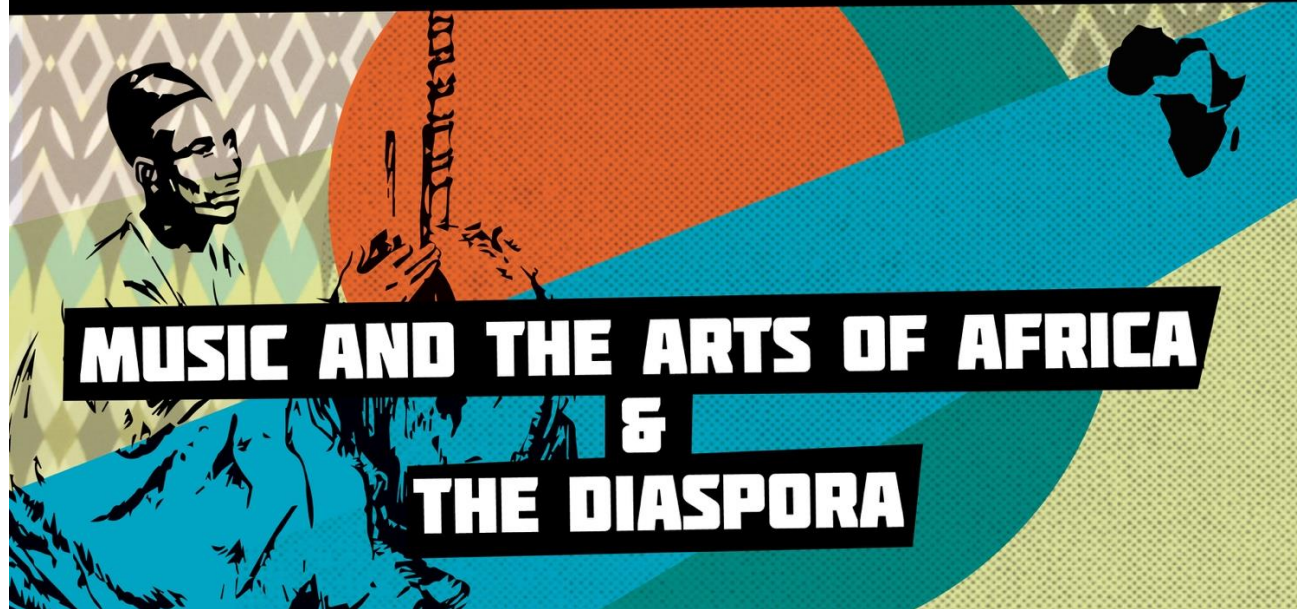


**41ST ANNUAL NYASA CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK CITY | APRIL 1, 2016 – APRIL 2, 2016**

**HOSTED BY THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK AND COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**



## **ABOUT NYASA**

The New York African Studies Association (NYASA), founded in 1967 as the SUNY African Studies Faculty Association, is a non profit membership association, incorporated as NYASA in 1975, dedicated to advancing the discipline of Africana Studies. As a regional organization, the New York African Studies Association promotes the visibility and advancement of the discipline in New York State and surrounding areas, and offers opportunities for the scholarly and professional development of educators, and enhanced education for community members, leaders and activists.

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Dear NYASA 2016 Participants:

The Organizing Committee of the 2016 New York African Studies Association conference welcomes you all to our historic conference in New York City. It has been an honor for us to co-organize this special conference that marks the 41<sup>th</sup> NYASA conference. We would like to thank all leaders, colleagues, and staff members of our institutions – The City College (CUNY) and Columbia University for all their amazing support.

We look forward to an exciting conference at both personal and intellectual levels.

Cheryl Sterling

Abdul Nanji

Kevin Hickey

## **WELCOME FROM THE NEW YORK AFRICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT!!**

It is indeed my great pleasure to welcome all participants and presenters to the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference for the New York African Studies Association (NYASA). The theme of the conference, “Music and Arts of Africa and the Diaspora” is critical to African people in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In addition to the importance of theme, this conference is an historic event for the following four markers:

- \* This is the first time in forty years the Executive Board of NYASA decided to devote a whole conference on music and arts.
- \* It is the first time the conference is simultaneously hosted by two institutions in New York City, The City College (CUNY) and Columbia University.
- \* For City College, this is the first time it is hosting a NYASA Conference.
- \* It is the first time the conference will present live performances.
- \* The last NYASA Conference hosted by Columbia University, was the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in 1978, 38 years ago.

