



African American Cultural Center Inc.

"we inspire urban generations!"

GateKeeper

December 2014



The AACC Dance & Drum Performance Company backstage at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with DanceAfrica founder and director "Baba Chuck" Davis. .

AACC Dance & Drum Company Performs at DanceAfrica

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ▶ PRT'S PAULETTE HARRIS TAKES CENTER STAGE
- ▶ NEW EDAS DIRECTOR
- ▶ AACC YEAR in REVIEW
- ▶ 2013-2014 DONORS

In Ghana, it is customary to call "ago" to get someone's attention. Responding "amee" acknowledges you have heard. This West African call and response tradition defines the AACC experience as part of DanceAfrica 2014. *(story on p. 3)*



716

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2013

urban
generations



Thank You for Helping the AACC to Inspire Urban Generations

Agnes M. Bain *Executive Director*

It is hard to believe it has been 56 years since the African American Cultural Center began.

In 1958, the vision of AACC founder Malcolm Erni was to offer children and families on Buffalo's East Side a dedicated place to learn about and celebrate African American culture and history. He believed it would benefit the entire community.

He was right. Since 1958, we have inspired three urban generations to become legislators and lawyers, actors, playwrights, administrators, entrepreneurs and educators.

This year, I am proud to share the wonderful accomplishments of the members of our own AACC family.

The AACC Dance & Drum Performance Company was chosen to be a part of the prestigious DanceAfrica celebration at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Youssou Lo, our dance and drum director, who is a master artist as well as drummer, mounted his second exhibit in our dance chamber. And Paul Robeson Theatre Artistic Director Paulette D. Harris captured numerous awards for her contributions to the community.

We would not be here without our committed staff – or the many friends and supporters, patrons and parents who carry us through. Thank you: You are appreciated. With your continued support, we will be here for the next 56 years.



MISSION | VISION | CONTACT > African American Cultural Center
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716.884.2013 africanacultural350@gmail.com
www.aaccbuffalo.org

The African American Cultural Center is a 501 (c) 3 not for profit multipurpose cultural arts performance and education agency founded in 1958 to help develop urban Buffalo to its highest potential. Its core mission is to promote, sponsor and develop programs and services that exhibit an appreciation of and allegiance to African American heritage – and to enhance social behavior among African American youth through multi-disciplinary training in the arts. The agency is supported through public funds from the City of Buffalo Community Development Block Grant, City of Buffalo Youth Bureau, the County of Erie, NYS Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, NYS Office of Children and Family Services and the State of New York, AT & T - and through the generosity of community, corporate and private friends and supporters.



The AACC Dance & Drum Performance Company on stage at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. INSET: Lynette Simmons and Linda Barr sharing DanceAfrica information on the air at WUFO.



TAKE a DANCE CLASS
TAKE a DRUM CLASS

Ages 6-8

Tuesdays 5-6 pm

Ages 9-12

Thursdays 5-6 pm

Ages 13+

Saturdays 4 -5 pm

“Dance is for everybody. I believe that the dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people.”

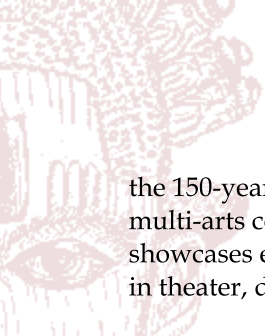
ALVIN AILEY

The call and response of West African tradition illustrates the experience of the AACC Dance & Drum Performance Company as part of DanceAfrica 2014.

DanceAfrica founder and director “Baba Chuck” Davis came to Buffalo to audition the AACC dancers and drummers in November 2013.

“He was canvassing Upstate New York for dance and drum companies to perform in DanceAfrica 2014. Our company was selected to participate from among 10 regional companies,” AACC contract administrator Tammy Gaines said.

Established in 1977, DanceAfrica is the nation's largest celebration dedicated to African dance, and the longest-running annual program of



the 150-year-old Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). BAM is a multi-arts center that engages global and local communities, and showcases emerging artists with world-renowned programming in theater, dance, music, opera, film and other genres.



AACC in rehearsal at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Before leaving for Brooklyn, Baba Chuck came to Buffalo to work one-on-one with the AACC company. “He provided a unique experience for us. We were all honored to have been under his tutelage,” Gaines said.

At BAM, the AACC was part of five performances with Asase Yaa and Restoration of New York City, and Bakomanga from Madagascar, the DanceAfrica 2014 featured artist.

