



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

Summer 2010

Board of Directors

Co-Founder

Linda Goss
 Philadelphia, PA

President

Vanora Franklin Legaux
 Gretna, LA

President-Elect

Akbar Imhotep
 Atlanta, GA

Immediate Past President

Dylan Pritchett
 Williamsburg, VA

Secretary

Dr. Mary Ann Harris
 Cleveland Heights, OH

Treasurer

Robert A. Smith, Jr.
 Baltimore, MD

Masankho Banda

Albany, CA

Deborah Pierce-Fakunle

Baltimore, MD

Togunde Nantambu Nokware

Adesegun, Esq.

Snellville, GA

Publisher

NABS

Layout

Vanora F. Legaux

Newsletter Editor

Vanora F. Legaux

Photographers

Clarence Mollock

Dylan Pritchett

Contributing Editors

Mama Edie Armstrong

Bunjo Butler

Mama Linda Goss

Baba Jamal Koram

Eleanor Tate

Ilene Evans

Jackkia Boyd

Willa Brigham

Vanora F. Legaux

Elisha Minter

Dylan Pritchett

Diane Williams

TRIBUTE TO BROTHER BLUE



Rarely does one meet a person who requires that you listen with all your senses, your head, your heart, and with every fiber of your being in order to be clearly understood. Such was the case with Dr. Hugh Morgan Hill, lovingly known as Brother Blue.

He was unique in so many ways. He was a storyteller who knew how to take the sweet flight of the butterfly and use it as a metaphor for the lightness of heart he wished for us all. He encouraged us in this way to unapologetically engage in occasional flights of fancy, luring us into areas of consciousness frequently untapped.

His reference to the beauty in a butterfly's wings encouraged us to see the radiance in every color and hue of the sky, of the earth, of our emotions, of each other. His stories helped us to heal, to accept the invitation to fly, being unencumbered by the expectations and agendas of others. His stories encouraged us to embrace our potential for change and to be the change we wanted to see in the world.

Having grown up in Cleveland, Ohio, Brother Blue became more than a scholar and well-loved professor at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was a storyteller's storyteller who crossed boundaries and opened doors that many were unaware even existed. He also excelled as a student at Harvard, having earned a degree with honors there and a master's degree in playwriting from Yale University. Brother Blue was committed to the significant role that storytelling can play in the lives of everyone. He pursued his doctorate in Divinity in Ohio, with a thesis that was based upon his work with incarcerated persons who could not read or write. Whether walking down the street, in a classroom, in a concert hall or in the park, Brother Blue was determined to reach everyone.

As an ordained minister, he carried his storytelling to spiritual depths that many have found difficult to fathom. He was a teacher but also a student of life, a lover of life, and one who embraced every moment, every person, every creature, especially his beloved butterfly.

NABS has always been honored by the spirit and presence of Brother Blue and Mother Ruth. We recall that they have not missed one festival since it's beginning. We embrace Mother Ruth as the stalwart Queen Mother who stood by our beloved Brother Blue through their darkest hours and their highest flights.

We will stand by Mother Ruth as she moves through this transition of her life partner and great love.

We will remember always the love and wisdom imparted by Brother Blue through his stories, raps, chants and syncopated scats. We will remember the love story that he and Mother Ruth were, that they will continue to be.

Be at peace, Brother Blue. We love you.

*Submitted by Mama Edie Armstrong
 November 5, 2009*



DRUMBEAT ... FROM THE PRESIDENT

Jambo My Brothers and Sisters!

We are excited about all that is happening within our organization. The 27th Annual National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference was a huge success. The Little Rock community became involved and shared with us the joy, love, the appreciation for Blackstorytelling and a yearning to become a part of the NABS Family. Many have joined our ranks as members and have expressed a desire to become an affiliate. Festival Director Dylan Pritchett worked beyond the call of duty with the committee to leave no stone unturned to make sure the legacy would continue. Asante sana!

Our newest Affiliate, Wichita Griots: Keepers of the Stories, we welcomed to the village as NABS' 13th Affiliate. We acknowledged new life member Cynthia Tompkins of Brooklyn, NY. The NABS Past Presidents were also recognized.

NABS membership is increasing! Membership chair Mama Edie Armstrong is requesting that we all join in the challenge – “ Each One, Reach One” and encourage all affiliate members to also become NABS members. Renew your membership and consider giving a gift membership to a youth age six and over. If you have not received your membership card, email me at vflegaux@bellsouth.net.

The Board of Directors is diligently working on funding for the organization. The Fund Development Committee has been considering various options including grants and the many forms of giving, We thank you our loyal, devoted and supportive members for your financial support. NABS has continued for over 27 years as an organization because of you who believed in and continue to believe in the vision of our Co Founders and the great need for us to continue to tell our story.

Our Affiliates have been actively engaged in promoting. Grant writing, training for tellers, developing youth tellers, improving and enriching literacy, residencies, research, writing, community involvement, and building an infectious love for storytelling.

