



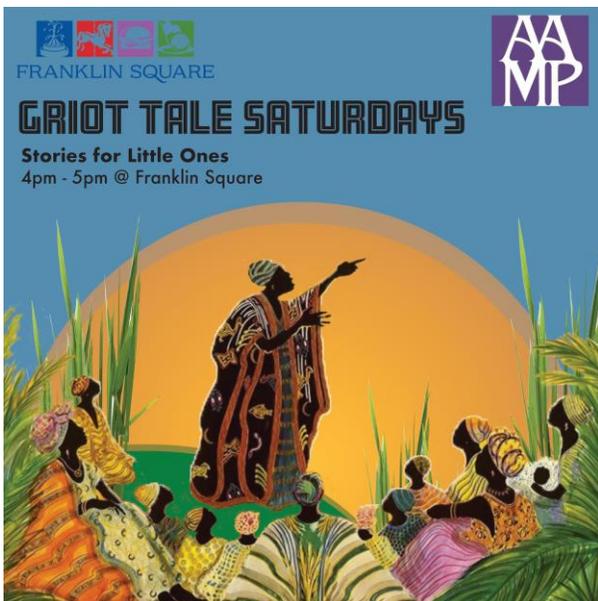
# **Keepers Of The Culture, Inc.** **Philadelphia's Afrocentric Storytelling Group**

## **2021 Annual Affiliate Report**

Peace and Blessings from the Executive Board, Council of Elders, and Membership of Keepers Of The Culture, Inc. the Philadelphia Affiliate of NABS, Inc. We send love and gratitude to our ancestors who came before us, to our co-founders Queen Mother Mary Carter Smith and Queen Mother Linda Goss, and to the current leadership of NABS Inc., President Janice Curtis Greene, and the NABS Board of Directors. As this year has been full of ups and downs, we continue on the life- calling of telling our stories, but realize that we must also take the time to rest and care for ourselves, for we can only be of good to others, when we are good to ourselves.

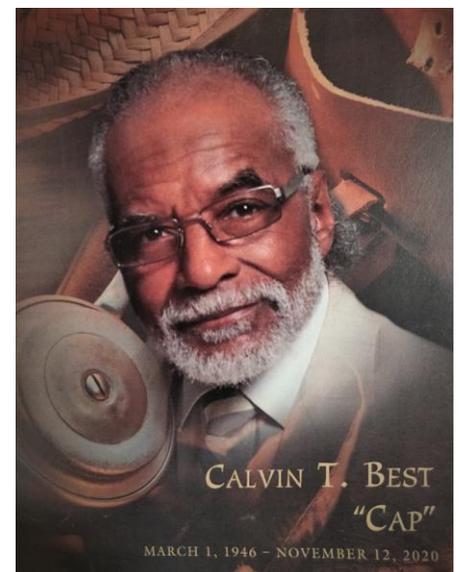
### **October**

KOTC continues its partnership with the African American Museum of Philadelphia and Franklin Square Park for "Griot Tales Saturdays", storytelling for children.



### **November**

KOTC supports the President on the transitioning of his father, Calvin T. Best, who loved KOTC. KOTC hosts the Homegoing Services on its YouTube channel.





KOTC hosts Family Day, a 24-year tradition with the Free Library of Philadelphia for their Sundays On Stage Series. The theme was UBUNTU: Stories, Songs, and Spoken Word on being human.

**24TH ANNUAL FAMILY DAY  
2020**

Free Library of Philadelphia  
Sundays on Stage Series

**UBUNTU!**

A southeast African way of life.  
*Stories, Songs & Spoken Word on the  
essence of being human.*

Mark your calendars!

Join us on November 22, 2020 @ 2PM

This is a family virtual event!

**December**

KOTC spends New Years Eve partnering with WURD 900AM Radio, Philadelphia's Black radio station for a three-hour radio program. They make history this year by having the first recorded Black Storytelling Radio Marathon. KOTC taps in 28 Black Storytellers from NABS Affiliates and Black Spoken Word artists from around the country! The theme was "I Love My People", inspired and used with permission from Oba William King's anthem, "I Love My People". It was a great success. Just in case you missed it, replay it [here!](#)





KOTC President Paul D. Best and his mentees Zakee, Zakim, and Haki create Kwanzaa videos, telling stories based on the Kwanzaa Principles.

**PENN**MUSEUM

MENU 

KOTC President represents KOTC giving a virtual lecture for the Penn Museum on Kwanzaa and the Black Roots of Storytelling.

