



**NABS** "IN THE TRADITION..."  
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION**  
**OF BLACK STORYTELLERS**

# W SPREAD THE O R D

**National Association of Black Storytellers**

P.O. Box 67722

Baltimore, Maryland 21215

www.nabsinc.org

Fall 2009

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## LINDA JENKINS BROWN IS NOW AN ANCESTOR 1946-2009



On August 15, 2009, Executive Director Linda Jenkins Brown made her transition surrounded by her family. There is now within our organization a void that cannot be filled.

Linda was a leader, organizer, storyteller, sorority sister, avid traveler and art collector who touched the lives of thousands of families in all ethnic groups.

Linda served as President as well as Executive Director for the National Association Of Black Storytellers, Inc. (NABS), the National Director of Storytelling for Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc, and a charter and life member of NABS. NABS Co-Founders Mary Carter Smith and Linda Goss often said Linda could also be considered a co-founder because it was Linda's organizational skills that made the NABS dream a reality. Under her leadership, the first National Festival of Black Storytelling was held at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. That historical event affirmed Black Storytelling as a vital part of our American culture.

During her term as NABS President, an educational component was added to the National Black Storytelling Festival. She initiated the Circle of Elders Award, Youth Award, Affiliate Program Award, Affiliate Membership Award, published the first and only NABS Youth Newsletter; and, with her husband, Charles Edward Brown II, was a 2002 and 2004 festival and conference sponsor for the Growing Griots. She served as NABS President-Elect, Treasurer, Interim Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Membership Committee Chair. In 1998, she was appointed as the first NABS Executive Director and assumed the position, in 1999. She is known to have prepared nomination packages for NABS members who received national and regional storytelling awards, to host receptions for storytellers, and, more importantly, for initiating a NABS policy to render financial support for storytellers who were affected by Hurricane Katrina. Linda willingly accepted the request to write Mother Mary's obituary, an emotional experience that lead her to write the article entitled "Mary Carter Smith: A Storytelling Ambassador" published in the 2007 September/October National Storytelling Network magazine.

From 2004 to 2007, Linda was an appointed member of the NSN Board of Directors. During her tenure, she served as Finance Committee Chair and initiated policy for the formation of its investment, audit and personnel committees. Among the NSN members, she is known for her 2005 financial "story" report that engaged, energized and educated its members in Oklahoma City. Linda was a member of the League for the Advancement of New England Storytellers, Network of Biblical Storytellers and a life member of NSN and the Griots' Circle of Maryland. She was a recipient of an Outstanding Leadership Award for her service as National Program Director for Storytelling for Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., under the former leadership of International Grand Basileus Jylla Moore Foster, and The Duafe Award (Phenomenal Womanhood) created and presented by NABS Co-Founder Linda Goss and 2007 recipient of the Zora Neale Hurston Award. She was a graduate of Morgan State University and University of Baltimore. Most importantly, she loved God, family and NABS.

Vanora Franklin Legaux  
 NABS President



## DRUMBEAT ... FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jambo My Brothers and Sisters!

We have met the challenges of life and are still nursing our wounds suffered from our loss, but the winds whisper in our ears and we feel the arms of love holding us as our ancestors speak, share their observations and remind us of our mission and our charge to focus our efforts on the uplifting and edifying our people.

Our vision for NABS includes building on our past while supporting the vision of our Co-Founders. A large component of this vision is youth programming. A NABS Youth Guidelines Committee was appointed to establish a process that will support and sustain the NABS mission of *promoting and perpetuating the art of Black Storytelling*.

Goals: 1) To provide a framework where NABS Affiliates and associated storytelling organizations can work with and develop youth storytellers through uniquely diverse and locally tailored methods.  
2) To provide a venue for NABS Affiliates to showcase their youth talent and progress.  
3) To promote the importance of youth storytelling development nationwide.

The NABS Youth Guidelines proposal was presented to the BOD, and Affiliate Director Baba Jamal. Upon endorsement it was sent to all Affiliates.

As we focus on our youth, the growth and future of our organization, can you imagine with me: Grant writers within our organization sharing the how to... imagine every school district in this country realizing the need of Blackstorytelling and procuring tellers from NABS all year long to train teachers... imagine every community sharing in intergenerational storytelling and writing those stories... imagine NABS Resource Center (a home of our own), national marketing, festival destinations for the next five years with national sponsors ... imagine Blackstorytelling 101: "What every Black storyteller should know"... "How to Tell When A Story Is Not Appropriate"... "How to Make a Media Kit That Speaks to Who You Really Are"... "How To Market Yourself"... being offered several times during the year by NABS? A vision or reality?

