



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF BLACK STORYTELLERS**  
*"In The Tradition..."*

**National Association of Black Storytellers**

P.O. Box 67722

Baltimore, Maryland 21215

[www.nabsinc.org](http://www.nabsinc.org)

Fall 2014

# SPREAD THE WORD

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Photo: JT Smith

To the NABS Family: My Bells are ringing!

*Ring-a-ling-ling!*

Autumn's Song

"Hope is the pillar of the world"

- West Africa

"No matter what – keep on praying"

- Willie L. McNear (Mama Linda's Mother)

## Let Us Reap The Harvest Of Our Labors:

REJOICE in fellowship and celebration of the upcoming 32nd Annual NABS festival in Chicago.

## Let Us Reflect and Remember:

RECALL the ancestor's names.

Remember Ferguson, MO and all the Michel Browns of this world.

Be informed about the ebola crisis affecting the Motherland.

Remember to keep President Obama and the first family in prayer.

## Let Us Always Be Grateful:

Give thanks and prayers for our many blessings.

Share our talents, skills, and stories.

Give support and aid to others.

## Let Us Plan Ahead:

As the squirrel prepares for winter so should we.

We must learn wisdom from the elders and pass it on to the youth.

## Let Us Respect and Love:

WE MUST CONTINUE TO LOVE AND RESPECT OURSELVES, AND LOVE AND RESPECT OUR NEIGHBORS.

WE MUST CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN THE WORLD.

"Education is the jewel casting brilliance into the future" - Mari Evans

"Armed with the knowledge of our past, we can with confidence charter a course for our future." - Malcolm X

Asante sana

Ife and nia

Love and purpose

Mama Linda, Co-Founder

*Dr. Mary Ann Harris*



**MESSAGE FROM THE  
NABS PRESIDENT**

Greetings NABS,

Thank you for your support and participation in events, activities, and celebrations of the National Association of Black Storytellers. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the 13th President of NABS. As we prepare for the 32nd Annual Festival & Conference in Chicago, Ill., November 12-16, 2014, I encourage you to register for this signature event early. This conference will be a turning point for me as I pass the cow tail switch to the President-elect, Karen "Queen Nur" Abdul-Malik.

My amazing journey as President will soon end; however; my passion and love will continue for NABS. We are traveling a timeless journey. I salute story listeners, storywriters, story dancers, and the storytellers.

Some people say storytelling is "Holistic Medicine." Some people say storytelling is a problem solving visualizing objective model. Mama Linda Goss, co-founder of the National Association of Black Storytellers say storytelling is "Medicine for the Soul."

Through voice or movement storytelling is magical, it's re-mark able! Storytelling gives power to the voice, peace to the spirit, and calmness to the mind. Can you imagine? Whether you are illustrating stories through dance movement, pictures or dramatization, you are a storyteller!

This is a historical year for storytellers to celebrate Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. For example this year marks 60 years of Brown v. Board of Education, (<http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-involved/federal-court-activities/brown-board-education-re-enactment/history.aspx>). Please read this source for a historical perspective.

Storytellers we must continue to tell the story of Brown v. Board of Education. We must not turn the page and be reactive. We must stand our ground and stay on the page of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. We must be proactive and tagline public education.

Respectfully,  
Dr. MaryAnn Harris  
President, NABS

## SPOTLIGHT ON WICHITA GRIOTS: *How We Celebrated Summer*

Griots Cultural Arts Enrichment Camp, have been active in the Wichita Community for over eleven years to inspire and enable youth to realize their full potential through the arts, to prepare children for success in school, work and life. Integrating storytelling with dance, music, drumming and call-and-response audience participation. In a week long intensive format.



