production Staff

Amaya Mann-Pereira – Choreographer & Costume Assistant

AShanti Jenkins - Instructor / Choreographer

Ayana Mann-Pereira - Children's Class Assistant

Dennis Johnson - Stage Manager

DJ Gerri McCritty –House DJ

Faye Mariee Jenkins - House Manager

Florance Kochenberger - Administrative Assistant

Katie Beth Wubbels – Instructor / Choreographer

Olori Osunremi “dba” Cathy Smith-Sonko – Costumes

Shashanah Payne – Children's Class Instructor

Shelia Robinson – Costumes

Towahana Rhim - Mistress of Ceremony

Àṣà ni Agbára - “Culture is Power”

This event evolved from genuine community and global collaborations. It highlights the collective efforts of Imani’s family of artists and our special guests. Together we uphold the critical importance of providing cultural experiences that encourage self-awareness and development to offer this culturally empowering space. We understand that culturally empowering spaces provide safe places for marginalized people to assemble. These spaces remain critical to the development and successes of those who identify as being of Black/African decent and the communities they serve (Hilliard, 2016).

Our presentations, framed by African-centered knowledge, Black feminist theoretical concepts, and the Ifa/Orisa tradition, harnesses our collective memories and shared experiences. Collective memory reinforces a sense of identity, instills a moral code, and preserves the knowledge and experiences of the past (Aberuagba, 2023; Karade, 1994). Further, acts of memory and remembering are integral to cultural experiences for females who identify as being of Black/African descent (Dillard, 2002; Hucks, 2014). Understood, the Ifa/Orisa tradition upholds that the stories, teachings, and traditions passed down through generations serve to connect the living with their ancestors and the broader community. Journey with us, in collective remembrance, to celebrate Juneteenth 2024, in honor of the heroic “Freedom Fighters”, past and present.

Message From our Director

As Black females are often seen as a marginalized population in the U.S. (Andersen & Collins, 2015; Berry & Gross, 2020), we must not underscore the impacts of trauma, associated with enslavement, subsequent racial inequality, and patriarchal oppression. Studies show that survivors of traumatic events may have effects in subsequent generations. Karade (2024) informs that “trauma keeps us from remembering.” Dillard (2002) reinforced that memory can be thought of as a thing, person, or event that brings to mind and heart an experience and with it, not only the ability to remember, but also put back together (p. 3).

Equally, I ask that you focus on the POWER of collective acts of memory, relied on to create this cultural experience. Let us recall the prowess of Black feminine energies of the Devine Cosmos, and our Ancestors, embedded in our DNA. Upheld in varying accounts of mankind’s existence, African and Black/African females remain on the forefront of positive change. It is our DNA that continues to nurture family, promote positive community change, while standing up against oppression, marginalization, and other social injustices.

Our Family of Artists

Led by Founding Director, Iya Dr. Osundara Ayotunde Oladunjoye “dba” Sonya Mann-McFarlane, tonight’s concert features choreographed works by: Amaya Mann-Pereira, AShanti Jenkins, Chinua McFarlane, Katie Wubbels, and Shashanah Payne.



Guest Artists:

Abena Moya

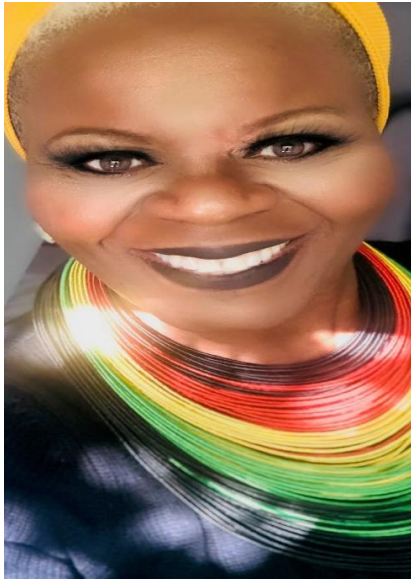


Hello, my name is Abena! I am dancer and this is a gift that was given to me since birth. This gift was revealed at an incredibly youthful age and as I grow, I continue to use it to connect with others, to entertain, educate, and heal. I cherish my gift so much, and have decided to pursue studies in Massage Therapy to learn more about the brilliant body we embody and hope to remind others of the wisdom and brilliance of their body and soul. I have performed for Speak to My Soul, Jordan's River project film, Imani Edu-Tainers African Dance Company, and hope for many more dance opportunities to come.

Daniela Gonzalez



Raquel Richardson



Raquel Farmer-Richardson, a native of New York City in the borough of Brooklyn has graced the local theater scene for nearly four decades! Raquel's humble beginnings at the Crispus Attucks Community Center is where she first met the late Jean Frazier, Artistic Director in the 1980's who was the inspiration for her developing a call to the performing arts.

Raquel has established notable history as the first Black Woman to win the title of Miss Lancaster County, and 3rd runner-up at the state competition, in the Miss America Scholarship Program in 1987-88. Her theater credits include: Purlie Victorious (Lutibelle) Crispus Attucks, Barnum (Joice Heith) PA Actors Company & Fulton Theater, For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Was Enough" (The Lady in Yellow) PA Actors Company & Lancaster Country Day School, Feeling Good...At Last, (Afterglow soloist) DenmanTurner Entertainment, Eerie, PA, Ain't Misbehaving, (Nell) Harrisburg Arts, The Forum, Harrisburg, PA., Jekyll and Hyde (Ensemble) PRIMA, A Raisin In The Sun (Lena Younger) Susquehanna Stage, Motown Presents (Ensemble) Reji Woods Production, The Music of Motown (Ensemble) PRIMA, Where Are You Christmas, (soloist) Reji Woods Production, Crowns, (Wanda), DenmanTurner Entertainment and Leaders and Liberators 2x (Harriet).