What then shall we do with what we have been given? Will we share it or bury it? Memories of our past, our stories and the impact we have on our communities dictate that we go forth, united with you our devoted, loyal members and supporters, with the strength supplied by our Creator, on the wings and shoulders of our Ancestors, determined to make this vision become a reality.

As the joy of summer comes to an end, and signs of autumn appear, we hope that you are making plans to come to Little Rock, Arkansas in November. This year, the 27th annual "In The Tradition..." National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference will take place November 11-15, 2009, at The Peabody Little Rock Hotel.

We are excited about all that is happening in Little Rock. . Go to <https://www.regonline.com/Festivalregistration> to access **Reg Online** which is the quickest way to register and receive your confirmation within minutes. NABS web-site [www.nabsinc.org](http://www.nabsinc.org) is updated with the latest information. You should begin receiving the registration brochures next week.

Consider giving the gift of membership to a son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandson or granddaughter! The cost is only \$15 for ages 6-21, and the benefit of being a part of NABS is priceless! Membership forms are available online or you can fill out a membership form during the festival & conference.

Make your **Hotel Reservation NOW!**

Peace and Love,  
Vanora Franklin Legaux  
President

## MESSAGE ... FROM THE CO-FOUNDER

Dear NABS Family, Peace and Blessings!

For those of you who were not able to attend the beautiful Homegoing Service for our beloved First Executive Director, Sister Linda Jenkins Brown, I want to share with you a tribute about Sister Linda I delivered at her wake, entitled "The Message"

Imani and Ife (Faith) (Love)  
Mama Linda

*(Bells) Ring a ling a ling! Ring a ling a ling!*  
*(Song-Bluesy)*

*"I lost my Big Sister –  
The Good Lord called her home.  
I lost my Big Sister –  
The Good Lord called her home.  
She's gonna be up there in Heaven  
And I'm gonna be so all alone.  
She's gonna be up there in Heaven  
And I'm gonna be so all alone.*

Giving all Glory to God. Family Friends, Sorors, and Storytellers, my Bells are draped in blue ribbons in memory of our dear beloved Sister Linda Jenkins Brown.

She was the "Big Sister" of the National Association of Black Storytellers, and our festival and conference for 27 years. She took such good care of us. She looked after Mother Mary and me with special care. Sister Linda and I had so much in common. We have the same name, we are the same age, we are sorority sisters – "Zetas Forever", and we have a great love for God.

She had a close friend name Gretchen (who lives in Washington D.C.) I, too have a close friend name Gretchen (who lives in California). Both Gretchens love cats and gardens. Both are cancer survivors.

Enough of all of this nostalgia. Enough of me drowning in my pain and sorrow.

Sister Linda Jenkins Brown gave me a message to pass on to you. It is a message for all of us.

When I went to visit Sister Linda during her illness at her beautiful palatial home, often times she would hold my hand or rest her sweet head on my shoulder. If she was in bed she would pat her bed gently and say, "Mama Linda, Come and lay beside me." When I wasn't there Sister Fellisco Keeling would lie beside her. We took turns.

One day when it was my turn to lay beside her in her king sized angelic bed, she said, "Mama Linda, do you know what makes a great leader?"

I didn't answer. I continued to listen with my storytelling ears. And then she said, "Mama Linda, there are three qualities a great leader should possess. They are Skill, Experience, and Knowledge." Naturally, I agreed with her.

Later that evening, while I was at my daughter's home, I thought about what Sister Linda had said and I realized that those same qualities were also true for a great artist including a folk artist, singer, dancer, writer, storyteller, etc, even a great person.

A few days later I went back to see Sister Linda. She patted the bed, and again I laid down beside my Big Sister. I said to her, "Sister Linda, I thought about what you said about the three qualities a great leader should have, and I realized that this is also true for great artist, even a great person."

"That is correct," she said.

"But I am curious," I told her, "as to why you chose those three words and not other words. For example, you said that a great leader should have "Skill". You did not use the word talent, or imagination. Then I realized that everyone has God given talent, but we must develop this talent, develop our imagination, nurture it, work at it, and train it, so it can become a Skill."

"That is correct," she said. And those of us who really knew Sister Linda know that is what she would say, 'That is correct' or 'That's correct'. Sister Linda was a cool, calm, and collected Sister.

