



PERCEPTIONS of Africa through

art

Monday, November 30, 2009
7 PM — Kay Spiritual Life Center
AIDS Awareness Week 2009

An evening of music, poetry, and discussion celebrating African creativity. Reception following with vegetarian Ethiopian food provided by Zed's Ethiopian Cuisine in Georgetown.

This event is free and open to the public.

poetry • song • art • music

Performers/Panelists including Galileo, Bassey Ikpi, Femi the Dri Fish, and Mahala.



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**“THE DARKEST THING
ABOUT AFRICA HAS ALWAYS BEEN
OUR IGNORANCE OF IT.”
-GEORGE KIMBLE**

LETTER FROM THE ORGANIZER

We need to have a conversation about Africa. There is a distorted understanding of the continent, simplifying an incredibly diverse union of over 50 countries to images of brightly colored textiles and noble animals walking past Lion King trees, of warring tribes and sad mothers burying babies lost to AIDS. Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie warns against stereotypes such as these, saying that “the danger of stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete.” When we close our hearts to the complexity within all of us we lose the ability to see each other’s humanity; when we are unable see each other’s humanity we lose some of our own.

We can learn from African ingenuity. In South Africa, where HIV prevalence is as high as 37% in some regions, residents of the townships have responded to the epidemic with a critical understanding of the interconnections between the spread of HIV and all forms of oppression. There are community-based programs like Umtha Welanga (Xhosa for “Rise and Shine”), run by residents who use their local knowledge to navigate complex social and familial networks to educate neighbors on financial management and opportunities and keep children orphaned by AIDS in school. There are youth groups like Africa Jam who use proverbs, music, and theatre to confront everything from gender violence to infidelity. There are amazing women like those who started the “Agenda” feminist media network while the country was still firmly under the heel of Apartheid who have published over 70 zines amplifying the voices of African women.

December 1 is World AIDS Day, when we renew our commitment to ending AIDS. One in every 20 adults in DC is living with the virus; DC’s HIV rate exceeds that of over half of the sub-Saharan African nations. Yet World AIDS Day often focuses on Africa and on dichotomizing “them” as being affected and “us” as potential saviors. When Americans look to ways of lessening the impact of the virus, we focus on individualized responses targeting what “you” can do, forgetting or ignoring the larger context in which people’s decisions are

LETTER FROM THE ORGANIZER

made. When aid is given to Africa, it is often given with stipulations that encourage generic, homogenizing programs that overlook local specificities. Whether in DC or in rural Africa, all too often we ignore local knowledge and skills. AIDS is affecting all of us, and we will benefit from listening to the wisdom of 30 years of fighting HIV with little resources.

We need to talk, and we need to listen. In the West African tradition of storytelling, griots combine both poetry and music with prose, traveling between communities acquiring and relating stories through music, song, poetry, and prose. In one West African tradition of storytelling, griots combine poetry and music with prose, traveling between communities acquiring and relating stories. Today we gather to hear a talented group of African poets and musicians, to value them both as artists and as teachers.

This World AIDS Day let us celebrate the creativity and vitality of Africa and Africans. Let's look at the AIDS crisis the world over as an intersection of innumerable social injustices. Let's acknowledge loss of lives anywhere as a loss to all of us. This World AIDS Day let's listen.

Thank you for choosing to join us.
Ravenna Motil-McGuire
ravennaelizabeth@gmail.com

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

MAHALA

AN AFRICAN STORY TOLD BY AFRICANS

Mongezi Chris Ntaka is an accomplished guitarist, arranger, composer and record producer. A native of South Africa, Ntaka started his musical career at an early age. He spent his early days performing with fellow Township musicians while attending music classes at a music conservatory in Johannesburg. His biggest break came at age



16 when he joined Lucky Dube as a lead guitarist. He went on to record six albums and went on numerous world tours with Lucky Dube & the Slaves. In 1994, Ntaka moved to the US where he formed the township music group MAHALA. Mongezi tours with Vusi Mahlasela and Lorraine Klaasen.