“Each company brought exciting and exhilarating performances to the stage. Music and dance are inseparable. Each is like a manifestation of the other,” said Gaines.

In addition to Gaines, the following company members traveled to BAM for DanceAfrica 2014: company co-administrator Linda Barr; Lynette Simmons and Youssou Lo, artistic directors; dancers Netanya Thompson, Shyana Broughton, Janae Brown, Onija Martin and Megan Lestak; and drummers Brandon Gaines, Denzell Cottrell, Anthony Gaines and Marvin Harris.

AACC participation was made possible through BAM funding from the New York State Council on the Arts, with support from Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Staff News

Tammy L. Gaines earned her M.E. degree in business and marketing from Buffalo State College. She is now a certified teacher at Bennett High School, and continues to work at AACC as contract administrator and marketing assistant.



PRT'S Paulette Harris Takes Center Stage



Paulette D. Harris has been the artistic director of the Paul Robeson Theatre since 1996. At left, Harris with AACC Executive Director Agnes M. Bain and NYS Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes.

Paul Robeson Theatre artistic director Paulette D. Harris has had a laurel-filled year. She earned her B.S. degree in arts from Empire State College in 2013, and taught “Black Drama in America” as an adjunct professor during the spring 2014 semester at Buffalo State College.



@PauletteDHarris

In March, Harris was included among 29 community leaders honored at the 5th Annual Roses for Outstanding Women awards program. Over the summer, she wrote two of the five PRT 2014 – 2015 season productions.

Harris serves as board secretary for the Arts Services Initiative of Western New York: in October, her alma mater named her a distinguished alumnus, and she received an inaugural Alemaedae Theatre Award for her role as a Buffalo theater mentor. In addition, under her leadership the Paul Robeson Theatre captured a 2014 International Center for Women Playwrights 50/50 Applause Award, given to theaters that produced 50 percent or more women playwrights in their season.

Harris came to the African American Cultural Center in 1988 as a volunteer. She was named the artistic director of the Paul Robeson Theatre in 1996, and has been employed full time as a production assistant at WGRZ-Channel 2 for 18 years. She is currently pursuing a master’s degree in liberal arts.



On
Stage
Next

Burying the Bones

February 6 -
March 1 2015
by M.E.H. Lewis

*In South Africa
at the end of
Apartheid,
a young
Xhosa woman
confronts the
Truth and
Reconciliation
Commission to
learn what
happened to her
husband, abducted
two years earlier.*

illustrations by James W. Cooper III



Paul Robeson Theatre

2014 – 2015
47th Season
716.884.2013

*Tickets.
Subscriptions.
Group Reservations.*

Simply Annette*

March 20-22 2015
by Paulette D. Harris

*The story of a
single mother's
determination to
achieve her goals.*



How I Got Over May 1 -24 2015

by Paulette D. Harris
*A joyous celebration of life and music
shared by Western New York's
most beloved gospel singers.*



AACC 2014: Year in Review

M&T Black History Month Program

The AACC presented a Black History Month program in February 2014 for M&T Bank's African American Resource Group for the second consecutive year. Themed "Experience the Experience" and coordinated by AACC marketing manager Tammy L. Gaines, performers included, among others, singer Drea D'Nur, storyteller Sharon Holley, poet Priscilla Hill and, of course, the AACC Dance & Drum Performance Company - with a jazz finale by Will Holton & Friends.



Award-winning storyteller Sharon Holley.



Drea D'Nur.



Will Holton and Friends.



Annual Easter Party



PRT Mother's Day Dinner Theater



Positive Productive Sisters



Positive Productive Sisters has had a busy year! The AACC self-mentoring group for girls ages 10 to 17 was founded in 2010 by Paulette S. Counts, who remains the program director. PPS meets Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at the AACC. This year, in addition to helping to host the 2014 AACC Tea Social, activities included a Mother Daughter Dinner, visit to the Nash House Museum, making hats and pillows and a sleepover. For information on joining PPS call 716.884.2013.

ABOVE TOP: AACC board chair and PPS founder and director Paulette S. Counts (center) with PPS members at the 2014 AACC Tea Social; (l to r): Chantal Rowe, Desiray Slaughter, Nia Hawkins and Quanaejah McPhyrce. BOTTOM: Fun and games at the PPS Mother Daughter Dinner!