I would like to extend our warm thanks to Professor Cheryl Sterling, Director of Black Studies, The City College (CUNY), the former Dean Eric Weitz of the School of the Humanities and Arts and President Lisa Coico at The City College, Professor Mamadou Diouf, Director, Institute of African Studies, Columbia University, Professor Sheldon

Pollack, Chair, Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS), Columbia University for hosting and for providing financial support for this conference.

I further extend our gratitude to Professor Alondra Nelson, Dean of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Science, Columbia University, Professor Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Chair, French and Romance Philology Department, Professor Rashid Khalidi, Chair, History Department, and Professor Samuel Roberts, Director of The Institute for Research in African American Studies for their generous financial donations. The work of organizing a conference of this size and scope is no easy task. For this, I thank Professor Kevin Hickey, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, NYASA Vice President and Conference Coordinator. We also thank members of the Local Conference Committee, the administrative staff at Black Studies Program, The City College (CUNY), the Institute of African Studies and MESAAS Department, Columbia University.

We acknowledge and especially thank all Plenary Session participants and Marriame Sy, Director of African Language Program, Columbia University, for her role in organizing special panels on African Languages where presentation are in three African languages, Wolof, Yoruba, and Kiswahili (Swahili).

Congratulations to Professor Deborah Willis for receiving the NYASA Distinguished Africanist Award and thank you for agreeing to give the keynote address.

Every year in recognition for scholarship, leadership, activism, and community service, NYASA gives a Book Award, Honorary Mention of a book(s), The Ali Mazrui Outstanding Publication / Book and Educational Activities Award, The Roger Gocking Award for Best Undergraduate Paper, The Distinguished Teacher Award, and The Community Service Award. We are encouraging NYASA members to submit names for 2017 wards.

Enjoy the conference and New York City.

Sincerely,  
Mwalimu Abdul Nanji,  
President, NYASA.

**Recipient of the 2016 NYASA Distinguished Africanist Award**



**Dr. Deborah Willis, University Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University**

Deborah Willis, Ph.D, is University Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and has an affiliated appointment with the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Social & Cultural, Africana Studies, where she teaches courses on Photography & Imaging, iconicity, and cultural histories visualizing the black body, women, and gender. Her research examines photography's multifaceted histories, visual culture, the photographic history of Slavery and Emancipation; contemporary women photographers and beauty.

She received the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship and was a Richard D. Cohen Fellow in African and African American Art, Hutchins Center, Harvard University; a John Simon Guggenheim Fellow, and an Alphonse Fletcher, Jr. Fellow. Willis is the author of *Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present*; *Out [o] Fashion Photography: Embracing Beauty*; *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers - 1840 to the Present*; *Let Your Motto be Resistance – African American Portraits*; *Family History Memory: Photographs by Deborah Willis*; *VANDERZEE: The Portraits of James VanDerZee*; and co-author of *The Black Female Body A Photographic History with Carla Williams*; *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery with Barbara Krauthamer*; and *Michelle Obama: The First Lady in Photographs* (both titles a NAACP Image Award Winner). She lectures widely and has authored many papers and articles on a range of subjects including *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, *Gordon Parks Life*

*Works, Steidl, Volume II; America's Lens in Double Exposure: Through the African American Lens*; "Photographing Between the Lines: Beauty, Politics and the Poetic Vision of Carrie Mae Weems," in *Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography & Video*, and "Malick Sidibé: The Front of the Back View" in *Self: Portraiture and Social Identity*. Professor Willis is editor of *Picturing Us: African American Identity in Photography*; and *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her "Hottentot"*, which received the Susan Koppelman Award for the Best Edited Volume in Women's Studies by the Popular Culture/American Culture Association in 2011.

Exhibitions of her art work include: *A Sense of Place*, Frick, University of Pittsburgh; *Regarding Beauty*, University of Wisconsin, *Interventions in Printmaking: Three Generations of African-American Women*, Allentown Museum of Art; *A Family Affair*, University of South Florida; *I am Going to Eatonville*, Zora Neale Hurston Museum; *Afrique: See you, see me*; *Progeny: Deborah Willis + Hank Willis Thomas*. Gantt Center.

Professor Willis's curated exhibitions include: "Convergence", Joan Mitchell Center, New Orleans; "Out [o] Fashion Photography: Embracing Beauty," Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, "Visualizing Emancipation," Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, "Gordon Parks: 100 Moments," Schomburg Center; "Posing Beauty Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African American Portraits" at the International Center of Photography and, "Social in Practice: The Art of Collaboration", Nathan Cummings Foundation.

