

A Tale of Two Conferences

This special edition of *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* sheds light on why the Black Arts Movement (BAM) is important to African American and American history by focusing on the research, art, and scholarship of two BAM Conferences.

The first conference, *50 Years On*, took place at UC Merced in March 2014 with the support of the Associated Students of the University of California Merced, the Office of Student Life, the Center for the Humanities, the California Endowment, Building Healthy Communities, Merced County Arts Council, the Merced County Office of Education, and donors and volunteers throughout the country. The second conference was held at New Orleans' Dillard University in September 2016, and would not have happened without the support and guidance of Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Abby Wolf, the Director of Harvard's Hutchins Center. A group of earth angels in the forms of Dr. James Smethurst, Jerry Varnado, Ishmael Reed, Eugene Redmond, Dr. Nathan Hare, Askia Toure, Dr. James Garrett, Director of Tulane University's Amistad Center Kara Olidge, UC Merced's Dean Jill Robbins, Vice Provost and Graduate Dean Marjorie Zatz, Vice Provost for Faculty Gregg Camfield, Professor Nigel Hatton, Dillard University Professors Mona Lisa Saloy and Zella Palmer, Bernadette Gildspinel, Nikki Madfis, Bev Young, Jim Chong, Doug Ridley, Vincent, Janie, Chet and Marlena McMillon, Itibari M. Zulu, Reginald Martin, Neola Adams, Marilyn Johnson, Dr. Doris Derby, Carolyn Vara, Marvin X, Charlotte "Mama C" O'Neal, Neola Adams, Avoteja, Shellee Randol and countless other beautiful souls ensured the success of the conference.

When asked about the differences and similarities between the conferences, the word community comes to mind. Each conference opened doors to history and culture for all. New Orleans was an exhaled breath encompassing attendees with the warmth, pain, and power of African history. I sought out a historically Black college to understand how the story of the Black Arts Movement might be told differently. I was in search of the very voices that birthed the Black Arts Movement. I wanted to hear their stories in an environment that spoke of African Americans' historic past. Vestiges of slavery mingled with everyday life bearing twenty-first-century fruit for the reasons for the Black Arts and Black Power Movements. The *50 Years On* conference did not have the history of African Americans on full display, but rather the men and women of the Black Arts and Black Power Movements in attendance were our monuments, our cultural libraries.

With that in mind, the *Dillard University-Harvard's Hutchins Center International BAM Conference* on the Black Arts Movement commenced on Friday, September 9, 2016, with a celebration of music, dance and African rituals. The New Orleans Black Indians began the conference with the prayer chant, *Indian Red* that has Native American and African roots. Big Chief Clarence A. Dalcour led the tribe of Creole Osceola Mardi Gras Indians.

An African Ritual Invocation with iconic Louisiana spiritual leaders was performed by Luisah Teish, Nana Sula, Charlotte "Mama C" O'Neal, a revered former Black Panther, and award-winning musician Avotcja playing percussions. Tears ran down the faces of audience members as ancestor spirits were called and memories of what it meant and what it means to be Black in America were acknowledged.

This special edition of *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* celebrates the history, achievements, culture, art and research of scholars and artists of all backgrounds dedicated to the study of a race and a culture that stands firmly on American soil in celebration of the art of Black America.

Kim McMillon, Conference Organizer

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Student Editors: Jeff Ball, Shumpei Kuwana, Anthony Spinks, Stephanie Maldonado, Jasmin Hinojosa, Jahmeel Walker, Lucero Soto, David Badill,



— Amiri Baraka & the Spirit House Movers —
 In honor of Amiri Baraka (October 7, 1934 - January 9, 2014)

The Black Arts Movement and its Influences

50 YEARS ON

Celebrating 50 years of history with a gathering of voices from the
 Black Arts Movement

February 28 - March 2, 2014
University of California, Merced

Conference Speakers:

Al Young, Adilah Barnes, Askia Toure, Avotcja, Ayodele Nzinga, Belva Davis,
 Billy Jennings, Dr. Nathan Hare, Earl Davis, Emory Douglas, Eugene Redmond,
 Gerry Lim, Greg Morozumi, Ishmael Reed, Jerry Varnado, Jimmy Garrett,
 Juan Felipe Herrera, Judy Juanita, Marvin X, Michael Lange, Poetess Kalamu Chache,
 Ras Baraka, Tacuma King, Umar Bin Hassan, and more...

Registration Required
<http://UCMercedBAMconference2014.com>
info@ucmerced.edu

Registration Fee: \$40
 For information on the conference and gala,
 call (510) 681-5652

UC MERCED
www.ucmerced.edu

Black Arts Movement Gala
 and Art Reception
 Friday, Feb. 28, 6 - 9:30 p.m.
 FREE to the public
 Merced Multicultural Arts Center
 645 W. Main St. -- Merced, CA
 Hosted by Belva Davis,
 first black female TV journalist in the West

Black Arts Movement Conference
 Saturday and Sunday, March 1-2, 2014
 University of California, Merced
 5200 N. Lake Road Merced, CA

A historic gathering of the voices of
 the Black Arts Movement



To those attending the UC Merced Black Arts Movement Conference, February 28-March 2, 2014, I write to salute you for a timely and important event. I grew up in Merced and attended elementary, Middle and High School classes before graduating from Merced High School in June 1971. I learned a lot about the struggle for justice and equality in Merced and throughout California and around the United States.