2014 Mother Daughter Sister Friend AACC Afternoon Tea Social

About 100 guests came out for the 4th annual AACC Mother Daughter Sister Friend Afternoon Tea Social, held June 22 under a tented AACC parking lot. The program featured opera by Tedyra Barton-Harris, violin performances by Johnny and Jaliyah Linton, Laila Myree, Meihea and Marisa Gachette and Destiny Wright Butler; and poetry by Priscilla Hill and Janae Brown.



2014 Chair Chris Millhouse with granddaughter.

Honoree Helen Lee explained the importance and joy of being a longtime AACC supporter and “owning the front row seat” in our Paul Robeson Theatre. Fancy hats earned oohs and aahhs as Patricia Wideman took home the 2014 prize for her delectable “Double Cake” headpiece – and all enjoyed tantalizing treats by McDuffies Catering .

Asante sana to all our friends and supporters! To volunteer to help plan next year's event call 716.884.2013 or email africancultural350@gmail.com

Jumpin' Jambalaya Summer Program 2014



More than 50 kids participated in the 2014 Jumpin' Jambalaya Summer Program from June 30 to August 22. Classes included Sewing, Theatre, Line Dancing, African Dance & Drum, Basketball, Self Awareness, Soccer, Spelling Bee, Ballroom Dancing, Vocal Expression, Woodwork, Reading, Poetry, Creative Arts, Hip Hop, Cooking, Science, and Life Skills. Tammy Gaines is program coordinator.

25th Annual Pine Grill Jazz Reunion



AACC's Marvin Harris



Niki Haris



Dr. Lonnie Smith

On stage at the 25th Annual Pine Grill Jazz Reunion: Slatman Knowles, Mixon Quartet, Niki Haris and Dr. Lonnie Smith on August 3; The Jazz Example, Evolution, Kenny Woo, Unity Band and MochaSoule & The Nickel City Ballers on August 10. Join us for next year's Pine Grill Jazz Reunion on August 2 and August 9, 2015 in MLKing Jr. Park.





Runway shots by Floyd Baker.

22Ti - Live Mannequin Runway Show and Artist Expo

"What does your closet say about how you exist and are perceived in this world?"

The AACC co-sponsored and Paulette D. Harris hosted *22Ti: Live Mannequin Runway Show and Artist Expo* on June 14, 2014 to promote the creative expressions of local designers and artisans through performing and visual arts.

The event was conceived and facilitated by Nneka Uzoma Gigi - The Artist, who began designing jewelry in 2012 and clothing in 2013.

"Fashion is what you wear but style is a gift that is not always innate. Fashion and style should have a message, whether that is subliminal or direct," she said.

In addition to Gigi, featured designers included Rebecca "Sour Pearls", whose clothing balances self-expression and professionalism; Elizabeth Marie Knights, whose designs in hand-made fabrics explore new techniques in the textile field; and Veota Souvannavong, owner of Shopaholic Fashionista Boutique at 425 Elmwood Avenue.

Photographers: Ronnell Hudson, Floyd Baker, Bill Dorsey, Darron L. Whitsett.
Vendors: Chattrbox Magazine, Tracilynn Fashion Jewelry. Hair Stylist: Annette Christian. Sponsors: African American Cultural Center, WUFO MIX 1080 FM, WGRZ-TV Kiss FM 98.5.

Staff News

Custodian Chalma Warmley and EDAS Assistant Director Earmie Beason celebrated their first wedding anniversary on October 12 2014. Congratulations Mr. and Mrs. Warmley – and many more!





Nia Morse: A Generation of New Poetic Voice

Nia Morse, 13, is a 9th grader at #156 Olmsted School. She is enrolled in the Educational Directives After School program, takes part in the Jumpin' Jambalaya Summer Program and is a member of Positive Productive Sisters. A prolific writer, Nia has been coming to the AACC for about five years. This is one of her many insightful poems:

MAJORITY

My people will no longer appeal to the categorization of "Minority".

We are a Majority.

We have the authority to overcome adversity but first we have to come together
Drop the guns and un-ball fist because firearms and arson will not uphold our Strength.

We need brothers and sisters to stand together to show our relevance and soon To them we will be evidence of a real Majority liberal and upholding our rights.

“ I like to mostly be around my family and close friends. I really started writing when I was about 9 or 10 but always lose the paper.

“I really think that especially in this day and age that verbal communication is key. A lot of things happen throughout the daily lives of my peers and it's sad to say that I have seen and heard my peers express themselves in ways that could've been done better. I feel things like bullying and suicide can be relieved or resolved by simply expressing yourself.”