"I then said to her, "Sister Linda, you said Experience was another quality which seems obvious, yet there is an underlying profound meaning to it. Many great Folk Artists are not world travelers. Some have never left their communities, yet they have incredible imaginations. They are able to go out into their surroundings, their backyards and observe, use all of their senses, pick up a piece of driftwood or mental (like the artist Thornton Dial, Sr.) and create a work of art or piece together scraps of cloth (like the Gee Bend Artists) and create a priceless quilt."

"That is correct," said Sister Linda.

"And lastly you said that a great leader should possess Knowledge, you chose the word, 'knowledge' instead of 'education'.

"Why do you think I said that, Mama Linda?" she asked me.

"Well, because many great leaders are artists who are self-taught – especially folk artist. (I thought about my Granddaddy Murphy who couldn't read or write. Yet he was one of the wisest men I ever knew. He was a master storyteller, too.) I continued talking and recollecting. "Having the ability to know something, to learn from your bad experiences as well as from your good experiences and using that knowledge day in and day out in your struggle to survive, and having the ability to stop and think is what it is all about."

"That's correct, Mama Linda, I see you have figured it all out,"

It was one of those moving moments in time for me. I realized that I was in the presence of a great woman of great faith, a great leader, a great artist of management skills, a great role model, a great teacher, a great philosopher, and a great friend whose life and story was a priceless work of art.

As we celebrate the life of Linda Jenkins Brown, let us remember our Big Sister's words of wisdom – Skill, Experience, and Knowledge. She wants all of us to apply them to our lives as we place the bountiful fruits of our labors at the welcome table of human kind.

Asante sana,  
Peace and Blessings

Linda Goss  
Co-Founder  
National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc.

# GRIOTS' CIRCLE OF MARYLAND

AN AFFILIATE OF  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK STORYTELLERS

## RESOLUTION

*In honor of the Life of*

### **Linda Jenkins Brown**

Executive Director of the National Assn. of Black Storytellers  
Life Member of the National Assn. of Black Storytellers  
Life Member of the Griots' Circle of Maryland, Inc.

- WHEREAS, The Griots' Circle of Maryland, an affiliate of the National Association of Black Storytellers has lost a devoted sister and a loving friend in the passing of Linda Jenkins Brown; and
- WHEREAS, She faithfully served the Griots' Circle of Maryland as a mentor, spiritual guide and model of the African cultural traditions; and
- WHEREAS, Her dedicated love of the Griots' Circle of Maryland has been an inspiration to our members and the entire community; and
- WHEREAS, Linda Jenkins Brown was a blessing to our organization and will be sorely missed by all of us; Therefore be it
- RESOLVED, That the Griots' Circle of Maryland laments the passing of a shining star that brightened our world who we called friend and who helped lay the foundation for our organization and furthermore, we express our deepest condolences to her family and convey our gratitude to her family and friends for her service to our organization. Be it further
- RESOLVED, That the members of the Griots' Circle of Maryland shall observe a year of remembrance in honor of Linda Jenkins Brown and will invoke her name and her spirit of love at our performances, gatherings and in our publications.

This Day the 20th of August in the Year of Our Lord 2009

Janice Curtis Greene, President

No matter how long the night, the day is sure to come

# A GREAT 26TH “IN THE TRADITION...” FESTIVAL AND CONFERENCE!

The 26th Annual National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference was an exciting event. With infectious smiles we greeted one another for our annual family reunion. Excitement filled the air on Wednesday, November 19, 2008 as persons assembled for the Heritage Tour to Wilberforce University; the historically black university established for the education of blacks and administered by the A.M.E. Church; “The National Afro-American Museum”, located on the campus of Central State University, another historically black school; and the Home of Paul Laurence Dunbar, in Dayton Ohio. Storyteller Omope Carter Daboiku, Cincinnati, OH served as tour guide. Gran Daddy Mitch Capel treated tour attendees to a performance at the Dunbar Home.

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center provided the stage for an exhilarating “Evening With Sonia Sanchez,” professor, writer, poet and social activist who left no stone unturned in her presentation as she propounded the events which helped to form who she is today. Her presentation was a preview for the Master Class: “Writing and Storytelling as a Spiritual Practice”.

Nouveau Chamber Players, a youth ensemble of Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, provided music as we assembled at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center for the Opening Gala Dinner. The Honorary Committee- Dr. John Fleming, Rev. Damon Lynch, William Billingsley, Dr. Tonya Matthews, Kathy Finley, Kristina Thomas, Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi, Juanita M. Adams, and Carl Westmoreland were recognized for their accomplishments and for adding to the history of NABS as it's first Festival Honorary Committee. The Love Circle was special with an added meaning as it was renamed the Mama Mary Cater Smith Love Circle.