Raquel studied theater and dance, (jazz, tap, and ballet) at Harcum Jr. College, Radio, Television and Film and Modern Dance, Temple University, and Non-Profit Organizational Leadership, Duquesne University,

Pittsburgh, PA., BSPS '05. She is a graduate of Lancaster Theological Seminary, MDiv '20, and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

Raquel resides in Lancaster City with her adult daughter, Adaria. She has two adult sons, Jeremiah, who works in the food service industry, and Malcolm, who works for the United States Army, Kansas City, KS.

Program

Welcome - J Whitlow, Director of Campus – Millersville University &

Denise Velez, Director of Intercultural Center - Millersville University

Mistress of Ceremony - Dr. Towahana Rhim, Director of Operations /

Penn Medicine

Drum Call

Libation - PA State Representative “Izzy” Smith Wade-El

Libation - We pray for the continued elevation and upliftment of our Heavenly Citizens. While Mask are traditionally reserved for ceremonies, we symbolically present our Mask in remembrance of the Ancestors.

Procession - 2024 Juneteenth Participants

My Sister's Keeper - Yemoja, Osun and Oya, remain inseparable sisters in the Ifa/Orisa tradition. They traveled with the members of the Yoruba ethnic group when they were captured, enslaved, and taken to various areas in the world. Osun is commonly called the river Orisa, and is associated with water, purity, fertility, love, and the arts. Yemoja, the African Goddess of the Ocean, is the patron of women, fishermen, and sunken ship survivors. Oya, owner of the wind and fire, is the goddess

of weather, and known to be one of the most powerful deities in Africa and the Diaspora. As a strong and brave warrior, she is unbeatable. Tonight we present Yemoja and Oya. Together they represent love, strength, and powerful forces of nature.

Do you Remember the Days of Slavery? - This presentation reflects on the days of slavery and is intended to highlight the countless “freedom fighters of that era. Let your memory be sparked by art movement and song, and an inspiring words of Harriet Tubman.

The Dashiki - Since the late 1960’s, the dashiki continues to symbolize the return to our African roots. for many Black/African Americans. The garment, originally fashioned after an Ethiopian noblewomen’s garment in the 19th century.

Honoring the “Grandmother of Juneteenth” - In the 2000s and 2010s, activists continued a long process to push Congress towards official recognition of Juneteenth. By 2016, 45 states were recognizing the occasion. Activist Opal Lee, often referred to as the "grandmother of Juneteenth", campaigned for decades to make Juneteenth a federal holiday, leading walks in many states to promote the idea. In 2016–17 at the age of 89, she led a symbolic walk from Fort Worth, Texas to

Washington D.C. to advocate for the federal holiday. When it was officially made a federal holiday on June 17, 2021, she was standing beside President Joe Biden as he signed the bill. Juneteenth is considered the "longest-running African-American holiday" and has been called "America's second Independence Day." Historian Mitch Kachun considers that celebrations of the end of slavery have three goals: "to celebrate, to educate, and to agitate."

Uplifting Black Motherhood - African-centered education, bolstering concepts of Black Motherhood, Black female power, serve as positive influences on cultural identity development and learning. This event posits the Director's lived experiences and shared scholarly African-centered views on the importance of cultural traditions and values when supported by a family and community. Throughout time, an African-centered perspective on Black motherhood symbolizes continuity as African cultures view motherhood roles as interwoven and supported by community. Therefore, in closing, we uplift and celebrate Black Motherhood.

Sources:

Andersen, M. L., & Hill Collins, P. (2015). Race, class, and gender: An anthology (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage.

Dillard, C. B. (2012). Learning to (re)member the things we've learned to forget: Endarkened feminisms, spirituality, & the sacred nature of re)search & teaching. New York: Peter Lang.

Chapman-Hilliard, C. (2016). Do culturally empowering courses matter? An exploratory examination of cultural identity and academic motivation among black collegians. *The Journal of Pan African Studies (Online)*, 9(8), 43-62

Hucks, T. (2014). Yoruba traditions and african american religious nationalism. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Karade, I. (1994). The handbook of Yoruba religious concepts. York Beach: S. Wisner, Inc.

Sponsors:



Millersville University

DR. RITA SMITH WADE-EL
INTERCULTURAL CENTER

Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

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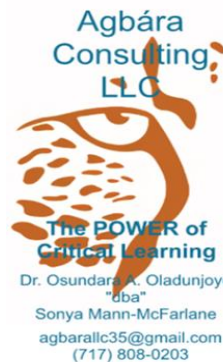
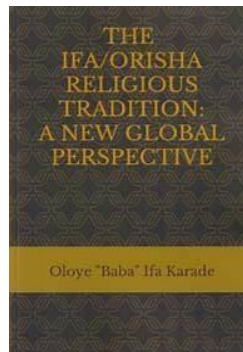
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2024 - Imani Concert Participants

Amaya Mann-Pereira, Anaijah Mantilla, Ashanti Jenkins, Brittany Lupton, Bruce Payne, Camani Lupton, Chinua McFarlane, Chloe Friesen, Chynaah Maryoung-Cooke, Danielle Williams, Dior Williams, Imani Mantilla, Katie Beth Wubbels, Nayla Williams, Peter Scheer, Raquel Richardson, Shashanah Payne, Sherry Lupton

Our Offerings

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Nkonsonkonson Community Award

VIP Reception