Make plans now to meet us in Minneapolis, Minnesota November 17-21, 2010 for The 28th Annual National Black Storytelling Festival & Conference to be held at the Minneapolis Marriott City Center, Co-Hosted by Black Storytellers Alliance, Inc. Make your Hotel Reservations NOW! Information is on the website at www.nabsinc.org Festival Director Dylan Pritchett and BSA are planning a not to be missed event. See you there.

Peace and Love,
Vanora Franklin Legaux
President

MESSAGE ... FROM THE CO-FOUNDER

Peace and Blessings, NABS Family and Friends

Inspire. Dream. Hope. Believe. Imagine. Create. Share.

Those words and ideas have been my resolution for a long time. In February 2010 when my family and I were stuck in the house because of the snow blizzard in Baltimore, I rekindled my love for writing poetry. Here are three poems that are for you NABS family. Enjoy and share with others.

Spread the Word
Mama Linda

INSECT LAMENTATIONS

Grasshopper
Joy riding
Flower sniffing
Spring flinging
Hammock swinging

Miss Ant
Burden carrier
Profound speaker
"Listen up!
Penny wise
Pound foolish."

Wise Owl
Hoot advice
Plan ahead
Nest egg
Safety net
Security blanket

Winter's Tale
Unexpected guests
North wind
Jack Frost
"Hoppy's" funds?
Frozen assets

Copyright © 2010
by Linda Goss

Bridges Frighten
me. Tunnels
do too.
However,
in order
to get
to the
other side,
I have
to cross
over or
go through.

Copyright © 2010
by Linda Goss



MEET THE DIRECTOR ... NABS BOARD MEMBER

Deborah Fakunle

So often, many of our Board members serve in anonymity. I'm putting Board member Deborah Fakunle on "blast." Deborah Pierce Fakunle is a native Baltimorean (the center of the universe) who holds degrees from Morgan State University. Her passports have been stamped in West Africa and Europe. She works for the State of Maryland's Injured Workers Insurance Fund and since 1988 as a Premium Auditor. She has two children, David Olawuyi Fakunle who is 23 years old and Mary Olubukola Fakunle who is 20 years old.



Mama Deborah's – or as she is known – "The Afropella Griot's" involvement with the African oral tradition or the perpetuation of Black culture didn't start with her accepting her nomination to the NABS Board in 2007.

From 1983 to the present, she has been a Board member of the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum located in Baltimore, Maryland, where she and her two children, David and Mary served as tour guides and Deborah also made costumes for the wax figures on display.

Her cultural consciousness is manifested by the fact that both of her children were involved in youth groups at an early age. From 1994 to 2002, Deborah was a Sankofa Dance Theater parent who not only mentored her children and other youth in this African dance group but also shared vocal performances and made costumes for the youth and adult performances.

By 1997 as students of Mother Griot Mary Carter Smith, Deborah's children read and performed on Mama Mary's radio program at Morgan State University and this led to Deborah becoming involved with the Griots' Circle of Maryland so from 1998 to the present, she has been the Creative Director for the Growing Griots, the GCM's youth division. This group has performed all around the country in venues that would include NABS's Festivals & Conferences in Winston Salem, NC. 1999; Baltimore, Md. 2002; New Orleans in 2004; and the National Museum of African Art in Washington, DC in 2005, among other venues.

Deborah's dedication to the oral tradition led to her forming a performance group consisting of her two children and herself known as Ola-Olu Griots. David sings and has been playing the Jembe drum and other African drums since he was seven years old; Mary sings and dances; and Deborah is a vocalist that grew up singing gospel songs in St. Paul Community Baptist Church, a talent she inherited

from her mother and she combines and weaves this talent into her stories hence the name Afropella Griot.

Since 2000 Deborah has been involved with "Musuyide", a woman's collective and afro centric dance group and is a Board member of Womb Work Production Nu World Art Ensemble, a group dedicated to fulfilling the mission of "healing and empowering youth, their families and communities and preserving cultural legacies through the performing arts." Mama Deborah co-hosted "The Talking Drum" on Maryland Public Television and along with GCM member Cheryl Hinton can hook you up with some cultural gear right after they get through performing as "Mama Talk"

In 2009 the Griots' Circle of Maryland Inc. initiated an afterschool program that is designed to help our youth enhance their literacy skills using the African oral tradition as the foundation of the learning experience. As staff person, costume maker, mentor, instructor, and creative director, Deborah Pierce Fakunle is a linchpin, the glue, the rock that helps to hold the 25 week Growing Griots Literacy Learning Program together.

Deborah does all of these things while serving on a volunteer basis on the Board of NABS because it is for the youth, sistahs, and the culture. So if anybody asks you who she is tell them that she is "The Afropella Griot" from the center of the universe!

Bunjo Butler



FOUR PHASES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

A Message to Affiliates by Baba Jamal Koram, Ed.S.

June, 2010

This is a response to all that I have been told during recent Affiliate meetings, and in private conversations and correspondence with members around the country. The following is also to chronicle what I have witnessed personally in my travels as an Affiliate Director, organizational consultant, trainer and liaison, I hasten to let folk know that change is inevitable, and that organizational change in long-standing organizations carries the weight of personal, emotional, frustrations, vendettas, and memories of better times, and frequent good times.