Workshop presenters, set the stage for the conference, along with Scholar Dr. John Fleming, National President of The Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc., who shared “The Importance of Storytelling in Relating Family History: “A SUMMER REMEMBERED”.

Lecturer Dr. Carolyn L. Mazloomi, Independent Curator, Writer and Artist wowed attendees with her display of quilts in “The Cloth Speaks”. The excitement in the halls near the workshops was felt as observations were shared. Everywhere one could hear “we just didn't have enough time. Hope we can repeat this workshop another year.”

The featured tellers were: Omope Carter Daboiku, Oni Lasana, Bobby Norfolk, Joanna Maddox, Lyn Ford, Baba Jamal Koram,

and Alice Mc Gil. Masankho Banda was the teller for Cruisin on the Ohio. Freedom Center tellers were Opalanga Pugh, Ivory Williams, LaRon Williams and Nomusa Xaba. Tellers' stories were magnificently done and reflected this year's theme “Follow the Drinking Gourd: Celebrating Heroes and Heroines of Freedom.”

Esteemed Elders Dr. Joyce Duncan, Gwendolyn Hillary, Gloria Kellon, Gomez W. Payne and Thelma Ruffin Thomas were inducted into the Circle of Elders for their years of involvement and commitment to the African oral Tradition and for their honored presence in the storytelling community. Sharon Draper, Dr. John Fleming, Alice McGill and Diane Williams received NABS highest award, the Zora Neale Hurston Award for their contribution to the preservation and perpetuation of African American folklore. Nya Russell received the Youth Award.

Members witnessed Past President and Past Board Member Carolise Frink- Reed lead our installation ceremony for the Passing of the Cowtail Switch to induct our new National President, Vanora Franklin Legaux of Gretna, LA. Past Presidents stood in solidarity with the Board of Directors during this most solemn and emotional ceremony. Our enthusiastic, dedicated and considerate outgoing National President Dylan Pritchett passed the Cowtail Switch on Friday, November 21, 2008 during our Annual Membership meeting.

The Riverboat Luncheon Cruise provided opportunity for fellowship in song and story with Masankho Banda. Liar contestants left the audience in tears from laughter, and more laughter. The winner was ASE' member Oba William King. The Spiritual breakfast provided nourishment for body and spirit with the mouth dropping Mona Lisa tribute to Co- Founder Mama Linda Goss and Executive Director Linda J. Brown by Griots' Circle of Maryland member Victoria Smith. The Unity Circle closed with the singing of “Follow the Drinking Gourd”, and vows to remember our Hero and Shero Brother Blue and Sister Ruth, keep in touch, encourage each other, and to “Keep Black storytelling alive!”

The 26th Anniversary “In the Tradition...” National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference was memorable beyond measure.

Vanora Franklin Legaux  
2007-2008 President-Elect  
2008 Festival Director

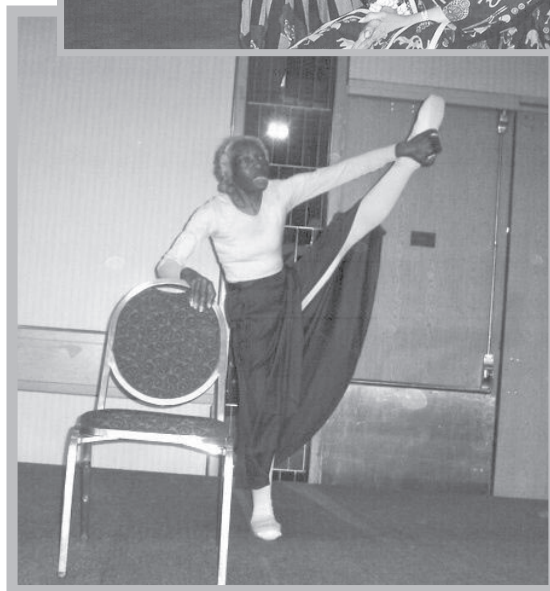


# *26th Annual Festival & Conference*





*“Following the Drinking Gourd:  
Celebrating Heroes and Sheroes of Freedom.”*



## STORYTELLING IN THE SCHOOLS *by Emily Cooper Lansana*

What if more teachers told stories to engage our children? Stories unveil the mystery of language, reveal the power of emotions, and unlock the spirit of curiosity. In Chicago, the Office of Arts Education has developed a pilot program to help teachers to enhance their teaching with the dynamism of storytelling. This program has been held at two sites, Adventure Stage Chicago and eta Creative Arts Foundation.

