

Black Storytellers Alliance

Affiliate Report



Virtual All The Way!

So Covid-19 forced us to gather virtually for the 38th Annual “In The Tradition...” Festival and Conference for November 2020! And now in 2021 we are also virtual! That is all right as long as we can stay healthy! AND hopefully see each other soon!

So how did BSA manage during this past year? We continued to do as much as we could to make sure we continued to perpetuate and preserve the *art* of oral storytelling from an African/African American perspective.

And to that end, we held a zoom Kwanzaa event in December.

In January and February, we made virtual presentations to schools and libraries.

In March we began our storytelling classes again - 12 weeks with 14 students AND preparing to present our 30th Annual “Signifyin’ & Testifyin’” Black Master Storytelling Festival, VIRTUALLY!!!

April - we continued with our storytelling classes. We present our postponed September festival April 10th, 17th and 25th! Who was there virtually? Mama Koku, Atiba and Oceana, Gran’Daddy, Mother Minter, Toni Simmons, Valerie Tutson, Len Cabral, Oba William King and Kathy Culmer! And music by Eddie Robinson and Gwen Matthews! Yes, it was as fantastic as it sounds! Danielle was the consummate Mistress of Ceremonies. For the 1st time we also had three of our students from our storytelling class to represent as



Mama Koku (when we were live at Hennepin County Public Library)



Three storytelling students: David Hurst, LaZya Smith and Chiagoziem Anigbogu (Chi)



well: LaZya Smith, David Hurst and Chiagoziem Anigbogu. They were terrific! Mama Linda welcomed everyone and of course we had words from our then president, Sister Janice Curtis Green and our Executive Director Sister Vanora Legaux.

May - Classes continued and under strict Covid protocols, we presented in person to Twin Cities metro teachers and administrators of color.

June - Commencement celebration for the storytelling the classes with a virtual presentation by the students. We made several Juneteenth presentations in person and virtually. We also made sure everything was in place for the Karamu Community Communal Garden: We had a Master Gardener and several volunteers; connected to the city water; picked up plant donations and purchased plants as well.

July, August and September - we worked in collaboration with We -Win Institute and Minneapolis Public schools graduating students in a specially designed four-week cultural immersion program. we met with our festival advisory planning committee and tech specialist in preparation for our 31st Annual Black Master Storytellers Festival, “Signifyin’ & Testifyin’” September 24 and 25, 2021, VIRTUALLY! Our theme: **“Black Joy: Stories Celebrating Hope, Resilience and Love”**.

This time we added a local, young (13 - 18 years old), sibling band called Nunn Above to attract a younger audience to enjoy our Festival. And we added Internationally renown Storyteller Ms. Jan Blake of Manchester, England to our powerful line-up of Featured Tellers: Mama Linda Goss, Lyn Ford, Dylan Pritchett, Chetter Galloway, Gran’Daddy June Bug, Kristie Lazenberry, Atiba Kwabena Wilson, Mother Minter, Toni Simmons, Danielle Daniels and Joshua Gillespie! All that and Sister Gwen Matthews and Brother Robert “Eddie’ Robinson. The result was an uplifting 90 minutes showcasing and inspiring just a piece of the magic that we have in our own African resources!

We have placed both Festivals on website in case you missed it or simply want to enjoy it again:

<https://blackstorytellers.com/gallery/>.



Pictured above, left – right & top – bottom:

Joshua Gillespie, Danielle Daniel, Kristie Lazenberry, Dylan Pritchett, Toni Simmons and Nunn Above (artwork by Joshua)



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