

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES FOR SPEAKERS AND FACILITATORS
Presenting and Discussing Difficult Topics in African American History
Presented by the Sankofa Collaborative
November 2017

IVEY AVERY

Ivey Avery is a retired educator with a total of 35 years in education. She received a Masters Degree in Education from Central Michigan University in 2000. She also has an extensive background in theater starting with the Drama Club at Trenton High School in the 1960's, continuing in college at Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga. in the Spelman-Morehouse Players and Black Image Theater, a local theater company in the Atlanta community. Upon returning to Trenton, Ms. Avery worked with the Super Bad Theater Company affiliated with New Jersey Broadcasting Company and Players Company of Trenton founded by renowned playwright Don Evans. Ms. Avery was the co-founder of Morning Glory and Sassafras Productions, a theater company that presented African American cultural programs. She has also performed in original one woman shows about the lives of Harriet Tubman, Madame C. J. Walker, Hattie McDaniels and Sojourner Truth.

For 10 years Ms. Avery directed the Drama Club at Harrison Elementary School and then at Columbus Elementary School for the Trenton Public School District. She wrote or adapted all the productions. Presently Ms. Avery is involved in a number of community projects such as Heal The City, Institute of Wonderful Women Working For Empowerment and The SEED Male Mentoring Program serving as a consultant, mentor or workshop presenter. She has worked with numerous youth groups writing and directing a variety of theatrical projects. She is an advisor for the Xinos and Kudos Youth program sponsored by her sorority, the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa Inc. Pi Chapter and coaches youth in oratorical and dramatic speaking. Ms. Avery has also been the Head House Manager at the Trenton War Memorial, Patriots Theater for 25 years.

HEATHER BRADY

Heather Brady has been actively involved in the fields of art and museum education for nearly twenty years. In 2015, she joined Grounds For Sculpture as its first ever Director of Education and Engagement. In this role, she oversees a diverse mix of education, performing arts, and public programs, and is actively involved in the organization's efforts to deepen ties within its local community. Heather came to Grounds For Sculpture from The Noguchi Museum in New York, where she served collectively more than 10 years, seven of which were as its Head of Education. There, she developed programs to support visitors of every age and ability, shaping the vision for all on- and off-site education and community programs, including guided tours, hands-on workshops, and experiences designed specifically around the museum's permanent collection, temporary exhibitions, and garden space. Heather also previously served as the Director of Education at the Museum of Chinese in America in New York, and earlier in her

career was an educator at the Bronx Museum of Arts, the Museum of Modern Art, and in schools and community based organizations throughout New York City.

RENEE BROWN-JOHNSON

Minister Renee Brown-Johnson currently serves as Pastoral Associate to Rev. Timothy L. Jones at Bethany Baptist Church in Newark, NJ. She responded to the call to Ministry two decades ago under the guidance of Rev. Dr. Glenmore Bemby Jr., former Pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church in East Orange. From a foundation of church service and Bible Study, she was recommended to attend the NY Theological Seminary Certificate Program, where she graduated with honors in 2002. A lifelong learner, Minister Johnson continued her theological education in Chaplaincy, Domestic Violence, et.al. Minister Johnson has matriculated at Cornell University, Rutgers University and the College of New Rochelle. She is a Union Organizer/Shop Steward and has enjoyed a 37-year Career with the Social Security Administration.

LINDA CALDWELL EPPS

Dr. Linda J. Caldwell Epps is President and CEO of 1804 Consultants, an organization dedicated to the advancement of educational and cultural organizations. Most recently she has served as a resource to historical societies, libraries, and museums. Dr. Caldwell Epps has more than 40 years of experience working with educational and cultural institutions, including the New Jersey Historical Society, a statewide museum, library, and educational facility, where she served as President and CEO, and New Jersey Network Television and Radio where she served as Vice President for Institutional Relations. Over a 28 year period, she held various positions at Bloomfield College including Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students capped by her role as Vice President for College Relations. She has also served as a Ford Foundation-funded consultants to several institutions of higher learning – including Keene College in New Hampshire, Union College in Ohio and the College of St. Elizabeth in New Jersey – on issues of diversity and equity in higher education. Dr. Caldwell Epps currently serves on several boards of directors. Among them are The New Jersey Performing Arts Center Theater Square Development Company LLC Board of Managers, the History Advocates of NJ Executive Board, The Newark Archives Project Board, and the Executive Board of the Newark History Society. Dr. Caldwell Epps holds a Bachelor's Degree from Rutgers University's Douglass College, a Master's Degree from Seton Hall University, and a Doctorate from Drew University. She completed the Institute for Higher Education Management program at Harvard University, the American Association of Colleges and Universities Diversity Institute, at Georgetown University, and is a Leadership New Jersey Fellow, Class of 1992. She has lectured widely on issues of diversity and the importance of the diverse narrative in the study and interpretation of US history and culture.

SHAWN HALIFAX

With 23 years' experience working in museums, interpretive centers, and historic sites, Shawn Halifax's work is focused on three primary objectives: 1) providing inclusive interpretation of minority communities and under-represented topics at public sites and museums; 2) providing relevant public interpretive programming with opportunities to engage people in their local communities; 3) and protecting natural and historic resources by revealing connections between people and those resources. Currently he is leading the interpretive team at McLeod Plantation Historic Site in Charleston, SC, whose mission is to connect visitors to the lives and experiences of enslaved people and their descendant's in their pursuit of freedom, justice, and equality from the Antebellum era to 1990.