eta Creative Arts Foundation is a community based world class company who has been committed to the “perpetuation, preservation and promulgation of the African American aesthetic” that believes as African people, we must “tell our stories in the first voice.” For this reason, they have demonstrated a longstanding commitment to nurturing storytellers through showcasing playwrights, and actors in pieces that celebrate a unique vision. They have also built a partnership with Ase: The Chicago Association of Black Storytellers to provide a venue for showcasing the talent of the Black Storytelling Community.

eta was excited about the opportunity to expand their programming in the areas of storytelling and education. When teachers feel confident of their knowledge of an art form, they seem more willing to take ownership of integrating the arts into their classroom curriculum. While it is often challenging for classroom teachers who are not trained artists to teach dance, drama, visual art or music, almost all teachers naturally incorporate some elements of storytelling into their teaching practice.

As we review many of the national models for teaching storytelling in the schools, most focus primarily on building student storytellers. While this has often been successful, it seems that if these efforts were also connected to solid, in-depth storytelling training for teachers, these programs could yield more long term success.

During the 2008-2009 school year, eight Chicago Public school teachers participated in a Professional Development program at eta where African American

storytellers guided them in the use of storytelling in the classroom. The eight session course of study included personal stories; stories form history, literature and performance skills. Each month, teachers shared stories that they had developed for use in their classrooms. The teachers worked diligently to find ways of connecting the stories with their classroom curriculum. Teachers addressed a range of topics including the journey of the Silk Road and the story of Nancy Green who came to be known as “Aunt Jemima.”

Developing one’s skills as a storyteller is a life long journey. Most of these teachers will never perform on a storytelling stage but each of them found their own unique method of bringing stories to life for their students. When asked what worked well about the storytelling experience, Debra Golden of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Community Academy stated, “Having my children interested in listening makes my experience golden.”

Lee Harrington, Esmond School, Library Media Specialist states, “This workshop provided me with yet another tool that I could use to help my students. My goals were to have students be able to comprehend information delivered orally or on paper, attend to a speaker, exhibit proper behavior when someone is speaking, and use critical thinking skills to recall details.

This workshop allowed me to learn about other cultures, experience the use of music with storytelling and how it enhances the teaching experience. Lastly it gave me a platform in which to stretch as an educator. I was taken out of my comfort zone and much like the students expected to stretch my own way of teaching and learning.”

This program will expand during this school year to include a new group of teachers. At a time when schools struggle to ensure that children learn, learn well and learn about themselves and their history, storytelling remains a powerful tool.

# NABS YOUTH CONTINUE TO SHINE GIVING A PROMISING FUTURE IN THE TRADITION

BY ELISHA T. MINTER©2009

Our NABS Youth Program continues to surprise and amaze even those of us who know the potential of our youth as they develop storytelling skills near and far. We were blessed to be in a historic Cincinnati, Ohio for our conference last year and our youth came prepared with stories and a willing spirit to participate in every area of the conference.

Our 2008 program consisted of wonderful workshops offered concerning the Underground Railroad and the history surrounding Ohio and Kentucky. All events were reinforced with actual group visits with youth and advisors to the Underground Railroad National Museum with a personally guided tour by curators at the museum.

The **Asante Children's Theater** under the direction of Sis. Deborah Asante and Keesha Dixon were our guest performers at our Youth Storytelling Concert and gave a sampling of their wonderful talent through stories and song. In addition, our National Youth Award winner, Miss Nya Russell, shared a story which left no doubt as to why she received last year's award.

It has been a dream that our youth would participate in every area of the conference and festival. Last year's Spiritual Storytelling and Breakfast found us overcome with joy as a youth mime group from New Jerusalem Baptist Church set the ancestors rejoicing with their participation in the program. The group consisted of over 20 youth sharing praises and telling the story through dance.

With last year's conference still powerfully fresh in our minds, we press on to this year's theme, "*My Soul Looks Back: Stories of How We Got Over*" and head towards yet another city rich in history and filled with our black presence.

This year's youth program will have our youth focus on recanting our rich history and developing a story in their own way, through workshops that include our music, our words, and the story of Little Rock, Arkansas. We will also explore the events and the effects that the Civil Rights movement had on the individuals past, present and future as seen through our Co-Founder, Mother Linda Goss and other Elder's eyes.