Those times are gone and can only be captured through story, song, written word, and memory. However, no matter what the response is to the necessity for change, it is clear that all that has happened before, serves as the building blocks for change and evolution now. We must be clear on this.

Within our organizations, change can be at least four things: structural, programmatic, cultural, and/or evolutionary.

Structural change is perhaps the last change that an organization should make unless the demographics of the populations they serve has changed, or the need for the services they provide has dissipated.

Programmatic Change is another change that requires great thought and discussion. The saying if it works, leave it alone, is apropos here. Often groups will seek to change for the sake of change and not to alleviate a potentially devastating organizational condition. Programs are the result of identifying specific needs, assessing available resources and then, through planning and organizing, matching the resources with the needs. If the need is no longer present then, perhaps, the programming requires scrutiny.

Cultural Change is the psycho-socio-personal aesthetics that glues an organization together. It is the why and the way you do the things you do. It is also the how things get done, who does them, how we communicate, and what is necessary to maintain our stability. As an organization matures, so should its membership. This is not always the case. Often there is a disconnect between what needs to happen and what happens and this is based, ironically, on what used to happen but doesn't happen anymore. Informational training, social events, training opportunities and involvement in the functions of the organizations are four of the approaches that can begin to address problems in this area - - EVEN IF THEY'VE BEEN TRIED BEFORE.

The final change (no pun intended) is Evolutionary Change. Simply stated, it means that an organization has outgrown its purposes and mission. Delving deeper, however, it suggests that the organization has not adapted its functions to the requirements of its membership or intended audiences. To address this type of change, organizations usually hold annual planning sessions and/or retreats to fine tune plans and to assess future desires to serve.

These are general, but accurate phases of change. Each has its own answers, programs, and plans, but sometimes fixing an organization requires looking at these four areas in a synchronous way. As we continue to grow as storytelling organizations which serve hundreds of thousands of individuals, let us continue to strive to do as much as we can do, but let us not do anymore than we can do. Review our mission statements not in terms of what we have not done, but to seek and find ways to accomplish our purposes and to secure what has been done that works. Let us meet sometime in the coming months to discuss my organizational matrix and how it may be relevant for your NABS Affiliate Organization.



Baba Jamal Koram, Ed.S.
is the National Affiliate Director,
and former President of the
National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc.

TELLING OUR STORY IN OUR OWN VOICE

By Ilene Evans 2010

In 1852, when asked about going to see the play of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" which was being performed in Philadelphia, Harriet Tubman replied, "...I've heard 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' read, and I tell you Mrs. Stowe's pen hasn't begun to paint what slavery is as I have seen it at the far South. I've seen de real thing"¹ Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel is a horrible example of the results of someone else outside the African American experience telling the story of enslaved Africans in America. The distorted images and stereotypes Stowe presented of African Americans held in bondage were accepted in the mainstream culture as a true. Those false and simplistic images are a burden we continue to correct to this day both in America and around the world. Harriet Tubman responded to Stowe's fiction by telling her own story. Her voice challenged and served to correct and clarify Stowe's misperceptions and falsehoods. Luckily, Harriet Tubman lived to tell her own story in her own words. By speaking out in her own voice, those of us who read her words can feel her strength and resolve. Her story continues to serve as a life line to each generation that has followed ...

The history of African American women is **ours** to tell. Ella Forbes, Darlene Hines, Roslyn Terborg-Penn are the some of the contemporary Black women historians who have dedicated their work to telling the story of their ancestors. As storytellers, we must build upon their work. We must find and utilize those primary source documents, read them for ourselves, and relentlessly apply the scholarship necessary to fill both intentional and unintentional omissions in our history. We must present a truthful history of people of color in the struggle of our own freedom. Too often others have spoken on our behalf. We must do the historical work so that we can speak for ourselves with authority. We must become the authors of our own stories. We need to tell the story of our grandmothers who refused to accept the conditions forced upon them.

In our history there are many ordinary women who led extraordinary lives in extraordinary times. The true story of African American women lies in their persistent resistance to enslavement, sexual abuse and negative stereotypes and oppression. Resistance was not the exception to the rule, it was the common thread. Resistance, creativity and courage **were** the rule for women of African descent held in bondage. How do we get to the truth of our own story when it has been omitted and subverted for so many generations? We must do our own research in primary documents, reach back into the shadows and speak for ourselves. We must find our own truth and tell the whole story.

When others speak for us, we hand away our power. When we let others dismiss or diminish us, appropriate our story, or prioritize our values, and we abandon our responsibility to the next generation. Our voice, when silenced, cripples the next generation and robs them of their legacy. Storytellers can use the power of historical portrayal and telling stories in the first person to correct misperceptions about the role of African American women in American society.