## LIVING ROOM LECTURE

Honoring Kwanzaa and the  
Black Roots of Storytelling

Tuesday, December 22,  
2020

5:30PM - 6:15PM ET

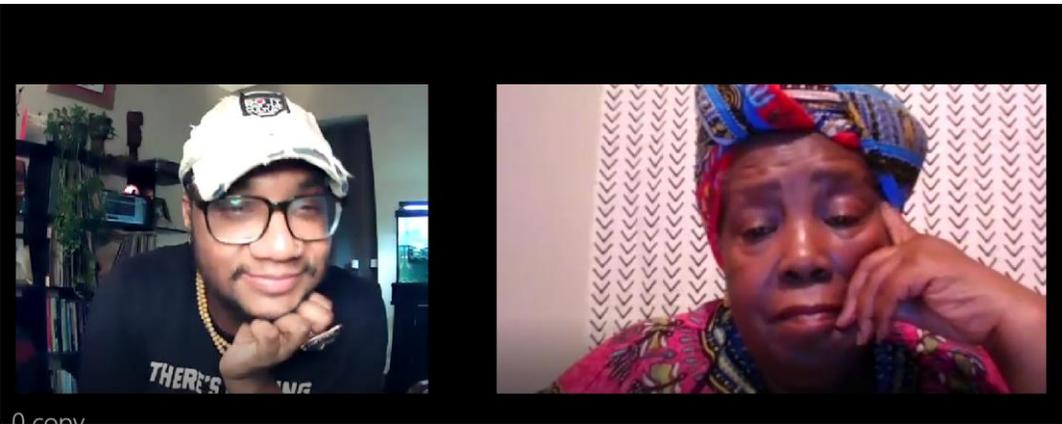
## January

The new year rolls in with KOTC partnering with the African American Museum of Philadelphia for their Learning Through The Arts Program. Headed by Carla Wiley, KOTC hosts a workshop on African America Storytelling for the Germantown Academy.

## February

Due to the multiplicity of events that take place in Philadelphia during Black History Month, KOTC members devoted their time to collaborating with various schools and community organizations to produce virtual programming.

KOTC partners with sales software company Highspot of Seattle, Washington and puts on a Black History Happy Hour for their 400 Millennial employees. Themed "Black House Rules" KOTC Storytellers tells stories about life in a Black home, and the many meaningful and humorous nuances they contained. The event is a great success, creating an initiative to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for the People of Color within the company.



UNITED MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
Presents  
**BLACK HISTORY**  
2021  
Saturday February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
@ 11:00 AM  
Zoom  
ID 4674747550  
REV. DR. CHANDRA I. WILLIAMS  
PASTOR  
SPECIAL GUESTS:  
Mr. Paul D. Best, M.Ed.  
President, Keepers of the Culture Inc.  
Bro. James McFadden  
Alabama Sit-In's 1960  
and Ms. Timala Thompson, KIPP Middle School  
umbcp Philadelphia  
25<sup>TH</sup> & THOMPSON STREETS • PHILADELPHIA, PA 19121

President Our Sun Paul represents KOTC at the United Missionary Baptist Church in Philadelphia, performing a one man show crafting three monologues as a tribute to Hymns of the Black Church and Rev. Charles A. Tindley.

## March

KOTC partners again with the African American Museum of Philadelphia to put on two virtual workshops on Black Women's History, and stories on the importance of tea in Black culture. The event is directed by Irma Gardner Hammond and Carla Wiley.

**Jawara's 75th Birthday Wish**

Sun up to Sun down,  
seventy five years and  
Jawara is still around!  
Kept by God, day by day,  
this is what she wants on  
her 75th birthday:

75 people coming  
onto Zoom,  
laughing and  
telling stories,  
in a virtual living room!

Zoom Meeting ID: 826 9634 1413  
Join by phone: 301-715-8592  
Enter meeting ID, then press pound #

Sisters dress nice, put  
makeup on that face!  
Brothers dress sharp,  
with your smile in place.

Get your stem glasses,  
fill them with wine!  
It's March 27th,  
7PM EST, that's for real,  
not Jawara time!

KOTC throws a virtual birthday party for Co-Founder Jawara Bishop's 75th Birthday!

