



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

# THE BLACK GRADUATION CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2024  
WAYNE STATE FIELDHOUSE  
NOON - 2PM



**The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence Program**  
**Processional of Graduates**  
**(Escorted by Nanou Djiapo Drum and Dance Group)**

<b>Permission to Commence</b>	<i>Blair Baker</i> <i>Student Engagement Program Coordinator</i> <i>Office of Multicultural Student Engagement</i>
<b>Libations</b>	<i>Dr. Kefentse Chiké, Professor</i> <i>Department of African American Studies</i>
<b>Musical Selection</b>	<i>"Lift Every Voice and Sing"</i> <i>Sung by Ashley Baylor, Claudia Mitchell, Dalas Stuart,</i> <i>Noelle Barker and Carlean Walls</i> <i>Department of Music, College of Fine Performing and</i> <i>Communication Arts</i>
<b>University Welcome</b>	<i>Bryan C. Barnhill II</i> <i>Wayne State University Board of Governors, Vice Chair</i>  <i>Dr. Kimberly Andrews Espy</i> <i>Wayne State University President</i>
<b>Rites of Passage</b> <b>(Maa't, Sankofa and Harambee)</b>	<i>Shushanna Shakur, Professor</i> <i>Department of African American Studies</i>
<b>Introduction of</b> <b>Student Keynote Speakers</b>	<i>Blair Baker</i>
<b>Student Keynote Speakers</b>	<i>D.J. Strong Class of 2024</i> <i>Master of Business Administration, Marketing &amp;</i> <i>International Business</i>  <i>Ja'Lea Echols Class of 2024</i> <i>Master of Public Health</i>  <i>Dr. Anglesia Brown Class of 2024</i> <i>Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership &amp; Policy</i> <i>Studies</i>
<b>Presenting of Graduates</b>	<i>Dr. Alicia Nails</i> <i>Associate Processor, Communication</i>  <i>Tyrone Austin, Academic Advisor IV</i> <i>University Advising Center</i>
<b>Closing Remarks</b>	<i>Dr. Mary Jenkins-Williams</i> <i>Organization of Black Alumni Leader</i>
<b>Permission to Close</b>	<i>Blair Baker</i>

**Recessional of Graduates**  
**(Escorted by Nanou Djiapo Drum and Dance Group)**

Please allow the escorts and graduates to march out of the Fieldhouse. Guests and graduates are encouraged to meet outside of the Fieldhouse due to capacity limitations.



WAYNE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

Government and Community Affairs

Patrick O. Lindsey  
Vice President

To The 2024 Black Graduates of Wayne State University,

Congratulations on earning your various degrees and reaching this important milestone of your academic journeys! You now join the nearly 300,000 alumni as graduates of this esteemed university!



As graduates, you represent "Black Excellence" in higher education, and I encourage you to continue demonstrating excellence in your various professions and careers. I pray that each of you reaches the highest heights in your respective endeavors and reap the full benefits thereof – excellent income, richly deserved recognition, and a healthy sense of professional and personal fulfillment.

Most importantly, I hope that each of you make significant contributions to our world, particularly to the Black community. Inequality, injustice and inequity still exist in our society – in health, education, justice, and wealth, among others – and Black people are disproportionately affected by these persisting disparities. Equipped with the knowledge and expertise you gained at Wayne State, each of you are well-prepared to address and eliminate these harsh and persistent realities.

Nelson Mandela stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." I am confident that as 2024 Black graduates of WSU, you will go out and change the world!

Peace and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patrick O. Lindsey', written in a cursive style.

Wayne State University, 4091 Faculty/Administration Building, Detroit, MI 48202  
Office: (313) 577-4228 Email: [patrick.lindsey@wayne.edu](mailto:patrick.lindsey@wayne.edu)



Akwaaba! Welcome!

Dear Graduating Class of 2024,

On behalf of the Department of African American Studies, congratulations on your graduation! Through your hard work, dedication and perseverance, you have accomplished this momentous achievement, amidst some very extraordinary times.



We celebrate you, your families, and your accomplishments, as you journey through this rite of passage. There is an African proverb, 'I am because we are'. Your successes are our successes. Your wins are our wins. As you embark on what's next for you, remember that you are enough. Your dedication, persistence and consistency are enough. You are resilient and you have what it takes to accomplish your goals. We are the realization of the past, present, and future. You stand on the shoulders of those who sacrificed and endured much, in the face of adversity, so that you may live well and thrive.