Traditionally in African American culture, the spoken word has carried with it the tools for liberation. belle hooks wrote an article called "Performance Practice As A Site Of Opposition."² Her piece is a testimony of how when African Americans use their own words to voice their experience of Apartheid we claim authorship of our truth and in speaking that truth we initiate the healing of our broken psyches in the midst of our brutal circumstances. Our story long before captivity, it started with the first mothers who whispered in their children's ears how beautiful they were and that they were sent with a divine purpose and held a magnificent destiny. We are those children and we are the storytellers.

As members of the National Association of Black Storytellers, we carry the mantle of truth in order to protect and guard the future generations. The Akan adinkra symbol of the mythological Sankofa bird teaches us the importance of reaching back for the stories that have been lost and are needed now. Future generations are in danger of losing the stories of valor and courage of the revolutionary ideals of equality and inclusion, of freedom fighters who established the moral high ground to which oppressed people around the world appeal.

The power of Storytelling to change the world resides in us who take on the Guardianship for future generations. Speak up - let us hear your voice.

1. Bradford, Sarah. (1869). *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*. Reprint Edition 1988 Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc. P. 22

2. hooks, bell. (1995). *Performance Practice as a Site of Opposition*. In Ugwu, Catherine. (Ed.), *Let's Get it On: The Politics of Black Performance*. (pp. 210-221) Seattle: Bay Press.



27TH ANNUAL NATIONAL BLACKSTORYTELLING FESTIVAL & CONFERENCE!



"My Soul Looks Back: Stories of How We Got Over!"

Reflections

The 27th Annual National Black Storytelling Festival & Conference held in Little Rock, Arkansas, November 11-15, 2009 was very special in many ways. The NABS

Family not only visited one of the most historic cities engraved into America's history but also earmarked another chapter in it's own history. Embodied in the same spirit and honor as we pay the Little Rock Nine and their importance in the Civil Rights Movement, we honored our cherished ancestors Linda Jenkins Brown, Brother Blue, Zack Hamlett III and many others who are now watching over us! Truly fitting did "Our Souls Look Back" as we honored past, present and future brothers and sisters who have "carried the water" by telling "Stories of How We Got Over!"

From the beginning, the Heritage Tour was phenomenal in giving us a sense of what Little Rock is all about. Walking up the steps and through the front door unimpeded of Central High School let us know how steep the climb was then and how many steps are still needed to climb. Visits to the EMOBA Museum and the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center provided the local flavor necessary to introduce us to where we were. Returning to the Mosaic Templars for the Pre-Festival Event proved to be a jubilant end of the day by performances of Little Rock's finest!

Our mission is to not only provide a stage for upcoming storytellers but to give them the tools and resources that helps their personal growth. The workshops that were presented did all that and more! Masankho Banda's workshop, The Indigenous Wisdom of our Ancestral Voices through Storytelling!; Barbara Eady's workshop, Crafting a 30-Minute Storytelling Performance; Verna Muthoni's workshop, Our People Dispersed, Our Stories Retained: Looking at the Afro-Caribbean Folktale Heritage and Adaptations; Ernestine Brown's workshop, Tellin'the Real Story: Incidences of the Enslaved Experience Depicted in African American Literature; Antonio Rocha's workshop, Beyond The Voice; and Kooki Davis' workshop, Tattle-Tale Dolls Tell Everything They Know! All provided a wide array of knowledge, coaching and storytelling tips to help attendees in the professional and personal growth from the novice to the professional! These workshops plus the Scholars Panel presenters Agnolia Gay, Dr. Gwendolyn Twilley and the rousing storytelling of Dr. Patricia McGraw rounded out an educational and useful experience.

Youth programming was equally as impressive in providing for future storytellers honing their knowledge and skills. Emily Bailey's workshop, Bring the Story to Life: Bring Life to the Story!; Elisha Minter's workshop, Writing Our History in Remembrance of Our Elders; Kooki Davis' workshop, Tattle-Tale Dolls was repeated for the youth and Co-Founder Mama Linda Goss' session, Witnessing History, was an outstanding experience for young and old!

Needless to say, ALL of our featured tellers and special presenters were amazing! Antonio Rocha, Queen Nur, Nothando Zulu and Mitch "Gran'daddy Junebug" Capel returned to our stage in celebration and honor of story as well as Oba William King and the Creative Daughters of Sound who both "showed out" at their first, but not last, time as a NABS featured tellers. Special Presenters, Linda Gorham and Esther Culver added their own special flavor to the festival as well. All of the tellers brought their "A" game with them as they wove their magic as only they could do.

Our awardees were a most deserving group of our finest! Zora Neale Hurston Award inductees Sharon Jordan Holley, Charlotte Blake Alston and Stanley "Bunjo" Butler are all well deserving of our highest honor. Youth Award inductee Onam Lansana was deservedly honored by his skill, respect and fortitude toward following in a storyteller's footsteps. Dr. Hugh "Brother Blue" Morgan Hill and "Mama" Ruth Hill were presented with an Honorary Life Membership because of their support and spirit they have given NABS since the beginning.

