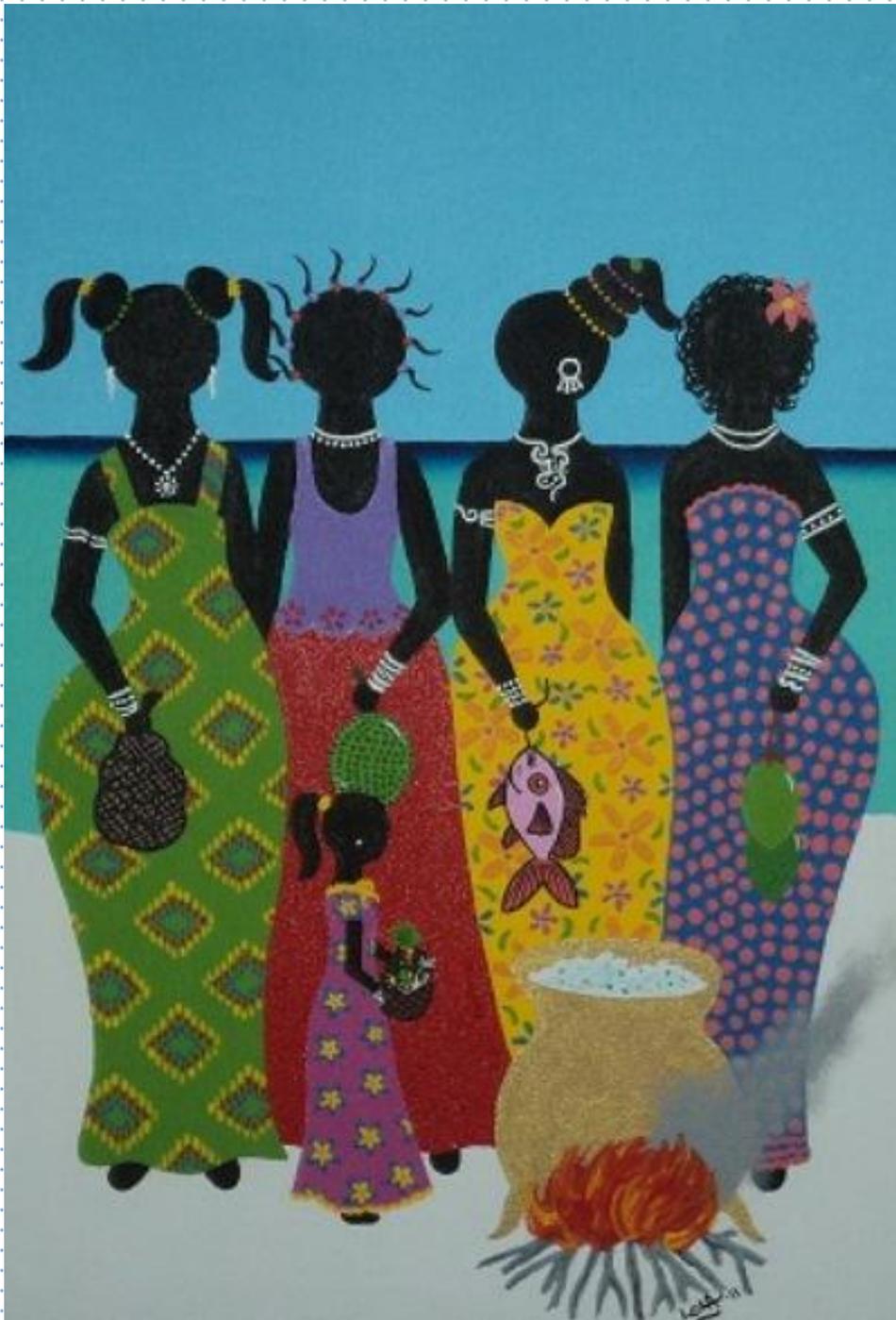


# Sacred Healing & Wholeness in Africa & the Americas



*"Cooking for the Healing Ritual" by Lola*

**Harvard University | Friday, April 13, 2012**

CGIS South – 1730 Cambridge Street, Tsai Auditorium

## **E Kaabo ~ Bienvenidos ~ Akwabaa ~ Byenveni ~ Aviela Bem Vindos ~ Pasaykamuy ~ Welcome ~ Tubasanyukidde**

It is with a humble and happy heart that I welcome you to Sacred Healing & Wholeness in Africa & the Americas! This symposium is the culmination of a year-long project of engagement with African, African Diasporic and Indigenous Religions that I have undertaken as a Junior Fellow at the [Center for the Study of World Religions](#) at Harvard Divinity School. It is truly gratifying to see it come to fruition and I am deeply grateful to the Center for their support of this project as well as to each of you for your interest and participation.

Although there has been definite improvement, Indigenous Religions of all varieties are still sorely underrepresented in the academic realms of Religious and Theological Studies. As a scholar-practitioner of such a tradition, I am eager to see that change. As of 2005, there were at least [400 million people](#) practicing Indigenous Religions worldwide, making them the 5<sup>th</sup> most commonly practiced class of religions. Taken alone, practitioners of African Indigenous Religions – both on the continent and in their manifestations in the diaspora – comprise the 8<sup>th</sup> largest religious grouping in the world, with approximately 100 million practitioners, and their numbers continue to grow. Despite their noted absence from Religious Studies in the past, more and more, the knowledge embedded in the rich traditions of Africa and the Americas is coming to the fore. I am glad to be a part of the Center for the Study of World Religions, and the wider Harvard University community, where I have the opportunity to help continue this development through programs like this.