In addition to making art, writing and teaching, she has served as a consultant to museums, archives, and educational centers. She has appeared and consulted on media projects including the documentary films such as *Through A Lens Darkly*, *Question Bridge: Black Males*, a transmedia project, which received the ICP Infinity Award 2015, and *American Photography*, PBS Documentary. Since 2006 she has co-organized thematic conferences exploring imaging the black body in the West. Professor Willis has been elected to the board of the Society for Photographic Education, where she was Chair of the Board and received the Honored Educator Award in 2012 and the College Art Association. She holds honorary degrees from Pratt Institute and the Maryland Institute, College of Art. She is currently researching a book on an early 20th century portraitist and educator.

## **Plenary Session Participants**

### **Plenary Session I – The City College**



### **Innov Gnawa**

Innov Gnawa is a young musical collective dedicated to exploring Morocco's venerable gnawa music tradition in the heart of New York City. Formed in the summer of 2014 by Moroccan expat Samir LanGus, the group draws on the considerable talents and expertise of Hassan Ben Jaafer, a Maâlem, or master gnawa musician, originally from Fes, Morocco. Under the guidance of Ben Jaafer, Innov has delved deep into the roots and rituals of gnawa music, and made a big splash in NYC, playing some of the city's most prestigious rooms including Lincoln Center, Music Hall of Williamsburg, Brooklyn Bowl and the storied backroom of Brooklyn's Barbès.



### **Banning Eyre**

Banning Eyre is Senior Editor of Afropop.org, a music commentator for National Public Radio, and the author of three books on African music the most recent of which is his 2015 *Lion Songs: Thomas Mapfumo and the Music That Made Zimbabwe* (Duke UP). His first two books were *AFROPOP! An Illustrated Guide to Contemporary African Music* (1995 with Sean Barlow) and *In Griot Time, An American Guitarist in Mali* (Temple UP, 2000). Banning has researched music in 16 African countries publishing articles in over a dozen journals as well as a 2001 report for the Danish human rights organization Freemuse entitled *Playing With Fire: Fear and Self-Censorship in Zimbabwean Music*. Banning Eyre currently performs with his fusion



band Timbila whose roots are in the music of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and he is a contributing musician on numerous CDs by Thomas Mapfumo as well as Taj Mahal and Toumani Diabate's 1999 *Kulanjan*.

### **Lunch Session - The City College (CUNY)**



#### **Kevin L. Tucker**

Kevin Tucker has been described as having both a “very expressive and smooth vocal style”. Kevin has performed in musicals, opera and choral ensembles like the Georgia State University Opera and Americolor Opera Alliance of Atlanta, and with The Lawrence Weaver Choral, Atlanta Voices and The Luke Frazier City Singers of New York. In recording and television, Kevin has performed and recorded with Christine Horn an indie label Alternative R& B artist, Malcolm Caulori a contemporary composer of the recording *Dangerous Liaisons*, LeSean Lewis’s recital recording concert, and the 2010 American Idol Show jingle for Fox News.

### **Lunch Session – Columbia University**



#### **Chris Washburne**

Chris Washburne has performed with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, Justin Timberlake, Celia Cruz, Ruben Blades, Marc Anthony, Gloria Estefan, They Might Be Giants, Chico O’Farrill, Ray Barretto, Roscoe Mitchell, Arturo Sandoval, Paquito D’Rivera, among many others. He leads his own highly acclaimed groups SYOTOS and NYNDK and is a member of FFEAR (Forum for Electro-Acoustic Research).

In 1999 he completed his Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology at Columbia University. He is currently Associate Professor of Music and Found Director of the Louis Armstrong Jazz Performance Program at Columbia University in New York. He has published numerous articles on jazz, Latin jazz, and salsa. He is author of the book “Sounding Salsa: Performing Latin Music in New York” (2008) and editor of the book “Bad Music” (2004).

## **PLENARY SESSION II – COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**



### **Dr. James Conyers**

Dr. James Conyers is an Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Director of Africana Studies at Kean University in Union, New Jersey. He holds a B.A. in Black and Puerto Rican Studies from Hunter College and a M.A. and Ph.D. in African-American Studies from Temple University. His field of teaching and research include African civilizations with a special emphasis on ancient Nile Valley history, culture, and language. He is the first person of African descent to develop an accredited course in Ancient Egyptian language at a state university in New Jersey. Among his publications are “Edward Wilmot Blyden’s Pedagogy on Race and Education: A Nineteenth Century African-centric Polemic,” and “Love, Sex, Sexuality, and Gender in Ancient Kemet: Paradigms for African-American

Male/Female Relationships.” Dr. Conyers has traveled widely in Africa and the Caribbean, and he has lectured all over the world. He currently teaches: Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Language, Ancient Egyptian Culture, Archaeology, Cultural Anthropology, and African-American History and Culture.