There were many twists and turns during NABS' 27th Festival & Conference. From the impromptu visit and chat by the first Tuskegee airman from Arkansas, Milton Crenshaw, to our lively Akwaba Gathering to perusing (trying not to say shopping) the vendor fashions and accessories to our first Song Swap to our Anansi stage and first-time silent auction along with the auction, etc. There were memories to share and experiences to take back with us.

Mostly we will remember Little Rock for its place in time. Not only as it's significance to the Civil rights Movement. But, rather, the place where we honored Brother Blue, Linda Jenkins Brown, Zack Hamlett III and those many others who were with us only a festival ago...smiling... hugging...guiding...supporting...telling...singing...dancing and loving! Honoring them was easy. Like family, they were easy to love. But, somehow, we will remember where we were when we took a moment to reflect, to share, to embrace the truths taught by our ancestors. The truths that we must continue to meet...smile... hug...guide... support...tell...sing... dance...love each other! For them...for us... for Black storytelling!

Asante sana to those who gave of their time, energy and expertise on committees, as moderators, as ticket takers, as greeters, as emcees, as Board Members, as National Directors and, most importantly, as supporting members and attendees! NABS would be without a soul without you! How'd we get over? Stories of how we got over must include...YOU!

Dylan Pritchett
2009 Festival Director



27th Annual Festival & Conference



27th Annual Festival & Conference



"My Soul Looks Back:
Stories of How We Got Over!"



STORYTELLING IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

By Diane Williams



The idea of working together - artist and teaching instructor – in a college setting came about as a way to meet our individual missions. Our schedules are ever increasing in the busyness of the day and the demands that rule our lives often keep us from exploring creativity and knowledge. We find ourselves straying from scholarly interaction and philosophical truisms.

There simply is no time anymore! The question arises: if there were only two of me, could I produce twice as much? And that is how we got started. Artist and teaching instructor; storyteller and reading instructor; Diane Williams and Dr. Evornia Kincaid.

As storyteller and writer, I work a full time job to make ends meet. I do not have the luxury of going on retreat or sabbatical so that I can create new stories, adapt old ones, or write until my heart's content. But creation is the essence of who I am as an artist. I thrive on creativity. It is essential to my lifeline and lifestyle.

Dr. Kincaid teaches a number of courses at Jackson State University and like most instructors, teaching and testing, precludes enriching students with curricular activities that engage students in active, interactive production that draws students into the realities behind the learning.

There are no negative sob stories here, no half full cup recountings, and no murky challenges to be addressed here. This past semester was filled with creative and fresh ways to look at learning. Partnership with community volunteers and representatives from a variety of sources, including resident teaching artist and storyteller, was utilized as resources for learning.

Dr. Kincaid worked with a former assistant superintendent/fiscal officer of the Rankin County School District (MS) who currently serves as the education director for the Mississippi State University Riley Center for Education and the Performing Arts. She enlisted the services of a PhD. level principal of a lower elementary school and the rank and file of rich resources goes on.

The focus for this article is the collaborative work done side by side with (me) professional storyteller, Diane Williams. I have been working as a storyteller for 18 years. I am a consultant to teaching professionals having been trained by the Galef Institute to use their technique "Different Ways of Know." I have been adjudicated as a teaching artist and have two award winning teaching resource books to my credit.

First, I reviewed the course syllabus and matched my experience and work with what students would be required to learn. Nothing

could be worse than bringing in extracurricular activities that did not match the course objectives. Secondly, the course book was reviewed and the art activities were noted to enhance learning.

We moved quickly from chapter to chapter and Dr. Kincaid and I worked together on test questions that related to both teaching strategies (mine and Dr. Kincaid's). It was important, during the residency, to provide students with a seamless course study. Therefore, Dr. Kincaid was always mindful of assessments. If we could view and assess an outpouring of interactive activities that exhibited the learning before our very eyes, then we could know that the students had captured and internalized the learning.

Some of my strategies dealt with brain research and using imagery and visualization versus routine memorization.

What was important to the process? Pairing the language by making sure we were translating our combined strategies. An example would be students creating lesson plans. I write books that include lesson plans and activities that meet learning objectives. Dr. Kincaid gave her students the language needed for identifying different aspects of their lesson plan creations. Making sure our references were defined and parallel were important to students comprehending and completing the task. I had students work in groups to create lesson plans. Long story short, it became more than just words on paper, it became interactive using cultural folktales for lesson plan creation across the curriculum.

Another activity, where we found opportunity was the assignment where students were to read Edgar Allen Poe's *The Tell Tale Heart*. As a creative person, I thought of a number of activities. But the one that I thought would engage the students best was a game called, "Here Comes the Judge." Students were given instructions on playing judge and jury. It was inquiry based and certain challenges had to be met even when the witness gave the correct answer. The learning occurred with the judge and jury asking questions and challenging the way the witness answered and the opposite team had to challenge the questions, support the response and intimidate an equally convincing debate. Along with Dr. Kincaid, we watched and gleaned from the comments and responses just how much the students learned.

Over the course of the semester, students were asked to work on a story. Each week, they were taught storytelling strategies based on story and storytelling elements. At the end of the course, everyone presented their stories and they were evaluated based on how well they incorporated the elements and strategies.