I was deeply influenced by people like Amiri Baraka and the global struggle they fought for decades. I owe all of these women and men everything for paving the way for me. Amiri died much too soon but his writings, teachings, and words of wisdom continue to inspire us today. As we celebrate his life we must also celebrate so many like him, including President Nelson Mandela, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Fanny Lou Hamer, Queen Mother Audley Moore, Rosa Parks and so many others who opened doors for us to pass through during critical times in our lives.

If we firmly believe in the mandate of each one teach one, then the legacy of Amiri Baraka will continue.

Yours in the struggle,
Professor Charles J. Ogletree Jr. (February 16, 2014)
Harvard Law School Climenko Professor of Law
Founding and Executive Director, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice

BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT CONFERENCE

SOUTHERN INFLUENCES NEW ORLEANS 2016



BECAUSE THE WORLD NEEDS TO CHANGE
 A Dillard University-Harvard's Hutchins Center International Conference

UCMERCED
 SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
 HUMANITIES AND ARTS



UCMERCED
 GRADUATE DIVISION

Dillard University, 2601 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, La.

September 9 - 11, 2016

Fri. 6pm-10pm Free to public • Sat. 8am-6:45pm • Sun. 9am-12:30pm

www.blackartsmovement.net

For more information, contact Kim Mcmillon at kmcmillon@ucmerced.edu



Dwayne D. Conrad, artist statement:

The use of art has always been a catapult for change. It stimulates discourse of new ideas and can remind us of a time laid to rest. We will never know the full extent of human cruelty experienced during nearly 300 years of slavery in these United States. However, we endured the atrocities and the hateful slander that led to even more dreadful acts. Through it all, we have lived, learned, and prospered against all odds. Today there is greater hope for our children to see a better future. We must move forward with our eyes wide open because to know one's past is an essential part of the arsenal in the fight for one's future.

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In his essay on the history of the Black Arts Movement, Kalamu ya Salaam (ya Salaam, Kalamu. "Historical Overviews of the Black Arts Movement." Oxford Companion to African American Literature, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997: 72) says of the Movement, "In addition to advocating political engagement and independent publishing, the Black Arts Movement was innovative in its use of language." The Movement grew from a profound need to reconcile the political and social injustices of the times, and language became a form of expressing the discontent with the status quo that marked the lives of people of color during this time period. As we commemorate the 51st year of the Black Arts Movement, we find that recent racial injustices have made the movement more relevant than ever. The current U.S. political climate is just as rife with turmoil as in the late 60s. This historic meeting of academics and arts professionals will continue the much-needed conversation and call-to-action as African Americans seek understanding and justice in the midst of social and political chaos.

Being entrusted with the responsibility of selecting a fitting visual image that would represent the conference proved to be a challenge. It was a challenge because we needed to find an image that would illicit an honest discourse surrounding the past and its impact upon the psyche of the African American. At the same time, it was deemed important to illustrate beauty and resilience. After finding an interesting vintage reference image, I sought out an artist who had the heightened consciousness to address the subject matter. Dwayne Conrad, a gifted fine artist from New Orleans, was contacted. The vision was shared and the image, *Never Forget*, was conceived. The viewer of the painting *Never Forget* is met with an oak tree-lined road leading to a Southern plantation. Two enslaved little girls stand at the wrought iron gate.

4.4

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These “spirit” children represent the atrocities our people have suffered behind that proverbial gate. The anguish in their faces pleads with us to never forget the sacrifices they endured to afford our generation the opportunity to “chase butterflies with reckless abandon.” It is not until one accepts and makes peace with the past, that one can confidently live in the present and move, with strength, on to the future.

Ultimately, freedom must be safe guarded and never taken for granted.
Bernadette Gildspinel (2016)
La Belle Galerie, New Orleans



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**Black Arts Movement
Exhibition and Conference**

September 8th, 5:00-7:00 pm

Tilton Hall, Tulane University

6823 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70118



Please join the Amistad Research Center for a reception celebrating its current exhibition on the Black Arts Movement.

Amistad is the proud co-sponsor of the Black Arts Movement – Southern Style Conference running September 9-11 at Dillard University.

BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT
CONFERENCE 2016 NEW ORLEANS

BECAUSE THE WORLD NEEDS TO CHANGE

Thank you, Dr. Kara Tucina Olidge, for your kindness and incredible efforts to ensure that the Dillard University Conference took place. As the first woman executive director of the Amistad Research Center, "the nation's oldest, largest and most comprehensive independent archive" dedicated to the history of people of color, on a daily basis you are making a difference.