### GRIOTS CULTURAL ARTS ENRICHMENT CAMP

JULY 7 – 12, 2014

AGES 6 – 16 YEARS

NORTH HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
3030 N. HILLSIDE – WICHITA KS 67219

REGISTRATION: \$25.00

Sign up Saturdays (June 7, 14, 21, and 28) from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Contact: Ms. Jean 316-682-1909





Kwanzaa is an African American Holiday that is celebrated for seven days – December 26 to January 1. The holiday was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966 and is “based on the agricultural celebrations of Africa called ‘the first fruits’ celebrations of harvest, ingathering, reverence, commemoration, recommitment, and celebration.” (Karenga). The seven days of Kwanzaa correspond to the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles): Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith).

## STORYTELLING INSTRUCTION

**Baba Jamal Koram, Ed.S.**

In Busara (American Afrakan) folklore, every story must include a minimum of the following concepts or ideals:

- HOPE
- VICTORY
- ACHIEVEMENT
- “A KWANZAA STORY must purposely reflect/describe/name/define one or more of the Nguzo Saba principles or Kwanzaa precepts; including Afrakan names, thought and descriptions.” Mjk

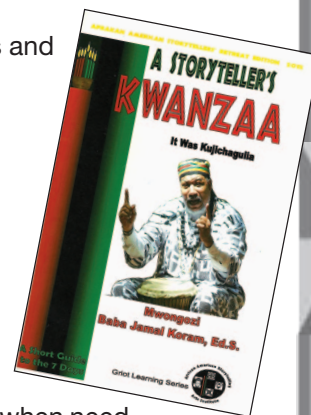
To arrive at these concepts, storytellers must be clear about their beliefs, their strengths and weaknesses, and their sense of right and wrong. Clarity is important.

Every Busara (American Afrakan) story has the following:

- PRELUDE/ANTECEDENT
- BEGINNING
- MIDDLE
- END

And should have

- A MORAL OR LESSON



To tell a story be clear about the sequence of events. Tell in a clear energetic voice. Calm when need be. Animated when the story calls for it. Our stories are extensions of ourselves, so we always speak in our own voice to fit our own personality. Every voice is unique.

*“Every story is not for every ear” Baba Jamal Koram*

Include songs, rhymes, quotes, sayings, proverbs in the body and text of your story.

Simple is good.

Negative, unbalanced stories, create unbalanced responses from young/old listeners. Our stories must come from within, must follow a path of right understanding, good intentions, clear thinking, and Afrakan consciousness. We understand that there is high culture and low culture and, that it is often easier to appeal to the base humor, language and understanding of those stories that do not, necessarily, elevate our cultural clarity. Ours is the high road, but we wouldn't be competent if we didn't understand both, and be prepared to respond to the needs of both situations and audiences. Even so, ours is still the high road of Afrakan expression and presentation.

WE MUST NOT WAIT UNTIL DECEMBER TO “LOOK” FOR KWANZAA STORIES. KWANZAA IS A ‘YEAR ‘ROUND OBSERVANCE.’ Our mission as cultural participants in the here and now is quite simple – pay attention to the Nguzo Saba. Follow our first minds. Stay on our paths of understanding and enlightenment, and do like Curtis Mayfield sang: “Keep on Pushin’!”

*Baba Jamal Koram is a storyteller, educator, spirit folk drummer and organizer. He is past president of the National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc. and is a recipient of their highest award, the Zora Neale Hurston Award.*

\*This article was reprinted by permission of the author from **A STORYTELLER'S KWANZAA: IT WAS KUJICHAGULIA** by Mwongozi Baba Jamal Koram, Ed.S. African American Storytelling Arts Institute, 2011, 2012.