Ancient traditions would not survive into contemporary times and, certainly, would not continue to grow, thrive and evolve were they not providing something that is useful for today's world. In addition to providing important points of connection, both with the earth and with fellow humans, the most significant and powerful element of these traditions is that they offer us a set of pathways through which to make and keep the self whole: body, mind and spirit.

Through [divination](#), ritual, [song](#), [dance](#), incantation, craft, [festival](#), spirit possession, dreams, herbalism, the acquisition of sacred knowledge and many other means, practitioners of the traditions represented here today exercise active agency and engage with the world on every level, using every one of their senses and sensibilities. They mend what is broken, balance what is askew and maintain equilibrium until the time comes to mend and rebalance again. It is this intricate, fascinating and empowering process that we look forward to exploring today. I pray that the connections we make and the conversations we begin will endure long after the symposium has ended.

*With best wishes and sincere gratitude,*

**Funlayo E. Wood**

*Symposium Chair*

Doctoral Student, Department of African & African American Studies

Junior Fellow, Center for the Study of World Religions

## About the Cover Art



Lola is an artist and writer born in [Belize City](#), Belize in 1959. She began painting at a very early age on the walls of her home with her mother's lipsticks, which spurred her parents to buy her proper art materials. Her father sold her first piece of art when she was 8 years old and, although she has been painting and writing all her life, Lola received no formal schooling in art – she says it is her gift from God.

In 1990 Lola discovered, fell in love with, and relocated to the beautiful cultural Garifuna village of [Seine Bight](#) on the Placencia Peninsula, where she settled and opened the peninsula's first art gallery in 1992.

She continues to live and work in Seine Bight Village, operating her gallery and enjoying the company of her two children, Elizabeth and Charles.

Working with acrylics on various surfaces like canvas, driftwood, found wood, stones and calabashes, she paints a variety of original canvases, keyhangers, miniatures, masks, driftwood heads, paper weights and more, including custom commissioned pieces. Her work is vibrant, colorful and energetic; themes of healing and images of the beautiful Belizean landscape and rich [Garifuna culture](#) that surround her come alive through her art.

Visit her Facebook page [here](#) and visit her blog at [www.lolasartinbelize.blogspot.com](http://www.lolasartinbelize.blogspot.com).



*"Garifuna Ritual" (30 x 40, acrylic on canvas)*



*"Toucan" (21 x 27, acrylic on canvas)*



*Lola at work in her studio*

## Sacred Healing & Wholeness in Africa & the Americas

Harvard University | Friday, April 13, 2012

### Schedule

**8:45 am – 9:30 am**

Sign-in & Networking

**9:30 am – 10:00 am**

*Opening of the Day*

Funlayo E. Wood, *Symposium Chair & Junior Fellow*, Center for the Study of World Religions

*Libation*

Awo Oluwole Ifakunle Adetutu Alagbede, *Chief Priest*, Ile Omo Ope

*Welcome*

Francis X. Clooney, S. J., *Director*, Center for the Study of World Religions

**10:00 am – 10:30 am**

*Reflections on the Theme: Sacred Healing & Wholeness in Africa & the Americas*

Tracey Hucks, *Chair*, Department of Religion, Haverford College

**10:30 – 12:00 pm**

*Resonance, Sight, and Movement: Art and Performance in the Healing Sphere*

Panel Chair: Lisa Osunleti Beckley-Roberts

*Professor of Music*, Tallahassee Community College; *PhD Candidate*, Florida State University

“Standing on Holy Ground’: The Creation of Sacred Space through Music in the African-American Lucumí Religion”

Panelists:

- 🌍 Kyrah M. Daniels, *Harvard University*, “Healing Rites of Haiti & Home: Unraveling Layers of a Pakèt Kongo”
- 🌍 Karyna Do Monte, *Boston University*, “Earth Healing: Candomble Meets Ecology in the Rio de Janeiro Carnival”
- 🌍 Peter Hoelsing, *Florida State University*, “History and Ethnography from the Healers’ Songs: Kinship and Kingdom in Buganda”
- 🌍 Kwame Ross, *Independent Scholar*, “Transformation through the Movement of Orisha”

**12:00 pm – 1:00 pm**

Lunch

**1:00 pm – 1:30 pm**

*Keynote Address*

**Yeye Luisah Teish**

**1:30pm – 3:00 pm**

*Embodied Restorations: Healing through Shamanism, Possession, Mediumship & Knowing*

Panel Chair: Frédérique Apffel-Marglin

*Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, Smith College*

“Peruvian High Amazonian Shamanism: An Experiential Report”

Panelists:

- 🌐 Meredith Coleman-Tobias, *Emory University*, “Spiritual Care and Embodiment in Malidoma Somé’s Healing Community”
- 🌐 Adam McGee, *Harvard University*, “Healing Dreams in Haitian Vodou: Toward a Methodology for the Study of Dreaming in Sevis Ginen”
- 🌐 Oludamini Ogunnaike, *Harvard University*, “Knowledge as Healing: Ahmadu Bamba’s Epistemology and Pedagogy”

**3:00 pm – 4:30 pm**

*Medical Meddlings: Articulations of “Modern” Medicine and “Traditional” Healing*

Panel Chair: Suzanne Henderson

*Asst. Dean & Professor of African American Studies, St. John’s University*

“The Yoruba Religious Tradition of Orisha Worship as a Model for Healing for African-Americans”

- 🌐 Chelsea Shields Strayer, *Boston University*, “The Placebo Effect in Asante Indigenous Ritual Healing Ceremonies”
- 🌐 Sonia Hart, *University of California at Berkeley* & Leo Suarez, *New York University*, “Ifa Divination as Mental Health Practice”
- 🌐 Onaje Woodbine, *Boston University* & Dr. Robert Woodbine, *San Bao Holistic Care*, “The Ase of Black Men: Castration, the Burden of Prostate Cancer, and Retrieval”