In the final analysis, we learned that collaboration and classroom partnership can work to everyone's benefit. After hearing each student present their stories, I had an entirely new repertoire of at least 30 folktales. Dr. Kincaid had a few new ways of evaluating student success. And students had fun learning.

STORY — *Finding Lady Bug*

By Willa Brigham (revised 5-07)

Chelsea Vee stretched and yawned as she woke up Saturday morning ready for a grand adventure. She had been invited to the Teddy Bear Celebration in the local park sponsored by the local library. You were invited if you had been a part of the summer reading program and Chelsea Vee loved to read. She was sure her teddy bear, Lady Bug was going to win a prize. Lady Bug was golden brown with Emerald green eyes. Dressed in a Mud clothe jacket with an orange blossom Kenta clothe hat she was too cute.

From her closet she pulled out her favorite jeans with a matching green stripe tee shirt. She raced through the house to the family room to pick up her bear. She had washed and brushed it the day before so she would be pretty and clean for the celebration. But there was a problem, Lady Bug was no where to be found.

Chelsea Vee flipped over chairs, searched through closets, and behind curtains. How could she go to the celebration without Lady Bug? Every one in the library program with a bear was going to be there, including her best friend Merci and her bear, Willow. Where was her Lady Bug?

Chelsea Vee yelled to her Mom, who was painting the kitchen.

"Mom, have you seen my Teddy Bear?"

"No", replied her Mom, "Where did you have it last?"

"I looked in the family room," cried Chelsea Vee, "Please help me!" Her mother said, darling, I am very busy right know. You know it's your responsibility to keep up with your toys. However, I have a suggestion for you and then she said: "Look up and down and all around; see if you can see what can not be found". "Good luck" sang her mom from the top of the ladder as she continued to paint the kitchen.

Chelsea Vee didn't like that answer. She would have preferred her mother help her look for the bear. But she did what her mom suggested. She began to look up and down and all around the kitchen. She looked into the food pantry behind gallon bottles of water and boxes of cereal. No sign of Lady Bug.

Out of the window she saw her Dad cutting the lawn. She raced down the steps yelling, "Dad, have you seen Lady Bug?"

"I had her all dressed up in her hat and matching coat."

"What is ladybug", asked her dad smiling".

My teddy bear, said Chelsea Vee, with tears in her eyes

Dad said, "sorry honey, but isn't keeping up with your toys your responsibility?" He was busy with the lawn but he gave her a suggestion. "Look in and out and all about"?

That was exactly what she did. Chelsea Vee looked into every flower pot and behind every tree. She got down on her hands and knees and looked under the porch but Lady Bug was not there.

With wide sad eyes and dripping tears Chelsea slowly walked back into the family room. She was sure she had left Lady Bug on the chair in the corner It was the chair her brother Jaden always sat in while watching television or reading. He always had his birthday quilt Granny had made for him on that chair.

Jaden looked up to see his sister crying and asked;

"Why are you so sad"?

Chelsea told him of her lost bear, Lady Bug.

Jaden wasn't sure which bear was Lady Bug. Chelsea Vee had so many bears.

"Which one is Lady Bug? asked Jaden.

"Lady Bug is the one with the Mud Clothe jacket and Kenta clothe hat. The one Aunt Kellie brought back from Egypt, cried Chelsea Vee.

Jaden said he had not seen the bear. He hopped up and galloped off to the kitchen to get a snack. Chelsea Vee climbed into the chair to think where her search would continue. She felt something soft under the quilt. Quickly she snatched away Jaden's quilt and there to her surprise was Lady Bug. She squeaked with delight as she hugged the bear to her.

"There you are," she sang, I've been looking for you".

Quick as a whistle Chelsea Vee was out of the chair and off to the kitchen.

"I found my bear," she yelled to her Mom.

Mom and Jaden were happy for her. Opening the door Chelsea yelled to her Dad: "I found my bear!"

Dad waved a hand and gave a loud hooray as Chelsea Vee danced down sidewalk and on her way to the Teddy Bear Celebration sponsored by the local library. She was sure Lady Bug was going to win a prize!

Willa Brigham
301 Creek Park Drive
Cary, NC 27513



NABS YOUTH ROCKED IN LITTLE ROCK

BY ELISHA T. MINTER©2009
NABS YOUTH DIRECTOR

Little Rock, Arkansas, being a “Mecca” of historical accomplishments for African Americans, was a prize location for our NABS youth as they experienced history first hand at this years National Association of Black Storytellers Festival and Conference.

From the Tour to the Youth Program, we were blessed to see and hear first hand accounts of the period that placed Little Rock on the map as a training ground for Blacks to push for their rights as citizens of the United States.

Our workshops focused on this rich history and bringing it to life for our youth, both in the city and visiting the city. Information garnered from each workshop was used to create a 15-minute presentation for our youth program. We also featured young adults reciting poetry and prose from the era. These young people help to instill in those younger than themselves, an awakening, that stressed that it is cool to know your history.