It is the continued dream that our Youth will come in large numbers, both locally and with our Affiliates that we may continue, 'In the Tradition...' Black Storytelling as we do what we do. This dream can only be fulfilled if we continue to invest time and energy in preparing our youth on a local and national basis to tell our story.

Too long have we allowed others to tell of our laughter and our pain. Too long have we watched our history being exploited and our children recoiling from uniformed reports of events that are repeated as the truth. Too long have our children been made to feel less than special because they don't know that they are Kings and Queens.

Won't you join us as we Celebrate Our Stories and tell of how we made it over. Please sponsor a child to come to the workshop and register early that we may prepare for large numbers.

## WHAT DAYS OF REJOICING THIS WILL BE!

*Dylan Pritchett*

All roads lead to Little Rock in November! If you don't get there, well, let me say it for you now, 'OH SHUCKS!! I should-a been there!!'

This year's 27th Annual National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference is going to be special. Special because we celebrate 25 years of when the Association of Black Storytellers became the National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc. This milestone is reached by a handful (if that many) of storytelling organizations. Members, affiliates and supporters should feel very proud of this fact and we're going to acknowledge every single soul who has helped us reach our 25th year!

The major purpose for this year's family reunion is embodied in our theme: ***"My Soul Looks Back: Stories of How We Got Over!"*** Plans are being made to honor our ancestors. Plans are being made to give thanks to our affiliates and members. Plans are being made to celebrate stories of old and carrying forth those and new stories "In the Tradition..."

Along the way, we're going to walk the infamous hallways in Little Rock Central High School. Along the way we're going to "break bread" with one who made it possible for us to walk through those doors, Thelma Mothershed Wair, one of the Little Rock Nine, who graciously accepted to dine with us. Along the way, we're going to learn about Afro-Caribbean and early African American folklore; learn the significance of doll making and what it says about us; examine the wisdom within the ancestral voices in our stories; perfect the use of the body to help tell our story; and be instructed in how to create our own thirty-minute storytelling presentation. Along the way, we're going to award those who exemplify the best of us in carrying the flame of story. We will give thanks while we rekindle memories of those who have given of their time, service and spirit to the mission of Black Storytelling and NABS. Along the way, we will look back to remember the lessons of our past as we strive to move forward!

And, when it's all said and done, we will all have been rejuvenated by the greatest storytellers in the land! Our own Mitch "Gran' Daddy Junebug" Capel, Nothando Zulu, Oba William King, Queen Nur, Antonio Rocha and the drum beats and stories of Daughters of Creative Sound! All honoring what we've learned and heard and felt and been lead to do...tell stories...share our legacy..."In the Tradition..."

Bring your drums because this is the year we're really gonna call 'em down . Shakeree players, bring your newly beaded ones. Dancers, don't come to Little Rock tender-footed. Singers, come ready to raise your voices in our storyteller's choir. We fixin' to "show out!" Naw...this ain't one to miss!

# ME AND NABS (IT'S A LOVE THANG)

*Sharon Jordan Holley*

I began to call myself “storyteller” in 1983 after I participated in Storytelling For Peace in Buffalo, New York, but I began to see and feel what it means to be a storyteller after attending my first (ABA – Association of Black Storytelling Association) Festival in November of 1985 in Washington, D.C. Traveling to D.C. for this storytelling festival has the makings of a story by itself. We were the Buffalo Four – Karima Amin, Mary Lewis, a lady whose name I cannot recall and me arriving at Washington’s National Airport on a day after the city streets had flooded. We caught a cab, which could not take us to Howard University and soon deposited us at a Metro station to fend for ourselves – no instructions, no change, lots of luggage and one lady with 3inch heels. Eventually, sweating and tired we arrived at the Howard Inn and Howard University via city bus. It was my rocky beginning of a love affair with Black Storytelling.

At that first festival, I was in the company of Mama Mary Carter Smith, Linda Goss, Maxine LeGall, Lawanda Randall and many more. Etched in my memory is the tap dance story performed by Dr. Walter Palmer and the Sunday at St. Augustine’s Church where Mama Mary told Moseoatunya (The Smoke that Thunders), Linda Goss told Song for My Mother, Prayer for My Father and Paul Keens-Douglass told a “Tim Tim” Story in a Trinidadian dialect about Singing in the Choir. By today’s attendance, it was a small festival but it was enough to “hook” me. I went the next year to Chicago and I have been coming to NABS ever since.