**4:30 – 4:45 pm**

Break

**4:45 – 6 pm**

*Discussion of themes from the forthcoming film “Across the King’s River”*

Discussants:

James Weeks, Director/Producer, “Across the King’s River”

Awo Oluwole Ifakunle Adetutu Alagbede, *Chief Priest, Ile Omo Ope*

Manbo Marie Maude Evans, *Lineage Head, Sosyete Nago*

## Keynote Speaker

# Yeye Luisah Teish



Luisah Teish is a writer, performance artist and ritual events consultant. She is the director of Ile Orunmila Oshun and the School of Ancient Mysteries/Sacred Arts Center based in California and currently serves as the chair of the World Orisa Congress International Committee on Women's Issues. She is an initiated elder and Womanchief in the Ifá-Orisa tradition and a devotee of

the Haitian lwa Damballah Hwedo under the guidance of [Mama Lola](#).

Yeye Teish earned a PhD in Spiritual Therapeutics from Open International University's School of Complementary Medicine in Colombo Sri Lanka in 1993 and she holds an Inter-Faith minister's license from the International Institute of Integral Human Sciences. She has been on the faculty at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, New College of California, John F. Kennedy University, the Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Center, and Naropa University.

A Native of New Orleans, Yeye Teish has studied earth-based African and indigenous Native American traditions, including those of the Caribbean, for over forty years. She has conducted workshops on Black and Native American culture at Medicine Wheels, under the directions of [Sun Bear's](#) tribal elders and designed a Rites of Passage program for the Institute of Noetic Sciences, among numerous other projects. Her performances, lectures and workshops have taken her to Egypt, New Zealand, Nigeria, Costa Rica, across the United States and to countries in Europe and South America.

Her books include [Jambalaya: The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals](#), a women's spirituality classic, [Carnival of the Spirit: Seasonal Celebrations and Rites of Passage](#), [Jump Up: Good Times Throughout the Seasons with Celebrations from Around the World](#), and [What Don't Kill Is Fattening Revisited: Twenty Years of Poetry, Prose and Myth](#). She has additionally contributed to thirteen anthologies and magazines such as *Essence*, *Ms.*, *Shaman's Drum*, and the *Yoga Journal*.

A resident of the Bay Area for thirty years, Yeye Teish has been actively involved in teaching transformation and working to insure justice and peacekeeping.

## Invited Guests

*click photos to visit websites*



**Babalawo Oluwole A. Ifakunle Adetutu Alagbede**, affectionately known as “the Babalawo of Harlem” is a Traditional African Orisa Practitioner, professional performing artist, father, and master chess player. Awo Ifakunle attended Hunter College, studying community health and physical education and is the student of Professor Ogunwande Abimbola who is the *Awise Agbaye* (spokesman of all babalawo in the World). His Oluwo (officiator of Ifa ceremonies), and his master teacher is Chief Araba Malumo Ifatukemi Alagbede of Elejibo, Lagos, Nigeria in whose compound Awo Ifakunle was initiated to Obatala and Ifa over 20 years ago. Additionally, the Awo has been tutored by Chief Priest Awise of Osogbo Ifayemi Elebuibon on Ifa divination and chants of Ifa. Locally, Awo Ifakunle was the Godchild and student of both Oba

Oseijeman Ofuntola Adefunmi I (iba e), who was the first King of [Oyotunji](#) African Village in South Carolina where Ifakunle lived in for a time in the 1970s.

Awo Ifakunle has been initiated to Egungun Society in Ibadan, Nigeria, as well as three houses of Palo, a Congo Bantu-based religion. He has studied with the Spiritual and Sango Baptist of Trinidad and Tobago where he has taken a type of ritual initiation known as Thrones. He has received countless lectures from Babalawos throughout the years from Africa and the Diaspora, and regularly lectures on Ifa-Orisa Tradition at Ile Eko Sango Oshun Milosa shrine in Trinidad and Tobago, at High Schools in New York City and at Colleges and Universities including [Harvard University](#), New York University, and Sara Lawrence College. His biggest love, however, is his role as officiating Awo for the Dyebanyani Initiated Women's Society, which conducts a rites of Passage program using the Eedyi tradition out of Southern Senegal.

Awo Ifakunle uses the literary corpuses of Ifa to chant, pray, divine, and make rituals on a constant quest to explore and expose how the ancient and modern African Traditional religion of Orisa can positively transform our modern communities in the African Diaspora. His concerns are with Africa and her people, serving his community, and with maintaining Africa's traditions, both on the continent and in the Americas, for the future generations to inherit. Ori (head) is the great transformer. Ori where are we going?



**Frédérique Apffel-Marglin** earned her BA and PhD from Brandeis University. She was first a student of Indian Classical Dance ([Orissi](#) style) and later did her first field research among the temple dancers of Jagannath Temple in Orissa in the mid-1970s. Her later field research was among agricultural communities in coastal Orissa. Since 1994 she had engaged in collaborative work with non-governmental organizations in Peru and Bolivia. She taught in graduate courses that those organizations offered from 1994 to 2005 during which time she was the coordinator of Centers for Mutual Learning in Peru and Bolivia during that period. This project was funded by a MacArthur grant until 1999. With the Peruvian NGO PRATEC, she had created a research and community center in the Peruvian High Amazon where she directed a program in Biocultural Diversity for U.S. undergraduates from 2001 to 2004.

