

TRADITION KEEPERS: BLACK STORYTELLERS OF WESTERN NEW YORK

Annual Report – NABS 2012

In 1995, Karima Amin and Sharon Holley (aka “We All Storytellers”), issued a call to all those interested in promoting, preserving, and perpetuating storytelling in the African tradition. The result has been the formation of “Tradition Keepers: Black Storytellers of Western New York” – the 15th affiliate of the National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc. (inducted November 2011 in Atlanta, GA).

Tradition Keepers’ calendar runs from September through June, with meetings on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Pratt Community Center, 422 Pratt Street. At the October meeting a workshop on “Getting Started with Storytelling” was presented by Sharon Holley. August has been reserved for a storytelling picnic or in the case of 2012 – a jazz gathering in the park.

In cooperation with the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library, TK presented storytelling programs for youth in January, May, and October. The 22nd Annual “Along this Way: Storytelling in the African Tradition” was presented by Sharon Holley and Karima Amin with vocalist, Joyce Carolyn at the Merriweather Library in February. Youth and adults often fill the audience for these programs. A two-part workshop for the Girl Scouts to receive a storytelling badge was presented in June.

In April, members Yvonne Harris, Denise Acosta, Sandra Bush, Karima Amin and Sharon Holley told spiritual stories at the Women of Grace Conference in Buffalo. Also on April 21, our 5th “Tell Me A Story” Festival with Spin-A-Storytellers highlighted Storyteller and CABS member, Jocelyn Dabney and her husband, Bob with a workshop and concert. TK members presented workshops on (1) Telling and Listening to Youth, (2) “Google” a Story, and (3) Get Your Storytelling On.

“Git On Da Bus,” which takes place in June, is the annual highlight of Tradition Keepers’ and a contribution to the Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo. Bus tickets are sold to the community who will board the bus in a mystery ride to various locations in Buffalo. When they arrive at each location, TK members are there to tell stories in a 30 min. program. In 2012, our 9th year (without a repeat location or theme), stories were told at: Alive Christian Bookstore (“On the Good Book”), Ms. Barbara’s School of Dance (“We Move and Groove”), Langston Hughes Cultural Institute (“Village People”), and Juneteenth Headquarters (“Looking Back to Go Forward”). In addition to this activity, TK members are represented at the Heritage Tent at the Juneteenth Festival in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. This festival is among the largest Juneteenth Festivals in the country.

Once again we will be telling stories for the city-wide Kwanzaa Celebration. In past years, we have been featured on the 1st night and have participated in other Kwanzaa activities.

Members of Tradition Keepers: Black Storytellers of Western New York have spread the word of stories throughout Western New York and other parts in the country in schools, colleges, libraries, family reunions, birthday celebrations, festivals, churches and many other

venues. Our 2012-13 goals are to recruit new members, strengthen the organization and establish a web/media presence.

Submitted by Co-coordinators, Sharon Holley and Karima Amin