The highlight of the workshops were Ms. Emily Bailey’s contribution towards writing our history, while focusing on the events that took place using a timeline that chronicled the Civil Rights Movement with emphasis on the Little Rock Nine, the Greensboro Four and other key incidents that led the Civil Rights Movement. She created journals for the children to interview the Elders at the conference and their experiences from that point on.

Sis. Kooki Davis made the connecting element as we told stories through her doll making class. Each doll represented a story and each dolls’ story was written and told by their creator.

The finishing touches were our Conversations with the NABS Elders and local Activists from Little Rock that participated in the Little Rock Nine movement. Mama Linda Goss and several of our NABS elders embraced

our youth as they shared their stories from the Civil Rights Movement, before, during and afterwards. We had to stop the class because of time, however, the participants carried on the conversation.

All these activities, led to a wonderful youth program that featured all that was

shared during our time together. It is believed that the adults enjoyed the session as much if not more than the youth. It is believed that the conversation with the elders should be kept in some form because our youth need and want the connection

We respectfully thank and honor all of our Elders that gave so freely of themselves, for the wonderful workshop experience and we plead with our organization to continue to invest in our youth. We look forward to the conversation continuing in Minneapolis and the experience growing as we tell our stories, share our stories, and create our stories “In the Tradition”...

We welcome those who can and will to continue to work with our youth in your affiliate organizations and to bring your knowledge and wisdom to the table as we continue to work towards our next NABS Festival and Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A special thanks to our gracious benefactors who continue to bless the NABS Youth Department, Sister Linda Brown and Brother Zack Hamlett III. Their wishes to have donations sent to NABS provided opportunities for youth to attend the festival and conference and selected concerts. As Ancestors, they continue to be a blessing! Their love for NABS is still with us. We will forever love them back too!



IN MEMORIAM



Sister Pugh

How often have we pondered the lessons learned from the willow: to stand tall, stately, beautiful, and strong and yet knowing when to bow? That was the way it was with Sister Opalanga Pugh. Her warmth reached you before you had even heard her words. And then the voice with a richness that reached down inside your soul soothed you and

helped you to know that everything was all right.

This is the spirit that was, that still is, Sister Opalanga Pugh. She was steady, consistent, and always welcomed one to journey deeper inside one's self. This is the gift that story can bring when we truly learn to appreciate its vast and powerful potential.

As a storyteller of over 20 years, Opalanga's journey took her to many places, including Nigeria and Gambia where she studied the special connections between people, their stories and the importance of those stories being told. She used storytelling as the electrical charge and herself as a conduit, in order to reach and teach people of all races and cultures the uniqueness and power that lies within them. What better purpose can an art form serve? From there we are reminded that all things, all joys, are possible.

The details of her life and accomplishments have been well documented in publications such as *Essence Magazine*. An article from the *Denver Post* informs us that Sister Opalanga graduated from Denver East High School; that she received many awards; was acknowledged as a "Living Legend" on NBC; and has works housed in the Library of Congress. I think that one of the most significant things we can say about her, however, is that she made

herself available to facilitate cultural, spiritual ceremonies that nourished the souls of those who needed it most. Through the powers of story, of music and dance, she unleashed a power that invited those who experienced her to discover and unleash their own. Through this power, they healed, they came to know, and they better learned to love themselves. Oh, what a gift. What a gift.

Several years ago, two friends from Chicago and I traveled to Denver to participate in a spiritual retreat facilitated by Malidoma and Sobonfu Some' of Burkina Faso. While housed in cabins nestled in the mountains and forests of that state, we were guided through the process of better discovering our connections to the forces of the earth as well as those spirits beyond. Opalanga was there. It was a magnificent journey that helped us to explore how to find a sense of home, no matter where we were born, no matter where we might find ourselves, and regardless of our conditions. Opalanga was able to tap into that experience and infuse her stories with that sense of home that allowed a person to know peace regardless of their circumstances. It is, no doubt, what many of us as storytellers strive to achieve. But as one Ethiopian proverb states, "Even the river wants to grow."

Sister Opalanga grew and took others along with her. And as long as we remember her, as long as we speak her name, that power, that potential will continue to resonate with love within us. For she also loved us; otherwise, her stories would not have moved us so. Be at peace, dear Sister. You have done well and I trust that the Creator and the Ancestors are pleased.

Submitted in love and respect,
Mama Edie Armstrong, Chair
NABS Membership Committee
June 11, 2010

Mrs. Emily Collymore

Dear Storytellers,

Word has been received of the transition of Mrs. Emily Collymore, a true supporter of storytelling and Kwanzaa. Her daughter, Mrs. Val Bynum, informed me of her transition. Condolences can be sent to Mrs. Bynum at 11 Trotting Drive, Chester, New York 10918. A memorial service will be held in the near future.

Some of you may remember Mrs. Collymore and her husband, the late Winston Collymore, at storytelling festivals where they gave workshops on Kwanzaa, primarily the 9th National Festival in Horry and Georgetown Counties, South Carolina. She was also awarded an "Esteemed Elder" award.