### **Rene McClean**

Rene McClean was born in New York City, Renè Profit-McLean (a/k/a Muhammad Al-Amien Abdul Kariem) world renowned Multi-reed Instrumentalist (Alto, Tenor, Soprano saxophone, Flutes, Ney, Shakuhachi), Composer, Band leader, Educator and Producer, began his musical training at the age of nine under the tutelage and guidance of his father, world renowned alto saxophonist and educator Jackie McLean. Renè recounts: “My father began giving me the saxophone in stages beginning with the mouth piece then the neck and finally the horn”. As an adolescent, the young McClean was already performing with local Jazz, R&B, Calypso, Latin and other bands of varied musical traditions, making his debut with Jackie McLean’s band in the early-1960’s as well as leading his own band’s.

Renè has performed and recorded as a leader and featured sideman with the crème de la crème of Black Musical tradition such as: the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band, Lionel Hampton – All Stars, Tito Puente Orchestra, Caesar Concepcion Orchestra, Frank Foster’s Loud Minority, Sam River’s Harlem Ensemble, Ray Charles Orchestra and the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra; to the smaller ensembles of : Jackie McLean, Horace Silver, Woody Shaw, Dr. Bill Taylor, Doug and Jean Carn, Baba Olatunji, Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba, Abbey Lincoln, Arthur Prysoc, Little Jimmy Scott, Dexter Gordon, James Moody, Yusef Lateef, Jaco Pastorius, Jerry Gonzales’ Forte Apache Band, Hamza El Din, as well as incollaboration with premier poet-activist Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones), Jayne Cortez/Fire Spitters and as Musical Director/ Composer for the production of Ntozake Shange’s play “For Colored Girls...”, choreographed and directed by George

Faison and Oedipus the King directed by Jonathan Wilson, Mclean has also appeared in the movie Cotton Club and advertising adds for BASF and Smith & Barney Investments.



### **Kewulay Kamara**

Kewulay Kamara, poet-storyteller, multi-media artist and lecturer, has been the subject of articles in The New York Times and has appeared on A&E Television, PBS, and other outlets. Kewulay has performed at St. John the Divine, Symphony Space, City Center, Oxford University, and the Dodge Poetry Festival. He narrated the TBS documentary, Legends of the Bushmen. He directed In Search Finah Misa Kule: the story of a people who live by the word, a documentary of epic poetry, history and music. Mr. Kamara is a senior consultant, expert facilitator, for UNESCO.. He was recently featured in TEDx, A Foresight Storytelling Experience and in Atlanta Interfaith Broadcasting (AIB)' s Sacred Sounds.



### **Rashidah Ismaili Abu-Bakr**

Rashidah Ismaili AbuBakr is a poet, playwright, and a writer of fiction and non-fiction. Her work is widely anthologized and has been translated into; Arabic, Catalan, Dutch, French, Japanese, Mandarin, Papiamento, Spanish, Turkish and Uzbek. She is the author of five collections of poems. A play, “RiceKeepers” has been published and performed nationally and internationally. Most recently she has officiated at several memorials for Sathima Bea Benjamin, a South African Jazz singer and former exile, Jayne Cortez, and Amiri Baraka. She attended the 40th Anniversary of African Literature Association, in South Africa where she presented a paper on the Exile Community in New York of South African artists and activists. Her novel in linked stories; *Autobiography of the Lower East Side* has just been published by North Hampton Press. Ismaili-AbuBakr is active in the Harlem community and hosts Salon d’Afrique, where artists, cultural workers from all over the world gather. She is featured in the documentary movie; *Zwelededumile*, by Ramadan Suleman. The film is a tribute to the late visual artist Dumile Feni, who lived in exile in England and finally America for over twenty five years. He died on the eve of his return to South Africa. Her poem is a dirge she composed for him and is prominent in the film. She is currently completing a novel.



## **Randy Weston**

Randy Weston is an internationally renowned pianist, composer, bandleader and cultural ambassador, whose compositions encompass the vast rhythmic heritage of Africa. Still a true innovator and visionary after six decades of active work, Randy Weston continues to inform and inspire.