In the spring of 2009, Apffel-Marglin founded the non-profit organization Center Sachamama in the Peruvian High Amazon dedicated to the regeneration of both the local ecology and local indigenous culture. Center

Sachamama is an educational organization that aims to integrate theory, research, activism and spirituality. She was a research adviser at the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) in Helsinki, an affiliate of the United Nations University, from 1985 to 1991. As part of that endeavor, she and economist Stephen A. Marglin formed an interdisciplinary and international collaborative team that has produced three books on critical approaches to development and globalization.

Apffel-Marglin currently directs a [six week summer program](#) that includes an intensive language program in the Peruvian High Amazon, "Ecology, Community and Indigenous Spirituality in the High Amazon." This course is administered by the nonprofit organization Living Routes. She is the author of five books, the editor or co-editor of an additional seven books and the author of more than fifty articles and book chapters. Her interests cover ritual, gender, political ecology, critiques of development, science studies and Andean-Amazonian shamanism with areas of specialization in South Asia and the Amazonian Andes. Her latest book, entitled [Subversive Spiritualities](#): *How Rituals Enact the World*, was released earlier this year.



**Lisa Oşunlétí Beckley-Roberts** was born in Holly Springs, Mississippi and raised on the campus of Rust College. Classically trained as a harpist from the age of nine, she received a Bachelor of Arts in Harp Performance from Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. After getting accepted to the College of Music at Florida State University she received a Master's degree in Harp Performance and played principal harpist in the Florida State University Orchestra, Big Bend Community Orchestra, Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, and the Central Florida Symphony Orchestra to name a few. However, after taking a community African Drum and Dance Class she began pursuing an interest in ethnomusicology and soon after received her Master's degree in the field. The African Drum and Dance class also opened the door to her spiritual community and shortly after beginning dance classes she began investigating the orisha tradition. Since 2000,

Oşunlétí has been studying the orisha tradition, becoming a member of her current ile in 2005 and being initiated to the orisa Oşun in 2010.

Oşunlétí is an Associate Professor of music and humanities at Tallahassee Community College (TCC) and a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at Florida State University both in Tallahassee, Florida. She is the founder and director of the [TCC African Drum and Dance Ensemble](#) and teaches Western Music History and World Music Cultures. A two-time Fulbright-Hays Scholar, she has conducted research on music associated with women and social change in South Africa as well as engaged in intensive Yoruba language studies in Nigeria. Currently, she is working on her dissertation entitled, "To and Through the Doors of Ocha: Music, Spiritual Transformation, and Reversion among African-American Lucumi." Though she loves her work, Oşunlétí is most proud of her accomplishments in her family. As a wife and mother, she seeks balance through her daily spiritual practice and study, and through her unique relationship with music and dance.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual African Languages in the Disciplines Conference

April 19 – 20, 2012

Barker Center – 12 Quincy Street – Thompson Room

Join us for our third conference, as we continue to engage scholars and African heritage communities in serious discussion about the contributions of African languages to the disciplines.

*Sponsored by the African Languages Program in the Department of African and African American Studies*



**Manbo Marie Maude Evans** holds a Master's in Mental Health Psychology and works as a Health Manager at the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) as well as a Mental Health Clinician at South Shore Mental Health. Prior to this, she served Boston's Haitian community as a Child Advocate, holding the position of Family Advocate for 10 years. Adding to her rich and varied set of skills, she studied Economics and worked for several years as an accountant for a telecommunications firm and also attended Fashion Design School at the Academy Verona becoming a fashion designer and opening her own business.

A native of Jacmel, Haiti, Evans re-located to the US in 1990 and resides in Mattapan, Massachusetts. She is a Manbo (high priestess) in the Haitian Vodou tradition and she serves both Haitian and American clientele who come seeking spiritual guidance. She maintains strong connections to her temple in Haiti by traveling there each summer to conduct initiations, spiritual weddings, feasts and other ceremonies.



**Suzanne M. Henderson** received her PhD in African American Studies from Temple University in 2007. In February of 2008, she became Assistant Dean in the Graduate Division of St. John College at St. John's University. In the short time Henderson has been at St. John's University, she has been instrumental in the re-formulation and execution of policies that affect all graduate students in St. John College. Presently she teaches African American Studies in the Sociology department, serves on the committee in creating a major in Africana Studies on the graduate level, serves on the Presidential Multicultural Committee, re-vitalized the Africana Studies professional certificate and publishing [articles](#) in referred journals within her field.

Henderson is a subject matter expert in the religious tradition of the Yoruba people of West Africa particularly the practice of the tradition in the United States. Her groundbreaking research focuses on African-Americans in the United States who practice the Yoruba religious tradition of Orisha worship.

Her previous higher education assignment was as Coordinator of Student Activities at Temple University Ambler. As a seasoned higher education administrator, Henderson planned and implemented various types of programs and educational opportunities that illuminated the value of scholarship and distinction in higher education. She is very passionate about conceptualizing, implementing, and adapting a full range of significant administrative services and programs that have pedagogy of learning and service that intersects race, ethnicities, class, gender, sexual orientations, and nationalities of all students.

Originally from Chicago, Illinois, Henderson graduated from Iowa State University in 1990 with a Bachelors of Arts degree in Speech Communications/Theater. In 1993, she graduated with a Master of Science degree in Education with a specialization in Counseling. Throughout her professional career, Henderson has endeavored to enhance higher education opportunities for all students. Her assignments have included being the Coordinator of Community Affairs with the Institute for the Study of Literature, Literacy and Culture at Temple University, Registrar at the Illinois School for Professional Psychology and Scholarship Coordinator for a not-for-profit agency in a Chicago public housing projects. Even as an undergraduate student, Dr. Henderson worked as the Assistant Director of the Iowa School Business Management Academy.