Sadly,
Eleanora E. Tate



Billie Norton

Billie Norton joined the ancestors November 2009. She held membership in both CABS and NABS for many years. Active supporter of CABS activities and NABS festivals (had even made plans to attend Little Rock) she seldom missed an opportunity to encourage and support her fellow griots. Billie was an avid world traveler and did private counseling as a social worker.

Jackkia Boyd
(Picture was taken at NABS festival in Atlanta)

DONORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In Memory of Linda Jenkins Brown

Charles E. Brown II
 ASE Chicago Assoc. Of Black Storytellers
 Dr. Joyce C. Duncan

Andrea Fain
 Baba Tony & Kucha Brownlee
 Caroliese Frink Reed

In Memory of Linda Jenkins Brown and Brother Blue

Myriette G. Ekechukwu

To Honor and Remember Brother Blue

ASE: The Chicago Association of Black Storytellers
 OUAT Storyteller Mike Myers

In Memory of Co-Founder

Mary Carter Smith

Victoria L. Smith

Member/Donor Appeal

T Nokware Adesegun
 Johnny Bellamy
 Janice Bishop
 Jawara Bishop
 Ernestine Brown
 Janice M. Brown
 Eshu Bumpus
 Leonard Cabral
 Eldoris Cupp Cameron
 Rex M. Ellis
 Ilene Evans
 Roxanne Erickson
 Andrea Fain
 Miriam Gibson
 Elaine F. Gregory
 Mama Linda Goss
 Guina Marie Hammond
 Sharon Holley
 Mildred Hurlock
 Akbar Imhotep
 Vanora Frankin Legaux
 Edwilla Massey
 Jeanette Mallory-Hill
 Alfred Mitchell
 Dr. Patricia Washington McGraw

Margo E. Myles
 Bobby Norfolk
 Gomez W. Payne
 Deborah Pierce
 Dylan Pritchett
 Dr. Richard C Puls
 Belinda W. Rodgers
 Khabir Shareef

Carole E Shelton
 Thomas Southern
 Carolyn Thomas
 Mae E Threadgill
 Audrey Tucker
 Valerie T. Tutson

James E. Washington

Eleanor Williams

Ivory D. Williams

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
Upsilon Mu Zeta Chapter

In The Tradition...

28TH ANNUAL NATIONAL BLACKSTORYTELLING FESTIVAL & CONFERENCE!

“Stories Are The Breath Of Life!”

Minneapolis, Minnesota • November 17-21, 2010

Co-Hosted by Black Storytellers Alliance, Inc.

Don't worry about the weather! Hot is all you need to think between now and the time we rekindle the old Blackstorytelling flames at our annual gathering!! Planning for this year's program is ongoing and soon you will be packing the flip-flops, grabbing your clip-on sun shades and deciding which one-piece swim suit to bring! Well, maybe you won't go that far. But, still, think HOT!

Black Storytellers Alliance, Inc. (BSA) is rolling out the red carpet, welcoming NABS to their twin cities of St. Paul/Minneapolis for the first time. The community is excited. Businesses are primed to pitch in as much as they can despite the economic climate. Schools and libraries are being informed how they can participate and share with us. Every facet of the planning is going smoothly thanks to the preliminary planning of our beloved Linda Jenkins Brown, NABS and BSA under the leadership of Vusumuzi and Nothando Zulu. This will be, yet another, fabulous Festival and Conference!

Just a few things you should know:

* **Reservations:** Please make room reservations now to take advantage of the \$85/night rate. Go directly to our website and click on the link which directs you to our NABS/Marriott reservations page; OR call 1-800-266-9432. Be sure to ask for the NABS Festival & Conference rate.

* **Awards:** Award Nominations are due August 4, 2010 with no exceptions! They should be sent to: NABS Award Nominations * c/o Dr. Joyce C. Duncan * 425 West 162nd Street * New York, NY 10032-4301 Questions? Call (212) 568-1645

* **Tour:** There will be no Heritage Tour this year. HOWEVER...

* **Pre-Festival Event:** Come early to attend the Pre-Festival Event Wednesday night as Black Storytellers Alliance is planning an extraordinary evening of enjoyment and welcome to Minneapolis!!! This event will take place right around the corner in a wonderful club/restaurant that bodes marvelously for storytelling performances!

* **Weather:** Once you arrive, you can take the skywalks from block to block and never have to go outside...although the weather won't be that bad!

If you'd like to serve on a committee, please call or email Festival Director Dylan Pritchett at (757) 561-6658/ aesop@widomaker.com. We can always use members on the Hospitality Committee, facilitators of workshops and emcees/Moderators.

Please continue to check www.nabsinc.org for further updates, applications, registration, etc. And between now and when we meet again, think NABS, BSA, Minneapolis, HOT!

Take a look at the NABS Website.....www.nabsinc.org

* * *

*Pictures have been posted taken in Little Rock
during our 27th Annual Festival and Conference.
Asante Sana to Clarence Mollock for his photos.*



Post Office Box 67722 • Baltimore, Maryland 21215