AACC STUDENT NEWS



*Shawn Michael
Edward Robinson*



*Quanaejah
McPhyrce*

The Affrican American Cultural Center is the only organization within the City of Buffalo and Erie County that provides affordable multi-disciplinary cultural arts entertainment and education programs for families and individuals of all ages.

The African American Cultural Center Educational Directives After School [EDAS] program was established in 1991 to provide urban children with a safe, nurturing environment at the end of the school day. EDAS helps to improve the city's high school graduation rate by providing academic support and life skills instruction to an annual average of 55 students from approximately 16 public and private schools.

For more EDAS information call 716-884-2013 or email africancultural350@gmail.com

2014 High School Gradutes

Brianna Koschnic
Devine Jones
Quanaejah McPhyrce
Shawn Michael Edward Robinson
Sierra Johnson

8TH Grade Graduates

Nia Morse - P.s. #81
Malik Springs (BAVPA)
Monet Seabury

Kindergarten Graduates

Ky'Riel Gadley
Southside #93

Honor Award Students

King Charter

Kamal Stephens
for maintaining a 90-100% in ELA
Kimora Stephens
for maintaining a 90-100% in ELA

Merit Award Students

Jaleah Gilmer
80-89% in Math
Nakyia Boyd
Awards for Drill Team 2014

Positive Productive Sisters (PPS)

8th Grade Graduates

Nia Morse
Monet Seabury



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A New Director for After School

Energetic, multi-talented and sophisticated, Ayana Williams, the new director of the AACC Educational Directives After School (EDAS) program, is sure to have a lasting impact on the children she nurtures every day:

“Growing up in an urban community, it is easy to get caught up in negative things. With this program, we’re helping children to push beyond barriers, break them, and keep on going.”

Daemen College alum Ayana Williams replaces Steve McMillion Jr. who had been EDAS director for 12 years.

Buffalo born and raised – an honors graduate of McKinley High School – Williams earned her B.A. in psychology with a minor in theater and entrepreneurship from Daemen College in 2013.

She came to the AACC in October 2013 as an intern, volunteered as a Paul Robeson Theatre usher the following spring, and made her PRT stage debut last season in *Branches from the Same Tree*. Previous acting credits include the role of Beneatha in a Daemen College production of *A Raisin in the Sun*, and working as an extra in the movie *Best Man Holiday*.



Above and at top: “Miss Ayana” with 7-year-old Ja’Kai Covington.

Williams taught Theater and Self-Awareness in the 2014 AACC Jumpin' Jambalaya Summer Program. While her first love is acting, she says her psychology background supports her in her new role as EDAS director, and in other areas as well: “It helps me every day, dealing with the children, dealing with myself, becoming more patient and understanding about human nature.”

EDAS serves East Side Buffalo school children from kindergarten through the 12th grade. Enrollment is free; children are dropped off by school bus, and receive homework help and life skills training. In addition to Williams the EDAS staff includes Earmie Beason, Marshawn Goodrum, Arthur Clark and Terri Polk.



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from Karen D. Williams

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effort to
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all who
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the AACC in
2013-2014.
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your name
has been
omitted,
please
contact
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(L. to R.): Kevin Hanna, Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Paulette S. Counts, Earl Hines, Agnes M. Bain, Legislator Betty Jean Grant, Dorothea Baxter-Hughes and Gwen Neal.

AT&T Grant

The AACC has received AT&T support for the third year. On October 13, AT&T regional director for external affairs Kevin Hanna presented AACC Executive Director Agnes M. Bain with a \$15,000 grant check to support youth programming. ► In addition to staff, NYS Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Erie County Legislator Betty Jean Grant, AACC board chair Paulette S. Counts and AACC board members Earl Smith, Dorothea Baxter-Hughes and Gwen Neal were on hand for the reception ► "AT&T is proud to provide resources to this important organization, which inspires so many young people to become whatever they want to be," Hanna said.

URBAN GENERATIONS Winter 2015 Calendar ►

January 5

January 19

February 6 - March 1

March 20-22

Classes resume

MLKing Jr. Day Holiday; AACC closed

Paul Robeson Theatre: "Burying the Bones"

Paul Robeson Theatre: "Simply Annette"



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African American Cultural Center inc.

"we inspire urban generations"

350 Masten Avenue
Buffalo NY 14209

The AACC is Your Passport to Cultural Adventure ► AACC Dance & Drum Performance Company
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Directives After School Program Jumpin' Jambalaya Summer Program Pine Grill Jazz Reunion