His area of concentration has been the interpretation of the history and culture of people of color, including the Powhatans of Tidewater and Central Virginia, the Contraband and freed people of Hampton Roads, Virginia, and the Gullah/Geechee of the South Carolina Lowcountry. He is a consultant for interpretive planning and training, facilitating workshops for historic sites and museums in the ethical interpretation of difficult histories and the National Association for Interpretation's Certified Interpretive Guide. He has held workshops at the Owens-Thomas House in Savannah, Georgia; the National Park Service and Maryland State Park's Harriett Tubman Underground Railroad historic site; James Madison's Montpelier in Virginia; South Carolina's Penn Center; Charleston's South Carolina Aquarium; Hampton University in Virginia; Georgia's Ossabaw Island Foundation; and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. He is a long-time member of the National Association for Interpretation and currently holds certifications as an Interpretive Guide, Heritage Interpreter, Interpretive Planner, and Interpretive Trainer.

CASSANDRA JACKSON

Dr. Cassandra Jackson is currently Scholar-in-Residence at the Grounds for Sculpture. She is also Professor of English at The College of New Jersey. She received a B.A. in English from Spelman College and a Ph.D. in English from Emory University. Her research and teaching interests focus on African-American literature, critical race theory, and visual culture. She is the author of *Barriers Between Us: Interracial Sex in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Indiana University Press) and *Violence, Visual Culture, and the Black Male Body* (Routledge). Professor Jackson is an alum of the OpEd Project, a nonprofit organization that aims to increase the number of women and minority thought leaders in key commentary forums. Her public commentary on race in American culture can be found on the *Huffington Post*.

TABITHA MCKINLEY

Dr. Tabitha (Bellamy) McKinley attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she earned her Bachelor Science in Biology (with a minor in Chemistry and Classical Studies). She also earned a Master of Education in Biology Education from The George Washington

University, and Master of Arts and PhD in Educational Psychology (with a concentration in Research, Evaluation, Measurement and Statistics) from the University of Georgia.

Dr. McKinley is the state coordinator for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for the New Jersey Department of Education. In this role, she reports to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) under the Institute of Education Sciences, which is a subsidiary of the United States Department of Education. She serves as a liaison between the state of New Jersey and the NCES to ensure that all NAEP-selected schools are in compliance with federal mandates. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated, National Council of Negro Women, American Educational Research Association, Northeastern Educational Research Association, and The Consortium of State and Regional Educational Research Associations.

CLAUDIA OCELLO

Claudia Ocello is currently President and CEO of Museum Partners Consulting, LLC. Ms. Ocello has over 25 years' experience in education, exhibition development, evaluation, and accessibility. Previously she worked full-time at Save Ellis Island, Inc; The New Jersey Historical Society; and The Barnum Museum, CT. A former classroom teacher, Claudia earned an MS in Museum Education from Bank Street College of Education and has won awards from American Association for State & Local History, American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and the NJ Association of Museums for excellence in programs, exhibitions, and practice. Ever grateful, she "pays it forward" by teaching in Seton Hall University's MA in Museum Professions Program and volunteering on the board of the Education Committee of AAM.

JULIA ROSE

Dr. Julia Rose is currently director and curator of Homewood Museum at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. Until recently, she served as director of the West Baton Rouge Museum in Louisiana, which, under her direction, received Museum of the Year and Award of Merit for Leadership in History in 2016 from the American Association for State and Local History. Dr. Rose has held curator positions at the Columbia Historical Society in Washington, DC, the Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, TN, and Magnolia Mound Plantation, where she worked with staff in expanding and elevating the lives of the enslaved people who worked at the Plantation. She has served as Chairman for the Council for the American Association of State and Local History and was on the faculty in the Masters of Arts in Museum Studies Program at Southern University at New Orleans. Dr. Rose received her doctorate from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University in 2006.

In 2016, Dr. Rose's book, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*, was published. It presents an educational theory of commemorative pedagogy, includes examples of difficult knowledge, and provides detailed examples of specific interpretation methods.

ROSETTA TREECE

Dr. Rosetta Treece has been an educator for 15 years and currently is the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Hopewell Valley Regional Public Schools in Pennington New Jersey. Dr. Treece's career as an educator began at Trenton High School's Chamber Street Campus, where she taught Literature courses for students in grades 9 through 12. Later she became an instructional coach for Trenton High School and its four satellite locations. After leaving Trenton Public Schools, Dr. Treece accepted a position as Vice Principal at Northern Burlington County Middle School. She served in that capacity for three years, prior to accepting a leadership position with Hopewell Valley Regional School District.

Dr. Treece is committed to preparing teachers and school leaders to create learning environments that are culturally responsive and that build cultural competence in young adults. Dr. Treece has conducted research on social-emotional learning in middle school and high school students and has a core belief that students need to be supported emotionally in order to be successful learners. Dr. Treece graduated Magna Cum Laude from the College of New Jersey earning a Bachelor's of Arts degree in English Secondary Education. She earned a Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Grand Canyon University and recently graduated with honors earning a Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership from Rowan University.