Randy Weston was born April 6, 1926, and raised in Brooklyn, New York, the son of a Jamaican father and a mother from Virginia. As a boy he didn't have to travel far to hear the early jazz giants that were to influence him. Although Weston cites Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Art Tatum as piano heroes, it was Thelonious Monk who had the greatest impact. "He was the most original I ever heard," Mr. Weston remembers. "He played like they must have played in Egypt 5000 years ago."

Weston's lifelong connection with African music and culture is due in large to his father, Frank Edward Weston, who told his son that he was, "an African born in America." "He told me I had to learn about myself, about him and about my grandparents," stated Weston, "and the only way to do it was I'd have to go back to the motherland one day."

In 1960, inspired by Nigeria's newly won independence from the United Kingdom, Weston began to experiment with elements of tribal music as well as those of High Life, Nigerian pop music. On his 1960 album *Uhuru Afrika* (for which Langston Hughes wrote the liner notes), Weston composed for large ensemble and employed traditional African percussion and rhythms as a framework for a jazz suite. Weston's affinity for African music became the force behind dozens of albums released over the past five decades. During that time, he has never failed to make the connection between African and American music.

In the late 60's, Weston left the United States, but instead of moving to Europe like so many of his contemporaries, Weston went to Africa. Although he settled in Morocco, he traveled throughout the continent tasting the musical fruits of other nations. One of his

most memorable experiences was the 1977 Nigerian Festival, which drew artists from 60 cultures. “At the end,” Weston says, “we all realized that our music was different but the same, because if you take out the African elements of bossa nova, samba, jazz, blues, you have nothing. To me, it’s Mother Africa’s way of surviving in the new world.”

After six decades devoted to music, Randy Weston continues to record, teach and perform throughout the Americas, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Europe. In 2006 he performed at the Pan African Dance Festival as Cultural Ambassador for the World Culture Open in Kigali, Rwanda. That same year he performed at the Panama Jazz Festival in Panama City and at the Queen Elizabeth Hall with his Quartet and the BBC Big Band in London. He had the honor of playing at the in Kamigamo Shrine in 2008. In 2010 he celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Uhuru Africa recording with a concert celebration.

Randy Weston has been the recipient of many awards, including an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Brooklyn College, City University of New York, in June 2006. In 2009, he was added to the ASCAP Jazz Wall of Fame. On May 11, 2011 Randy received the award of Royal Wissam of National Merit of the Order of Officer by command of His Majesty the King Mohammed VI of Morocco for his lifelong engagement with Morocco. *African Rhythms: The Autobiography of Randy Weston*, composed by Randy Weston, arranged by Willard Jenkins, was published in 2010.

### **Plenary Session III – Columbia University**



#### **Taoufik Ben Amor**

Dr. Ben Amor specializes in Arabic language and linguistics, language and identity, Arab music, and music in Sufism. His research combines his interests in music, language and identity in the Arab world through the study of lyrics. His most recent papers are entitled “The Making of Tradition: Standardization of the Lyrics of the Tunisian

Andalusian Malouf,” “States of Mind: Music in Islamic Sufi rituals,” “The Politics of Language and the Formalization of the Iraqi Maqam,” and “Bilingual Dissidence: Arabic and French in Algerian Rai Music.” Dr. Ben Amor is currently working on a book entitled: *The Making of Tradition: Language, Music and Identity in the Arab World*. Professor Ben Amor is also a performing musician and music producer.

### **Matthew Morrison**

Matthew D. Morrison is an Assistant Professor in the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. Matthew has served as Editor-in-Chief of the journal, *Current Musicology*. His published work has appeared in publications such as the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, the *Grove Dictionary of American Music*, and on Oxford University Press's online music blog. Matthew is currently the Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs for the W. E. B. Du Bois Scholars Institute at Princeton University. His in-progress book project, *American Popular Sound: From Blackface to Blacksound*, considers the implications of positing sound and music as major components in both individual and societal identity formations, particularly the construction of race. Matthew also curates and contracts a variety of performances featuring some of the most dynamic musicians in the New York City metro area.



### **Imani Uzuri**

Imani Uzuri has collaborated with a cross section of artists across various disciplines including Herbie Hancock, John Legend, Vijay Iyer, Sanford Biggers, Carrie Mae Weems, Wangechi Mutu and Robert Ashley. In 2012, Uzuri released her critically acclaimed second album, *The Gypsy Diaries*. Uzuri was a 2015 Park Avenue Armory Artist-in-Residence. March 2016 will mark Uzuri’s Lincoln Center’s American Songbook series debut.

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