**Tracey E. Hucks** is Chair of the Department of Religion at Haverford College. She is the author of several articles on the history of African-derived traditions in North America and the Caribbean. Scheduled for release in May 2012 her [forthcoming book](#), *Yoruba Traditions and African American Religious Nationalism* examines the history of Yorùbá practice among African Americans in the United States and will be published with the University of New Mexico Press in the *Religions of the Americas Series*. Her current research involves the study of African-derived traditions in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and her next book, *Religious Vocabularies of Africa* offers a historical, literary, and ethnographic account of religious identity in Trinidad. Hucks is also the co-author of “*Africana Religious Studies: Toward a Transdisciplinary Agenda in an Emerging Field*” a forthcoming roundtable essay

for the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Africana Religions* (January 2013). She holds a BA and MA from Colgate University and an MA and PhD from Harvard.



**James Weeks** is the producer and co-director of “Across The King's River,” an upcoming documentary feature film that explores African spirituality and science while following one man and his daughter on their quest for transformation.

Weeks, a native of St. Croix U.S. Virgin Islands, who now lives in Oakland, California, is an initiated *Ifá* priest and speaker of the Yoruba language. He holds a BA in French from Cal-State East Bay and is the recipient of The Art of Living Black 2004, Jan-Hart-Schuyers Artistic Achievement Award. An award-winning photographer and a writer with more than 19 years of experience, Weeks’ writings have appeared in *Parenting*, the *Virgin Islands Daily News*, the *San Francisco Weekly* and other publications. His work has afforded him the opportunity to interview and interact

with thinkers such as Daniel Nettle, Charles Finch, Robert Voeks, Awise Ogunwande Abimbola and Chief Fama Aina Adewale-Somadhi, among others.

Weeks is the creator of the [Sacred Journey](#) fine art calendar series, a series of unique fine art calendars that feature the wisdom of Africa and the Caribbean. With riveting portraits, insightful journal entries, and uplifting quotes, Weeks pays tribute to the Yoruba, one of the most widely studied cultures of the Motherland.

## Panelists

*click photos to visit websites*



**Meredith F. Coleman-Tobias** is a first-year PhD student at Emory University (Graduate Division of Religion, American Religious Cultures). Her research interests consider trajectories of Afro-Caribbean religion in North America. She is specifically interested in embodied knowledge production in the Spiritual Baptist faith tradition, which she began to study during her tenure as a Fulbright student in Barbados (2009-2010). She received the Bachelor of Arts degree (summa cum laude) in Religious Studies from Spelman College (2006) and the Master of Divinity degree (cum laude) from Yale Divinity School (2009).



**Kyrah Malika Daniels** is a doctoral candidate in African & African American Studies with an emphasis in Religion and Sacred Arts at Harvard University. Her research explores the role of material religion and healing practices of Kongo traditions in Central Africa and the Caribbean. She considers how ritual artwork narrates religious histories of the Black Atlantic and offers mediation for cosmic disorder. She graduated from Stanford University in 2009 with a BA in African & African American Studies where she studied pakét kongo as sacred curatives for physical and psychic ailments, and the ways that ritual art asserts a presence of AfroAtlantic religious voices in global history.

Kyrah currently holds a position as a Graduate Student Associate at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard. She has presented her work at the Caribbean Studies Association and Haitian Studies Association, and has published in the *Journal for Haitian Studies* as well as in the *Encyclopedia of African Religions*. Kyrah has co-organized two Graduate Student Symposiums focused on the Caribbean, *Roots & Branches: New Directions in Haitian Studies* held at NYU in

January 2012, and *Reconsidering Caribbean Diaspora*, to be held at Harvard University in September 2012. This summer, she will conduct research in the Democratic Republic of Congo for a project that considers the connections between ritual healing bundles across the Black Atlantic. In the summer of 2009, Kyrah worked in St. Raphael, Haiti with Lakou Soley (House of the Sun): Academic and Cultural Arts Center, a grassroots organization that encourages the incorporation of art and performance as mediation strategies in the classroom for students who have experienced and continue to struggle with enduring traumas, including the earthquake of 2010.



**Karyna Do Monte** is a Brazilian-American PhD student in the Division of Religious and Theological Studies at Boston University, where she focuses on Transatlantic History with Dr. John K. Thornton World Christianity and Mission with Dr. Dana L. Robert. Her areas of interest include Latin American and African Diaspora studies, Brazilian studies, World Christianity, and religion and ecology. Karyna is a research assistant for Dr. Linda M. Heywood in the African American Studies Department and a teaching fellow in the Department of Religion at Boston University.

Karyna earned her Master of Arts from Florida International University in 2009 with her thesis entitled, “Environmental Stewardship and the Fate of the Brazilian Amazon: A Case Study of the Madeira Complex.”



**Sonia Hart** is a doctoral student in the Ethnic Studies program at the University of California at Berkeley. Her research interests include stress, resilience, and non-Western coping mechanisms in minority populations. In her incipient career, Ms. Hart has co-authored peer-reviewed articles published in *Psychological Science*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, and the *Journal for Group Work Specialists*, and has presented for the American Psychological Association and the American Educational Research Association. Her earliest work was conducted in Madrid, Spain and addresses topics of identity-type, loyalty to a group (e.g. nation, ethnic community, racial categorization), and intergroup perceptions. Her graduate level training has focused on teachers’ preparation for

working with diverse racial/ethnic student populations as well as the increasing need to integrate healthcare, social service interventions, and care management. Most recently, Ms. Hart’s work builds on inter- and cross-disciplinary methodology to analyze traditionally used psychological constructs within decolonial and critical race theories. She asserts that many accepted and institutionalized constructs of health and illness find their theoretical roots in European Modernity and neoliberal political economies, and furthermore, that these histories obscure the colonial systems of power that have been foundational in the development of academic thought surrounding health/illness paradigms. This work aims to bridge disparities between conventional academic theory in psychology, population needs, and the delivery of social services.