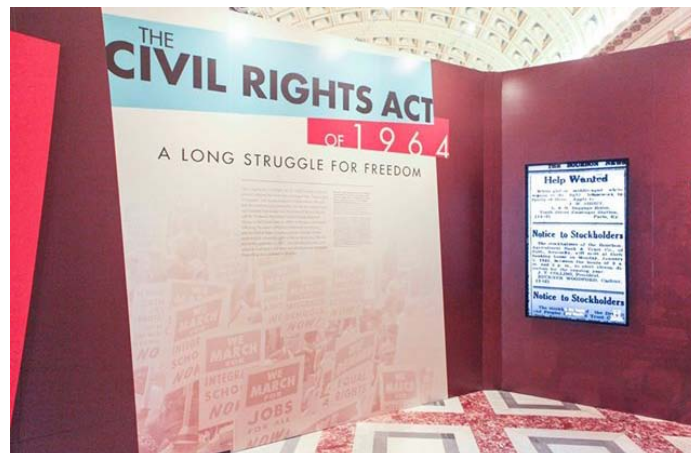
## ASE: THE CHICAGO ASSOCIATION OF BLACK STORYTELLERS

Getting excited! ASE and the UChicago Reva and David Logan Center are producing a dynamic evening that celebrate a diverse range of performance styles from the African diaspora including jazz, blues, ragtime, African dance, spoken word, poetry, hip hop and storytelling. Scheduled to appear: Ayodele Drum & Dance, Reginald Robinson, Billy Branch, Maggie Brown, ReBirth Poetry Ensemble, and ASE: The Chicago Association of Black Storytellers. Join us for this fabulous concert. There will be something for everyone!

Wednesday, November 12 at 7 pm / UChicago Logan Center Tickets will be available through the Logan Center Box Office.



## CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 EXHIBIT NOW OPEN



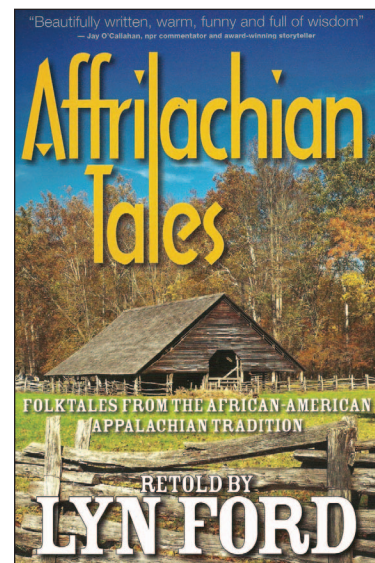
September 12, 2014 by Kate Stewart

**The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A Long Struggle for Freedom (website)** opened at the Library of Congress on September 10th. This exhibit draws from collections across the library to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the act. It covers America's long history of discrimination and segregation, the grassroots movement for civil rights, and the efforts of President Lyndon Johnson, lobbyists, and key congressmen and senators to get the bill passed in 1964. The exhibit features many objects from the American Folklife Center and the Veterans History Project. Ten tablets throughout the exhibit include 25 oral history clips from our collections, along with news and documentary footage from the library's National Audio-Visual Conservation Center.

## LYN FORD'S MESMERIZING AFFRILACHIAN TALES

I don't recall how I was initially drawn to Lyn Ford's fascinating Affrilachian Tales which has now become one of my most treasured e-books on my trusty little iPad travel companion. As the Tennessee elders (Affrilachians) who reared me in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains would've said, "The Spirit surely must've brought me to it."

From the work's colorful, artfully designed back-home cover to its entrancing contents uniquely relating in three sections, four-legged, two-legged, and of course a good helping of "spook and h'aint" tales, Lyn, an award-winning fourth generation griot from the Affrilachian/Appalachian region of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, is what I would term a "master immerser." From the moment one starts to read such animal tales as "**Possum and Snake**", the wisdom tale, "**Three Suitors**", and a classic ancestral ghost tale like "**Zuri Killed Me**", one is immersed in the storyweaving mastery of this contemporary griot. When you're reading a book of folktales and can almost hear the mesmerizing voice of the teller, feel the excitement, tap into the special, highly developed energy of her/his craft, one knows that one is under the story-lifting spell of a master immerser. It is no wonder that this NABS member has blessed 29 countries and innumerable festivals with the creative story tools of her trade.



She learned from the best—the back-porch tale-sharings of her Tennessee-born father, Edward Maclin Cooper, a Tuskegee airman, blues-playing, topnotch teller as well as numerous other Affrilachian story weaving elders who shared great soul food, ancestral traditions, and story-lifting magic during her youth. A long-time NABS member, Lyn succinctly notes, "The stories maintain a psycho-spiritual connection to ancestors, traditions of culture and faith and a history far richer than the schools of my own childhood ever taught. The stories and their storyteller, helped me to know and become who I am."