## April

KOTC Treasurer Nashid Ali, begins weekly appearances on the "Groundings with Brother Shomari" Radio Show. Throughout the show, he tells stories from the character "Pop Pop Grow Somethin" based on his grandfather. Nashid opens the opportunity and KOTC members come on the show to tell stories throughout the year. Listen in on Sundays from 6pm to 8pm EST on [WURD Radio](#)



The KOTC Teller Development Committee begins a series of workshops to refresh and newly train members in the craft. Sessions topics included Storytelling Basic, Telling using Technology, and interpreting the KOTC Ishara (logo).

# Keepers Of The Culture, Inc. Workshop Series



**GETTING READY TO TELL:**  
Performance Techniques and Tips  
Mama Irma Gardener Hammond  
Mama Wanda Gidgetts  
Dr. Carolise Frink Reed

2021-03-06 11:12:41

**THE KEEPERS OF THE CULTURE ISHARA:**  
A Valuable Tool For Traveling The Black Storytelling Universe  
Present by Nashid Furaha -Ali (Storyteller for Peace Inside Black Life)

- Have a paper and pen ready
- Mute your mic unless you are speaking.
- Have the KOTC Logo pulled up to view throughout the workshop
- Bring your Joy!

2021-03-20 11:03:58

**Video Norms**

- I am presentable BEFORE I turn my camera on. I check myself in the mirror.
- My background is not offensive.
- My background is nice, but not distracting.
- I am in a space with little or no distractions.
- I am in a well lit area.
  - I place lights in front of me when I can.
  - I use ring lights or a face a window in the daytime. Melanin + Natural Light= Win!
- I stay aware of my facial expressions.
- I tell people around me that I am on camera.
- I cover or turn my camera off if I need to step away. (Phone face down, cover with cloth or tape. "Sliding doors")
- Key takeaway: Prepare yourself as if you are attending in person!

2021-04-10 11:54:00

KOTC continues its residency at Franklin Square with the African American Museum of Philadelphia, telling stories of Mother Earth for Earth Day.



## June

KOTC reemerges with it's first in-person event since January 2020, teaming up with the Stenton House Museum of Historic Germantown, creating a Juneteenth Festival for the public. The day was filled with original stories and reenactments from Our Sun Paul and Irma Gardner Hammond, and performances by the Women's Sekere Ensemble, and Universal African Dance & Drum Ensemble.





KOTC Elders gather to celebrate Co-Founder Wanda Gigetts's birthday!

### July 2020

KOTC creates programming for its corporate collaborator Highspot of Seattle, Washington once again in observance of Juneteenth. The company was closed for the weekend of Juneteenth, and request the program be presented the week of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July instead. Nashid Ali, Our Sun Paul, and Shani Carrington tells stories of Juneteenth, the Underground Railroad, and excerpts from Frederick Douglas' essay "What Is The Fourth Of July to The Slave?"

### August

KOTC takes its annual month of hiatus to rest and regroup for the upcoming season.

### September

KOTC returns from hiatus. The Watoto of Joy are reformed after a three year hiatus through enrolling the students of the SAHGE Academy into the Growing Griots Program of NABS Affiliate Griots Circle of Maryland. Thirteen students from Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and St. Louis enroll.

### October 2020

KOTC members join the Spirit of the Drum honoring veteran KOTC member Atiya Ola and fellow mother of the community, Mama Kay for their extensive contributions to the Black community for over fifty years. Enthroned on the Elders Stool, they are officially recognized as Black Elders of the Community.



## Conclusion

This year was a learning curve for Keeper's Of The Culture, Inc. The pandemic of the COVID-19 virus led many to a state of anxiety and panic. But being true to our culture and faith, we used the tragedy to triumph, turning straw into gold, and dirt into diamonds. We were reminded of the many stories of our people that speak to our resilience and strength. The opposition of not storytelling in person created opportunities for us to try new things and start on a path of innovation. Our perceptions were shifted. All this time on our hands was a gift; time to worry shifted to time to work on things that we had tabled for so long. Time that we often complained of not having enough of was all of sudden plentiful and gave us the time we needed to rest. As Keepers Of The Culture, Inc. moves forward in these changing times, I am reminded of an old hymn of the Black Church, saying "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand" We are Black Storytellers, and as the world changes, our narrative of hope, strength, and an indomitable spirit will forever remain true.

**In Spirit, In Love, In Culture,**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P.D. Best". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Paul D. Best, "Our Sun Paul"  
President  
Keepers Of The Culture, Inc.

KEEPERS OF THE CULTURE, INC.

Philadelphia's Afrocentric Storytelling Group

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