**Peter Hoelsing** is a Musicologist with primary research interests in performance and ritual healing in East Africa. He recently earned his PhD from Florida State University with his dissertation, “Kusamira Ritual Music and the Social Reproduction of Wellness in Uganda,” which examines the music of ritual healing and spirit mediumship in two regions of southern Uganda: Buganda and Busoga. His efforts will produce the first comprehensive ethnographic narrative on the musical and performative elements of rituals called kusamira.

Over the last six years, Hoelsing’s studies have received robust support. He qualified for a Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship in 2006 and received continuing funding for language development from the Krebs Foundation in 2007. Following his tenure as an International Dissertation Research

Fellow with the Florida State University Graduate School in 2008-2009, he received a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship for further research in Uganda. These generous benefactors, along with the Smith Educational Trust, have supported his attainment of comprehensive fluency in Luganda and his ongoing ethnographic research in both Uganda and its various Diasporic communities in the U.S.

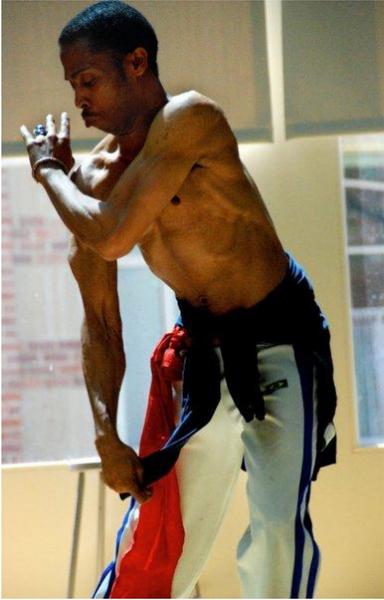
Hoelsing presently serves as Interdisciplinary Research Associate in the Department of Religion and Adjunct Professor of Musicology in the College of Music at Florida State University. His teaching interests include African and Caribbean genres, music of U.S. regional folk life, popular music in the Americas, and the ethnography of sound and the senses. He presently teaches a graduate course in music history. Over the last ten years, he has maintained a studio of private music students. He continues to teach a number of students and work as a performer. A lifelong church musician, Hoelsing serves as a cantor and staff musician with St. John's Episcopal Church in Tallahassee, Florida.



**Adam McGee** is a doctoral candidate in African and African American Studies at Harvard University. He is also an oungan asogwe, initiated by Manbo Marie Maude Evans, lineage head of Sosyete Nago. Adam studies the historical and cultural processes that impact the lives of Haitian Vodouisants, as well as the ways that those lives are perceived and imagined by outsiders. He also writes about the theology of Vodou. His dissertation project examines how sacred ideas of Africa inform the religious practices and self-understanding of a diverse range of Vodou practitioners, including converts. Adam has been published in *The Journal of Haitian Studies*, and will soon appear in *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* (Wilfred Laurier Press), *Dreaming: Journal of the Association for the Study of Dreams* (American Psychological Association), and in Kimberley Patton's edited volume *Gemini and the Sacred: Twins and Twinship in Religion and Myth* (I.B. Taurus Press). To help correct misconceptions about Haitian Vodou, Adam has spoken in classrooms and churches, and has assisted educators and religious leaders with the development of instructional materials. He has also organized and participated in lectures, displays of sacred arts, public ceremonies, and fundraising events--all with the goal of improving popular understanding of Haitian Vodou. He holds an AM in African and African American Studies from Harvard University, and an MTS from Harvard Divinity School.



**Oludamini Ogunnaike** is a 4th-year PhD student in African and African American Studies and Religion at Harvard University. His work focuses on issues of knowledge in West African Sufism and the Yoruba tradition of Ifá in Nigeria. He holds an AB in Cognitive Psychology and African Studies from Harvard University and an MA in Religion from the same institution. He has also traveled widely in West and North Africa.

