In Collaboration with The Office of Diversity & Inclusion

2021 Juneteenth Celebration: Art and Activism

Join us on June 18th, 2021 from 12 pm – 1:30 pm for our Juneteenth Celebration, where we discuss different forms of modern and contemporary African American art, how it honors experiences of Black people, celebrates the Black identity, and serves as a catalyst for activism.

Kamasi Hill, Ph.D. is a historian, theologian, art curator, filmmaker, and a modern-day griot who has been teaching high school students for the past 25 years. He was born and raised on the West side of Detroit by parents who were curators of the Black arts, both visual and musical. He attended Howard University and graduated with a degree in Film Production. From there, he won several awards for his documentary, "Variations on Shabazz Barber Shop". He moved to Chicago in 2004 to attend Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary at Northwestern University and received his PhD in Religion and Historical Studies. He has been collecting from contemporary artists of African descent for the past 15 years and has amassed over 150 pieces of art.

He specializes in 20th and 21st century American Religious History and Culture and their work explores various themes in African American History, religion, and popular culture. As a comic book fan, Dr. Hill created a series of non-fiction graphic novels to help recruit students to the power of literacy and imagination.

Yolonda Ross (Actress, Writer/Director, Producer) made her feature film debut in the award-winning independent film "Stranger Inside" in 2001 and went on to win an IFP Gotham Award for Best Breakthrough Performance for the role, as well as received her first Film Independent Spirit Award nomination in the category of Best Debut Performance. Her second Spirit Award nomination was for the John Sayles drama "Go For Sisters". Yolonda has appeared in dozens of films including Denzel Washington's award-winning film "Antwone Fisher," the independent film "Yelling To the Sky," and the commercial hit "Whitney," directed by Angela Bassett for the Lifetime Movie Network. She has also portrayed recurring characters on several high-profile series including, "Ms. Green," in the hit Baz Luhrmann NETFLIX series, "The Get Down" and "Claudia" on "How To Get Away With Murder."

Yolonda made her award-winning directorial debut with the 10-minute hybrid music video/short film "Breaking Night" about a young girl taking control of her destiny.

Yolonda is a member of the prestigious Labyrinth Theater Company in New York. She will be reprising her role as "Jada" in Season 4 of the critically acclaimed SHOWTIME series "The Chi," created by Emmy winner Lena Waithe.

Bayeté Ross Smith is a photographer, artist, and education worker who lives in Harlem New York. He is a Presidential Leadership Scholar, a TED Resident, a Creative Capital Awardee, an Art For Justice Fund Fellow, a BPMPPlus Grantee and a POV NY Times embedded media maker.

His work is in the collections of The Smithsonian Institution, the Oakland Museum of California, the Birmingham Museum of Art, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and The Brooklyn Museum. He has exhibited internationally with the Goethe Institute (Ghana), Foto Museum (Belgium), the Lianzhou Foto Festival (China), and America House in (Ukraine), among others. His collaborative projects "Along The Way" and "Question Bridges: Black Males" have shown at the 2008 and 2012 Sundance Film Festival, respectively. His work has also been featured at the Sheffield Doc Fest and the L.A. Film Festival.