Each festival has its highlights for me and I recall a few:

1987 – Berea, KY (My first featured telling with Karima Amin of **African American History Rap**); 1988 – Oakland, CA (Seeing red/black/green flags lining the city streets to welcome storytellers and large community participation at every event); 1989 Brooklyn, NY (eviction notice under the hotel door – New York, New York); 1990 – New Orleans, LA (Delta Queen boat ride and Danny Barker playing the banjo); 1991 – Myrtle Beach, SC (overfilled community day with storytelling at the school); 1998 – Orlando, FL (Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis at the church in Eatonville); 1999 – Winston Salem, NC (parade of storytellers from the hotel to the cultural center); 2006 – San Diego, CA (stories at the edge of the ocean); I did not mention all of the years, but they all have highlights and hold memories for me.

NABS has allowed me to grow as a storyteller and be part of a great organization – Board Member, Secretary, Treasurer, Featured Teller, Workshop Presenter, Adopt-A-Teller, Coordinate a Storytellers Resource Table and be published in its’ publications: **Talk that Talk** and **Sayin’ Somethin’**. I often describe NABS to newcomers as a Family Reunion with a bit of Revival. Coming to the Festival and Conference reinforces the importance of our stories/songs/poems and rhythms. We are connected to the youth who come and push us forward and by the “Ancestral Affiliates Chapter” that keeps us grounded – Mama Mary, Linda Brown, Phyllis Stevens, Ayubu Kamau, Zack Hamlett, Amos Zu Bolton, Tunki Baku and others whose life prints are in the foundation.

Me and NABS – It’s a love thang...join the Love Train.

# PRESIDENT-ELECT'S

## *Reflections*

Akbar Imhotep

In the fall of 1984, I ran into Cynthia Watts, an actress friend at the post office. During our brief conversation she told me that she had become a storyteller and was a member of a group called NABS. She also told me that the water was deep and I should consider becoming a storyteller.

Prior to that conversation, I had never thought about becoming a storyteller. I was doing puppetry until I had an opportunity to get back on stage or TV as an actor. Thanks to a nudge from her and my puppetry friends; storytelling became an option.

My introduction to other professional storytellers came two years later; when I participated in a festival that had Jackie Torrence and Madafo Lloyd Wilson as headliners. A year or so later, I met Gran'Daddy Junebug at an Alternate Roots Festival in Black Mountain, NC. In the spring of the following year, I met Baba Jamal Koram at a Black Book Festival.

My introduction to the Annual "In the Tradition..." National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference was the Myrtle Beach Festival in 1991.

Gwen Green, a poet friend and media specialist at Fairington Elementary School had encouraged me to send my PR packet to Eleanora Tate. This led to a week long puppetry residency in Horry County, SC and participation in the NABS festival; where I met Brother Blue, heard Tejumola, Bunjo Butler and Sankofa tell stories and witness Deborah Asante win the Liar's Contest.

I could not make it to another festival until the 2000 Festival in Rochester. By then I had been calling myself a professional storyteller for fourteen (14) years but left the Rochester festival feeling like a 'kindergartner' in the

world of storytelling. After the festival inspired me to go back to the "woodshed" and become a better storyteller. The festival changed my life and commitment to art of storytelling.

Went to Richmond in 2001 wanting to represent Kuumba and learn about the bidding process for hosting the annual festival. Spoke with Caroliese Frink-Reid and found out what was required. I came back to Atlanta determined to host a future festival.

2002 is a blur and family concerns kept me from attending the 20th Anniversary Festival in Baltimore. In 2003, Kuumba submitted an initial proposal to host the 25th Anniversary Festival in 2007. At this time, our entire Kuumba membership was Deborah Strahorn, LaDoris Bias-Davis, Jeanette Vaughn, Chetter Galloway and myself. We were a small but dedicated group. I came back to Atlanta after the Providence festival and set a goal for Kuumba attendance at the 2004 festival in New Orleans. Ten members of Kuumba attended the New Orleans festival and we were given the opportunity to host the 25th Anniversary festival in 2007.

How do I sum up the last five years? Attended the Festival in Tampa. Was elected to the NABS board in 2007. Assisted with the planning of the 25th Anniversary Festival. Became NABS president-elect in January 2009. The end of 2009 finds me preparing for the annual festival in Little Rock and heading up the 2011 Festival Planning Team. Some may ask how did I manage to get so involved with NABS and the Kuumba Storytellers of Georgia. My answer would be; it all goes back to a friendly nudge from an actress, Cynthia Watts; encouragement from a poet, Gwen Green, becoming a member of the NABS family of storytellers and being willing to serve.