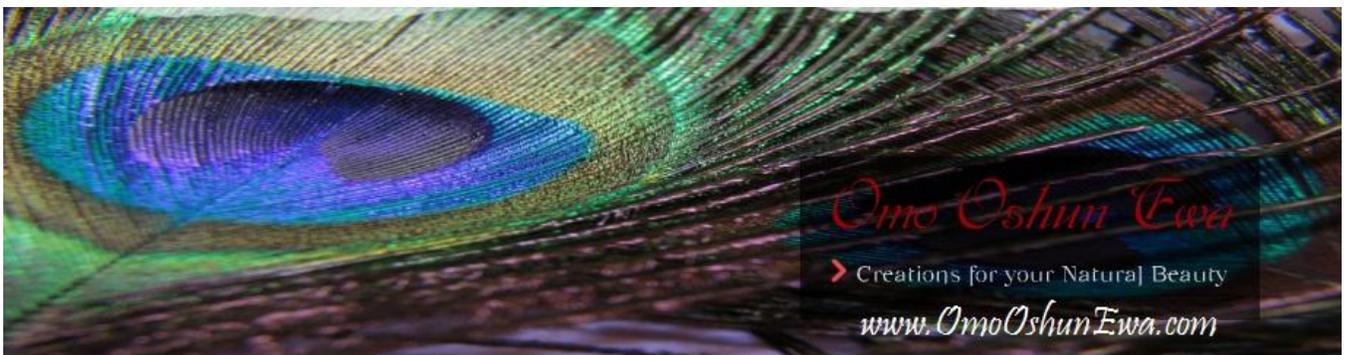


**Kwame A. Ross** is a Performer, Choreographer, Musician, Community Activist, Priest of Olokun and Tata of the Congo tradition formerly from New York City and now a resident of Tallahassee, Florida. For the past thirty years Kwame has been engaged in the preservation and continuum of African culture through the arts and community service. Ross has served as Cultural Ambassador to Egypt, and Associate Artistic Director of Urban Bush Women. He is the recipient numerous grants including from the Puffin Foundation, Jerome Robbins Foundation, Harkness Foundations, National Endowment of the Arts and Ford Foundation. Presently, he is the Artistic Director of Prophecy Dance Works the company which will soon be premiering a new work titled “Movement of the People” a work inspired by the Political Party developed by the Nigerian activist and artist Fela Ransome Kuti.

Ross has conducted extensive field research in African and African diasporic traditions. He has traveled to Benin City, Nigeria to work with the Edo ethnic group on the Olokun arts and religious traditions; in Maputo, Mozambique he worked with the National Song and Dance Company of Mozambique concentrating on the Chopi ethnic group and their traditions around the Tambila instrument; in Cairo, Egypt he worked with the Modern Dance School of Cairo and company of the Cairo Opera House Modern Dance Company developing a work around social issues; in Santiago De Cuba, he studied the Afro-Cuban traditions of Oriente, Montanza and Havana folk dance and music traditions; in Trinidad he worked with Malik Folk Performers studying the folkloric dance of Trinidad; and in Salvador Bahia, Brazil he studied the traditional dances of *Candomblé* and Samba. He is an ongoing Teaching Artist with Cutno School of Dance in Augusta, GA as well as guest faculty at Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, FL, working with the Drum and Dance Ensemble.



**Chelsea Shields Strayer** is a PhD candidate at Boston University in both biological and cultural anthropology. She also received her MA in anthropology and the African Studies Graduate Certificate from Boston University on a FLAS fellowship studying Twi and Yoruba languages. She also had the privilege while a student of participating in Placebo Studies Seminars at the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine then a part of Harvard Medical School. Chelsea has been doing research in Ghana, West Africa for over a decade on Asante indigenous religion and ritual healing and how social interactions, cultural meaning, and ritual processes influence physiological mechanisms. Currently, she is living in Baltimore, MD where she is teaching at Towson University and finishing her dissertation on “How Asante Indigenous Ritual Healing Ceremonies Activate and Enhance Placebogenic Mechanisms.”





**Awo Leo Suarez** is a Master's candidate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University, researching Ifá-Orisha religion as it has evolved in the Yoruba Diaspora. He has conducted original ethnographic research in Orisha-worshipping communities in Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the United States. In his role of Omo Ayan (ceremonial drummer), the majority of his research to date has focused on the role of sacred music and cultural preservation in Ifá-Orisha worship. While an undergraduate at Northwestern University, he conducted ethnomusicological investigations in Ilé Axê Opo Afonjá in Salvador da Bahia and Ilé Axê Opo Ajaomim in Areia Branca, Brazil. This research was conducted under the supervision of professor/priest Jaime Sodr  of the Universidade Federal da Bahia, and by professor William Calhoun, Awo Orunmila, of the Fortaleza, Cear  office of the School for International Training. Independent research of this scope has been conducted in Cuba with the members of Tambor de

Fundamento A  Bi, based in Pogolotti, Marianao; in Carolina, Puerto Rico with the members of Tambor de Fundamento A  Adeola; and in Chicago, Illinois with the members of Tambor de Fundamento A  Oba Tola. To date this research has produced the publication of two articles: one addressing the roots of Orisha religion in Salsa music, the other addressing the role of music in the initiation ceremony of new Orisha priests within Cuban Lucumi practice. He also possesses extensive independent research experience among Afro-Colombian communities in Colombia's Caribbean coast, and is currently compiling interviews regarding the ways in which the incipient Orisha movement is unfolding in Colombia.

Suarez's role as an If  priest and diviner, has sparked a new research focus on examining the ways in which practitioners use If  divination, practice, and initiation as means of holistic and preventative healing. Specifically he is concerned with developing a hypothesis as to how If  methodology can be used to combat somatoform disorders such as chronic pain, epilepsy and conversion disorder. This research focus is ultimately motivated with making the case that If -Orisha healing practices deserve to be considered for inclusion within the network of societally accepted alternative health systems, such as acupuncture and Ayurveda.



**Onaje X. Offley Woodbine**, PhD candidate in Psychology of Religion at Boston University, specializes in African and African American religious thought. He received his BA in Philosophy from Yale University, and his MA in theological studies from Boston University's School of Theology. Recently, he served as African Diaspora Scholar in Residence for Project on African American Religious Research and Education (PAARRE) at the Boston University School of Theology, and was awarded a Fulbright-Hays Scholarship Abroad to study language, religion and culture in Nigeria, West Africa.

Onaje and his wife, Folasade Woodbine, produced the first Ifa Divination App for iPad/iPhone/iPod touch in the world. Currently, his research interests center on the role of religious aesthetics in disenfranchised African American communities.



