**RIBS 2019 Report**

**Submitted to NABS**

**Oct 15, 2019**

**Submitted by Valerie Tutson**

**Winter**

**January 26-Feb 2, 2019**

RIBS presented its 21st Annual FUNDA FEST: A Celebration of Black Storytelling.

This is our flagship program.

RIBS presented 21 artists in public performances in Westerly, South Kingstown, Woonsocket, Providence and Newport. RIBS and invited regional and national artists also presented 43 school performances and 3 library shows across the state, reaching over 5500 people during FUNDA WEEK. Highlights included presenting Ron Daise of GULLAH GULLAH ISLAND, and introducing “Rugrat,” a young spoken word artist from Philadelphia. Our Saturday evening concert featured artists from their 20s to their 70s!

Additional performers included Linda and Sumner McClain, Teju Ologboni, Christylz Bacon, RIBS tellers Len Cabral, Ramona Bass Kolobe, Rochel Coleman, Valerie Tutson, Raffini, Marlon Carey, and returning founding member Abigail Ifatola Jefferson. Additional local artists included Yunnus Quddos, Habiba Quddos, Ana Paola, a young Cape Verdean performance artist.

RIBS presented 7 free school performances and two discounted programs in Providence schools reaching 1,675 students, plus their teachers and staff and 5 free programs in Newport county.

Funding for these programs was made possible by grants through the Providence Shelter for Colored Children and the Newport County Fund, respectively.

RIBS also worked with the teachers and staff at Gilbert Stuart Middle School to leverage the funds in partnership with Turnaround Arts. Consequently, the directors of RIBS and Turnaround Arts (Valerie Tutson and April Brown, along with music teacher Suzanne Dorian) were able to garner Rhode Island State Council on the Arts funding to present 3 programs at Gilbert Stuart during FUNDA FEST, and work with RIBS storytellers through the rest of the year to bring in an additional 5 programs that have direct curricular ties, and a workshop for teachers. Rochel Garner Coleman and Ron Daise presented at Gilbert Stuart. Valerie Tutson did a 10 day residency with 7th and 8th grade social studies classes. Marlon Carey worked with the “newcomers class” sharing his story about immigrating to the US from Jamaica as a kid.

**Spring:**

**Dance and Story Bridge Project**

RIBS and the Laotian Community Center teamed up this spring with an Intercultural Seed Grant from the Expansion Arts Program. Girls with Black and Asian heritages had the opportunity to get to know each other and one another’s cultures AND dance and storytelling skills. 12 girls started, and 5 completed the entire program. They were Liberian, Cambodian/Black, Jamaican/White, Hmong, Thai and Laotian. They learned and performed a traditional Laotian dance and a Haitian folktale. They performed at the Asian Art Exhibit at the State House Gallery in May, and at the JUNETEENTH Celebration at the Southside Cultural Center of RI in June.

RIBS artists Valerie Tutson, Ramona Bass Kolobe, and Raffini, along with local artist Shaffany Terrell worked with the young people.

**Spring/Summer/Fall:**

**Intergenerational Farmers Market Project**

For the past 2 years RIBS has partnered with LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) to develop and present intergenerational storytelling workshops with senior adults and youth. This project, funded by TUFTS Medical, helps address one of the social determinants of health and wellness-- the challenges of senior isolation, and creates an opportunity for intergenerational experiences and bonds. RIBS has worked in Providence, Newport, Central Falls and Bristol. We have also partnered with the Rhode Island Latino Arts in Central Falls and Providence for a bilingual experience as well! We have begun our next year of programming in Pawtucket this October.

**Sowing Place and Community Flavors:**

RIBS has been engaged in an effort to use the arts for “creative placemaking” in the neighborhood where our office is located. This Sowing Place Initiative involves the RIBS home (the Southside Cultural Center of RI [www.sccri.org](http://www.sccri.org)), West Elmwood Housing, the Sankofa Market and Kitchen project and the African Alliance. This year RIBS has hosted 2 of our programs—Community Flavors, an evening to share food and stories, one in June (in conjunction with the Story Bridge Project and JUNETEENTH) and one in August. We will do another one in December with the Holiday Market.

**Organizational Development:**

RIBS received a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation to do Board development. We hired a consultant with the funds, assessed our needs, had several Meet and Greets, and now have 8 new members who are committed to the vision of RIBS and excited about how we can adapt ourselves so that 1)there is a succession plan for leadership, 2) we examine the landscape for Black storytelling in this time and 3) figure out how we can continue to be relevant to our community in these changing times and 4) develop new storytellers and story lovers.

**Coming Up: FUNDA FEST 22: A Celebration of Black Storytelling January 25-Feb 1, 2020**

Featured tellers include International Artist Gcina Mhlophe and her daughter Khwezi Becker of South Africa

We are also working with the Langston Hughes Community Poetry Reading, which celebrates 25 years in 2020, on Feb 2, 2020.

**March 8, 2020: Girls Night Out**; RIBS hosting a gathering of women storytellers in honor of International Women’s Day

**In Process: International Tennis Hall of Fame**

RIBS is working with 7th grade social studies teachers and the ITHF with a planning grant from RICH (RI Council on the Humanities) to develop stories of Black tennis players featured in the ITHF, that tie in with social studies and social justice curriculum goals. Valerie Tutson and Rochel Coleman are primary tellers on the project at the moment. The goal is to have these stories ready to share at FUNDA FEST in 2021, in Newport, both at the Middle School, but also at a public performance at the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

**RIBS funding comes from:** The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, Newport County Fund, Providence Shelter for Colored Children, Bannister Black Philanthropy Fund, Dexter Foundation, Legislative Grant, Expansion Arts, The Rhode Island Foundation, private donations and ticket sales