MAHALA has been the voice of Southern African music in the Washington, DC area where it has performed at the Smithsonian Institute, The Kennedy Center, National Geographic, The US Capitol, Baltimore's Arts Cape music festival and Taste of DC. MAHALA has also performed at the Chicago Cultural Center. The group's current line up includes KUKU, a Nigerian singer/songwriter who has an established solo career of his own.

www.myspace.com/mahalajive - montaka@att.net
www.kukulive.com - mr_kuku@hotmail.com

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:

US Capitol, Washington, DC: December 10, 2009
Milan, Italy: December 12, 13, 14 and 15, 2009

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

BASSEY IKPI



BASSEY IKPI, a Nigerian born poet/writer who has appeared on HBO's Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry 5 times. Her poetry has opened shows by Grammy Award winning artists. BASSEY appeared on the NAACP Image Awards as part of a tribute to Venus and Serena Williams. She has also been a featured cast member of the National Touring Company of the Tony Award winning Broadway show, Russell Simmon's Def Poetry Jam. BASSEY was a part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. In the Summer of 2009, BASSEY was a featured performer for Johannesburg, South Africa's annual arts festival, Joburg Arts Alive. BASSEY has also been seen gracing the pages of magazines such as Nylon, Marie Claire, Glamour and Bust. She also recorded an original poem for the Kaiser Foundations, HIV/AIDS campaign, Knowing Is Beautiful. BASSEY'S personal and heartfelt work has made her a much sought after performer. She is currently working on various screenplays as well as freelance writing for social media outlets. Her first completed collection of Poetry and Prose entitled, Blame My Teflon Heart: Poetry, Prose and Post-Its For Boys Who Didn't Write Back is expected for release in 2010.

FEMI THE DRI FISH

THE DRI FISH, London born, Nigeria raised, Baltimore resident is formally one half of the Nationally traveled spoken word poetry duo The 5th L (www.5thL.com). As a solo artist and part of The 5th L, THE DRI FISH has performed at over 50 colleges throughout the states of MD, DC, VA, PA, NY, SC, TX, MA, OH, performed on BET's Lyric Cafe', has a permanent exhibit featuring his work (written and audio) at the Reginald F Lewis museum located in Baltimore. He has shared stages with international recording artists such as Musiq Soulchild, Saul Williams, Ursula Rucker, Raheem DeVaughn, Bill Cosby, The Last Poets, Fertile Ground, Jaguar Wright, and KRS-One and recently took the stage at the Tennis 2009 U.S. Open. His writing and performance has been described as high energy animation and passion with drops of candid sarcasm from an out of water experience view.



Not only skilled in performance poetry, but is known to host events and venues and have committed his talents to avidly introducing creative writing classes to elementary through high school students, after school programs, detention centers throughout Maryland, Washington DC and Virginia. And for the past 6 years has been working toward lowering the homicide rate for youth and adults in the Baltimore area through facilitating a violence intervention program at The University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center (VIP). The 5th L & The Violence Prevention Program is inviting any of you with youth groups of any kind to take part of our P.H.A.T Program which takes place at the University Of Maryland Hospital, for more details please email thedrifish@5thL.com

http://www.umm.edu/shocktrauma/vip_phat.htm

TO PURCHASE THE 5TH L'S RECORDED PRODUCT VISIT

<http://cdbaby.com/all/5thlcom>

WWW.5thL.COM

GALILEO



Hip-hop lyricist, folk singer, arranger, poet and mathematician. Galileo plays the bass and guitar. Born in Silver Spring, MD and of the Ashanti tribe in Ghana. He spent his formative teenage years in Ghana. His mother of Akan royalty, is heavily involved in the empowerment of Youth and Women in Ghana; following the footsteps of her father who worked closely with Kwame Nkrumah after Independence.

Studying Mathematics and Philosophy at Howard University, Leonard continues to nurture his craft in literature and music. His upcoming projects include a book of poetry, *The Graveyard's Lullaby*, and a hiphop-afrobeat EP, *Caroline Calypso*. One can be introduced to his work by visiting his myspace ([/leothe griot](#)) and to find out more about upcoming shows.

MORE INFORMATION

**RECEPTION FOLLOWING DOWNSTAIRS
WITH FOOD PROVIDED BY ZED'S ETHIOPIAN CUISINE.**



Born in Ethiopia, Zed Wondemu has combined her remarkable drive with a desire to promote the love of her culture through sharing good food and hospitality and has become one of the DC area's most successful foreign-born woman restaurateurs.

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has so generously supported this event!

1201 28th St, NW Washington DC 20007
202-333-4710
<http://www.zeds.net>

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER ENGAGEMENT:

Africa Career Café
January 20 6:30-8:30pm
American University Mary Graydon Center Rooms 5-6

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS:

TransAfrica Forum <http://www.transafricaforum.org/>
(seeking interns and volunteers)
Africare <http://www.africare.org/>