**Dr. Robert J. Woodbine**, ND, MAcOM is president of San Bao Holistic Care, LLC which provides naturopathic and Chinese medicine services. Through his *Strategies for Optimum Wellness* (SOW), Inc., he incorporates twenty-six years of studying, training and teaching Qigong and taijiquan in his work. The mission of *Strategies for Optimum Wellness* (SOW), Inc. is to sow the seeds of effective health and lifestyle strategies to optimize well-being and promote self-sufficiency in typically underserved communities of color. Dr. Woodbine has studied Qigong and taijiquan in China, Thailand, France, Switzerland, and the U.S. with notable masters of these disciplines including Master Mantak Chia, Fabien Maman, Grandmaster Yang, Jwing-Ming, Grandmaster Roosevelt

Gainey, and Master Wang, Qingyu.

Dr. Woodbine follows the lineage of his grandmother, a midwife and healer, his mother, a seer, and his father, a noted healer, who first taught him the Original Ingham Method of Foot Reflexology. Dr. Woodbine is a graduate of and former principal instructor of Foot Reflexology at the Bancroft School of Massage Therapy. Currently, he teaches Pathology for Massage Therapists at the Ridley-Lowell Business and Technical Institute. He has studied John Upledger's CranioSacral Therapy, Bert Hellinger's Family Constellations (with Roberta Maria Atti), African Ritual Healing (with Malidoma Some'), and Gary Craig's EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique). Additionally, Dr. Woodbine has studied vocal harmonics and sound therapy with Fabien Maman, Nestor Kornbloom, David Hykes, Rollin Rachelle, and Sayam Bapa of Huun-Huur-Tu.

Dr. Woodbine received his doctorate in naturopathic medicine (ND) from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine and his masters in acupuncture and Oriental medicine (MAcOM) from the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine both in Portland, Oregon. He received his BSc in Management and Organizational Behavior from Lesley College.

## About the Organizer



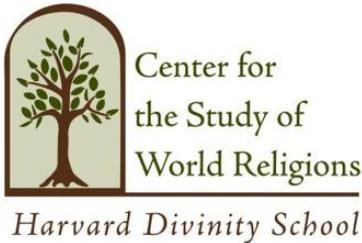
Funlayo E. Wood is a doctoral student in African and African American Studies with a primary field in Religion at Harvard University. Her research focuses on philosophical and theological aspects of Ifá-Orisa tradition as practiced in Nigeria and the Americas, exegesis of the corpus of Ifá orature and comparative analysis of Ifá-Orisa concepts and practice – within all of which she privileges Yoruba language as a conduit to understanding. An initiated priestess of Obatala and Iyanifa Funlayo has dedicated her life to the Ifá-Orisa tradition and relishes in contributing her voice as a scholar-practitioner.

A native of New York City, Funlayo holds a BA in the African Diaspora in the Americas and an MA in history, both from the City University of New York where she was a graduate fellow at the Colin Powell Center for Leadership and Service. Throughout her post-secondary career, Funlayo has conducted research on African Indigenous religious systems including time spent at the University of Legon in Ghana, Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria and at various cultural-historical sites in Nigeria and Egypt. Augmenting her scholarly work, she receives consistent spiritual instruction from her Master-Teacher, Awo Oluwole Ifakunle Adetutu Alagbede.

Funlayo serves on the boards of the [Orisa Community Development Corporation](#) and [Creating a Culture of Peace](#), non-profit organizations dedicated to community building. Additionally, she is a Junior Fellow at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School and the creator of [Ase Ire](#), an inspirational, informational web space and resource center.

## Symposium Sponsors

*click logo to visit sponsor's website*



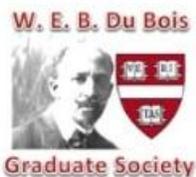
The mission of the **Center for the Study of World Religions** at Harvard Divinity School is: to advance interdisciplinary, international, and interreligious exchange, learning, and research on the world's religions; to bring together the rich intellectual resources of faculty and students at Harvard Divinity School and at other Schools and departments of Harvard University with an international scholarly network to explore issues of religion in today's complex, globalizing, and changing world; and to build a deeper and broader understanding of the histories and contemporary patterns of the world's religious communities by hosting scholars and practitioners at the Center as residents and program participants.



Building on Harvard University's longstanding scholarship and education on Africa, the **Committee on African Studies** fosters the creation and dissemination of knowledge about Africa and African perspectives, across the University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Professional Schools. As a University-wide entity, the Committee works collaboratively with Harvard's many loci of Africa-related expertise to expand upon and create new opportunities and resources for education and research, and to enhance connections among and between scholars, students, and groups focusing on Africa-related knowledge at the University, in the broader community, and through partnerships on the continent.



The **W. E. B. Du Bois Institute** is the nation's oldest research center dedicated to the study of the history, culture, and social institutions of Africans and African Americans, broadly defined to cover the expanse of the African Diaspora. The Du Bois Institute's research projects and visiting fellows form the vital nucleus around which revolve a stimulating array of lecture series, art exhibitions, readings, conferences, and archival and publication projects.



Since its formation in 1983, the **W. E. B. Du Bois Graduate Society** has worked to create a conducive educational environment for historically underrepresented minorities in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS). It has acted as an umbrella organization to serve the needs of African-American, Puerto Rican, Mexican American, and Native American graduate students.



The **Department of African and African American Studies** brings together scholars and scholarship from many disciplines to explore the histories, societies, and cultures of African and African-descended people. The field of African and African American Studies is not only interdisciplinary but also comparative and cross-cultural.



The **Orisa Community Development Corporation** is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting the economic, social and cultural development of the global Orisa Community. We will fulfill our mission through providing strategic planning, programs and initiatives that build sustainability, pride, and the perpetuation of traditional ways of life in the context of modern society.



**Ase Ire** is an inspirational, informational webspace and resource center which is aimed at "Promoting the Power of Positivity" using African-centered principles and philosophies.