

**National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc.  
Membership Committee  
Annual Report to  
President Akbar Imhotep  
November 3, 2012**

The Membership Committee has continued its effort to move beyond simply facilitating the logistics of membership registrations and renewal to providing a viable support for the individuals in our organization. The establishment of the now annual **Akwaaba Gathering**, instituted four (4) years ago, has helped us to move in this direction. This Gathering allows for new members and first-time festival attendees to be and to feel officially and warmly welcomed into the NABS Family. It provides the opportunity to be individually introduced to our Board of Directors, NABS Officers and general membership; to share with veteran members why they chose to attend the Annual Festival and Conference; and/or to relay why they chose to become a part of NABS. It invites them speak to the significance of the power of story in their lives, and how they choose to use it to uplift the quality of life for themselves and others. From this insight, by learning more about each other's life stories, we become more aware of how we can use this artistic bonding force to move our organization forward. The **Akwaaba Guide**, created by this committee's chair, was developed for the Akwaaba Members to provide a brief accounting of the history, mission and traditions of the organization in order to facilitate their understanding and participation in the Festival as NABS Family.

The primary goals of the Membership Committee this past year have been to:

- 1) encourage 100% NABS membership among affiliates by requesting that affiliate chairs stimulate interest among their local memberships
- 2) provide ongoing support, information, encouragement and advice to those members who are moving into the profession of storytelling for the first time, as well as to those more seasoned tellers and festival producers
- 3) to provide connections upon request for the advancement of collaborative opportunities and/or in response to queries received via communication with this committee's chair for local performers.
- 4) To continue to upgrade, update and improve the online version of the NABS Membership Directory (special thanks to Sister Barbara Eady for her facilitation of this project)

As of this writing, our financially active membership stands at over 500 (initial memberships and renewals are continually being received.) Most of our affiliates have between 80-90% NABS Membership. We are happy to report that the **Cleveland Association of Black Storytellers (CABS)** is proud to boast that **they are bringing 12 new members to our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival this year!** All affiliates realize the importance of encouraging this support for the further growth of our organization. We will, therefore, continue to strive for 100% NABS membership within each one. ***Congratulations, CABS! And thank you!***

This Committee is, hereby, requesting that a budget line for \$400. be developed for the next fiscal year for operational expenses to defray the costs of mailings, paper, publications and special acknowledgements.

A praise song is offered here for the hard work and dedication of our **Membership Committee Members:**  
~ **Kucha Brownlee (Founding Co-Chair of Ase: Chicago Association of Black Storytellers)**  
~ **Barbara Eady (Cleveland Association of Black Storytellers; Past NABS President & Membership Coordinator)**  
~ **Janice Greene (Griots' Circle of Maryland; featured teller @ 2012 Festival/Conference)**  
~ **Eslyn Hinmon (Griots' Circle of Maryland; Spiritual Liaison)**  
~ **Dylan Pritchett (Virginia; Past NABS President; Past & Present Festival Director)**

Appreciation is also extended to Mama Fellisco Keeling, who has supported this committee continuously. We are grateful for the healing of our President Akbar Imhotep and for his continued work during difficult times; for the sage counsel of our new Executive Director Vanora Legaux; and for our Festival Director, Brother Dylan Pritchett. Above all, we offer our deep love and appreciation to **Mama Linda Goss**, for her vision, artistry and commitment to the well-being of our people and of people everywhere.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mama Edie Armstrong, Chair (Founding Co-Chair, Ase: Chicago Association of Black Storytellers)