# IN MEMORIAM

*In Memoriam*



## Zack Earl Hamlett III

Life member and long time supporter of NABS was born December 16, 1951 and made his transition on May 27, 2009. Brother Zack dedicated his life to service and people. At the time of his passing he was director of the NCDHHS-Office of Economic Opportunity and board chairman of the North Carolina Rural Communities Assistance Project, Inc.

Brother Zack served as national media relations director of the 1991 National Festival of Black Storytelling held in Horry and Georgetown Counties, SC, and received many awards for his photos, published in leading newspapers around the country. He was the designer of NABS Logo and was married to Past President and past Board member Elenora Tate. To honor his memory and commitment to NABS Youth, contributions were made for Youth Programming.

## Benjamin Giles

Benjamin Giles, Jr., a veteran member of Ase: The Chicago Association of Black Storytellers, was born September 21, 1949 and made his transition on July 8, 2009 with his wife Sharon by his side. He served well as the parliamentarian of Ase and fell in love with NABS from the first festival. He will long be remembered for his warmth, wit and serious appreciation for the responsibility, the power and the gift of story.

(Prepared by Mama Edie 9/15/09)

# IN THE VILLAGE ...



## Highlights of 2009 ASE Programs and Activities

- Held our annual storytelling concert; with special guest, Baba Jamal Koram.
- Conducted our first youth storytelling concert to a sold out audience. Our youth storytellers and a youth poetry group were featured.
- Youth performed a Black History Month storytelling program at a local library and at other venues.
- Became an advertised sponsor, with other major institutions and WBEZ radio station, of a coming citywide 2010 Black History Month program featuring one of our storytellers, Oba William King.
- Continued the storytelling partnership with the City of Chicago Homeless Education Program, telling stories to homeless youth in after school shelters.
- Formed a committee of storytellers with over 10 years experience and extensive storytelling performances to begin the process of creating a curriculum and training program for new and current members to provide guidance in developing their storytelling skills.
- Performed storytelling as an organization at major cultural events such as at the African Festival of the Arts' Family Pavilion, which extended over a 3day period.
- Continue to promote storytelling to adults through our storytelling nights at eta Creative Arts Foundation. This year we performed a program on Black Women and will host a Kwanzaa celebration again.
- Will offer our fifth neighborhood storytelling Tellabration, with a new school partner, which will impact hundreds of families and children.
- Continue to expand our presence as a Black Storytelling organization through our website. Our webmaster responds to many inquiries and requests for information involving our storytelling events and interest in becoming storytellers.

### **ASE: The Chicago Association of Black Storytellers**

**P. O. Box 802834**

**Chicago, IL 60680-2834**

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Gwen Hilary, President / D. Kucha Brownlee, Vice-President / Linda Braggs, Corresponding Secretary Pat Redd, Recording Secretary / Alice Collins, Treasurer / Emily Hooper-Lansana, Past-President

# DONORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## Youth Programming

### *In Memory of Zack Hamlett III*

#### **\$100 - \$250**

Amanda and Horace Parks  
Coastal Community Action, Inc.  
North Carolina Community Action Association  
Salisbury Rowan Community Service Council, Inc..

#### **\$5 - \$85**

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## 2009 Member/Donor Appeal

Lyn Cabral  
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## Mama Linda Goss Enshrinement Appeal

#### **\$1000**

MaryAnn Harris

### *In Memory of Linda Jenkins Brown*

#### **\$2000**

Charles E. Brown III

#### **\$100**

Venus R. Kent

#### **\$25 - \$50**

Dr. Jylla Moore Foster  
Dorothy R. and Lawrence D. Jones  
Eleanora E. Tate  
Jane B. Crouse  
Connie Regan-Blake

**Take a look at the NABS Website.....[www.nabsinc.org](http://www.nabsinc.org)**

Pictures have posted taken in Cincinnati during our 26th Annual Festival and Conference. Asante Sana to Clarence Mollock for his photos.

**ATTENTION NEW MEMBERS**  
*and*  
**FIRST-TIME FESTIVAL ATTENDEES!!**

New members are in for a treat! The membership committee will meet and greet new and first-time attendees to the Annual Black Storytelling Festival and Conference! Look for more information in the program itinerary for time and place.

**SEE YOU THERE!**



Post Office Box 67722 • Baltimore, Maryland 21215

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