Oh, "It just hit me!", (as my own storyweaving Affrilachian elders would've said), exactly what "Spirit" brought me to Lyn's work—that other Master Immerser and "living ancestor", Mama Linda. As we chatted about her own account of her blossoming as an Affrilachian griot, discussed in **Southern Appalachian Storytellers: Interviews with Sixteen Keepers of the Oral Tradition** (Saundra Gerrell Kelley, Ed.), my "Tennessee sis" further energized me to obtain and read Lyn's work as well. After having read such a voice, I long to hear this griot's voice on audio; or better yet in person, and hopefully one fine tradition-lifting day at yet another ever so memorable NABS gathering.

**AFFRILACHIAN TALES – Folktales from the African-American Appalachian Tradition** – Retold by Lyn Ford, Parkhurst Brothers, Inc., Publishers, Little Rock, Arkansas, 2012.

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Linda Cousins-Newton  
www.ancestralpromotions.com

# HOW BRER RABBIT LOST HIS FINE BUSHY TAIL\*

BY KARIMA AMIN

Have you ever taken a good look at a rabbit from behind? Then you know that ol' rabbit's got a bob-tail. That's right! Thanks to Brer Rabbit, he's got a bob-tail! Now, way back in the beginning things were different; Brer Rabbit used to have a long, bushy tail. Let me tell you how he lost it.

Brer Rabbit's fine tail was his pride and joy. In the cool of the evening, he'd take his stroll down the big road just to show it off, strutting his stuff with a "lippity-clip, lippity-clip" and a "howdy-do?" waving that tail to all the folks as he passed.

Swishy-swish...swishy-swish...

Every now and then, for added measure, he'd give that fancy tail a shake and a twirl. The gals liked that and he knew it. That long, fine, bushy tale was the talk of the town. Some folks had great admiration for it. While others were a bit jealous. That was one pretty tail!

Swishy-swish...swishy-swish...

One evening Brer Rabbit was going down the road, waving, shaking, and twirling his tail, when he saw Brer Fox ambling along with a big string of fish. They spent a moment or two passing the time of day, then Brer Rabbit asked, "Brer Fox, tell me, whereabouts did you find that nice string o' fish?" "I caught these down at the creek," said Brer Fox.

"Those minnows you have there are the kind I like. How did you catch 'em?" Brer Rabbit asked. Brer Fox said, "It was simple. I went to the creek after sundown, dropped my tail in the water, and sat there 'til daylight. With my tail, I caught a whole armful of fish. I had so many that I flung some back into the creek!" Now you and I know that don't sound right but Brer Rabbit wasn't thinking about the right or wrong of it. He was already tasting minnows.

Later that evening, Brer Rabbit found himself a spot on a log where he could squat and drop his tail into the creek. The weather was cold that night so he had brought along something warm to drink. He sat there, and he sat there, just a-squattin' and a-drinkin' 'til by 'n by', the sun came up.

Brer Rabbit stood up to check his catch, but his tail was stuck in the frozen creek water. He pulled and pulled, then groaned and pulled again. Then he heard, "R-r-r-rip!" Brer Rabbit looked around. His tail was gone!

Now, I don't know if Brer Fox was jealous or not, or if he tricked Brer Rabbit on purpose. Maybe he just gave Brer Rabbit some bad advice, But I do know this: from that day on. All Brer Rabbit's kin had short tails just like him.

*Karima Amin is a storyteller, educator and author from Buffalo, New York. She is the co-founder of Tradition Keepers: Black Storytellers of Western New York. In 2012, she received the Zora Neale Hurston Award at the NABS...In the Tradition Storytelling Festival.*

\*This story is printed by permission of the author and SAYIN' SOMETHIN': STORIES FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK STORYTELLERS. Edited by Linda Goss, Dylan Pritchett and Caroliese Frink Reed. NABS, Inc. 2006.





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