In the spirit of 'Harambee', a Kiswahili word that means, 'pull together', and celebrate your/our accomplishment. Let the Village pull together and use our skills to make a difference for ourselves and our people.

"Forward ever, backwards never." - Kwame Nkrumah

Kefentse Chike, Ph.D.  
Professor, African American Studies



Dear Graduates,

On behalf of the Office of Multicultural Student Engagement, congratulations on completing your degree!

Despite any obstacles or challenges, your unwavering commitment to your goals has allowed you to reach this moment.



Today, we celebrate you and the community of people who supported you during your time at Wayne State. The end of the semester is a busy time but make an effort to pause. Pause to appreciate the friendships you've built and the connections that will sustain you through your next chapters of life. Pause to celebrate the joy of accomplishing a major milestone and the benefits to come. Pause to say thank you to the mentors, family, friends, professors, staff, and other folks who helped you cross the finish line.

As you go out into the world, no matter what your profession, be kind, give back, and aim to make the world a better place for those who are to come. In the words of Malcom X, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

Congratulations again!

Stephanie Hawkes, Ed.D.

Senior Director, Office of Multicultural Student Engagement



WAYNE STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
Career Services

Dear Graduating Class of 2024,

On behalf of Career Services,  
congratulations on completing your degree!

We are excited to celebrate you! Your  
persistence, dedication, and commitment in  
achieving your goals has brought you to this  
momentous occasion.



Your graduation from Wayne State University reflects your growth and  
transformation. Take the lessons you've learned with you as you move  
forward. Take time to enjoy this moment with those who have  
supported you throughout this journey.

As you transition to the next chapter of your life, let the excellency of  
your history shine in all that you do!

Career Services is here to help as you transition from college to your  
career! As a graduate of Wayne State University, you have lifelong  
access to career resources and opportunities to connect with  
employers. To connect with Career Services, please visit  
<https://careerservices.wayne.edu/>.

Blessings and again, Congratulations!

**Shawn R. Pewitt**

Shawn R. Pewitt, M.A., CCSP  
Director, Career Services





# WAYNE STATE

## ORGANIZATION OF BLACK ALUMNI

April 27, 2024

Dear Graduate,  
Congratulations on earning your degree from Wayne State University!  
You may have officially completed your studies but know that your connection with your fellow graduates and your alma mater lasts a lifetime.

The Wayne State University Alumni Association and the Organization of Black Alumni (OBA) are here to help you stay connected as you move forward in your personal and professional life.

OBA is a community of like-minded Black alumni who are active champions for the culture and examples of Black excellence. They connect Black alumni with enriching opportunities to network, volunteer, and mentor at the university and in the greater Detroit community. With a mission to "unite, empower, connect and highlight" Black alumni, OBA positively impacts participants, prospective and current students, the university and beyond.

To become an OBA member and have access to programs, activities, events, volunteer opportunities and mentorship connections – including everything OBA-related, please sign up via the QR code below or online at: [alumni.wayne.edu/connect/oba](https://alumni.wayne.edu/connect/oba). There are no membership fees or other requirements to be a part of OBA and the benefit of staying involved is priceless. We look forward to welcoming you into the Organization of Black Alumni and congratulate you on completing your degree at Wayne State University.

Sincerely,

**Ron Wood '75, '80**  
**Organization of Black Alumni Co-Founder**



### ***OBA History***

*In 1994, Organization of Black Alumni (OBA) were approached by Laurence A. Stewart to support the African American Graduation Celebration and immediately became partners for the event. OBA has been a strong supporter of the African American Graduation Celebration since then and is committed to honoring Black graduates during this special celebration. The Organization of Black Alumni has dedicated itself to being a champion for Black graduates and advocating for their involvement and celebration on campus. OBA continues to salute and congratulate graduates in this 31st year of distinctive celebration and welcomes them into the organization as new alumni upon their convocation.*



**LET'S STAY CONNECTED!**  
**FOLLOW @WSUOBA**

**ALUMNI.WAYNE.EDU/CONNECT/OBA**



# *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

---

## College of Education

---

### **Bachelor of Science in Community Health**

Serena Baker

Christine Griffin

### **Bachelor of Science in Early and Elementary Education**

Pauline Spatcher

Danielle Tillett

### **Bachelor of Science in Sports Management**

Joshua McDonald

Chrishoun Roberts

Jared Scott-Ombima

### **Master of Arts in Community Health**

Myyon Ligon

### **Master of Arts in Counseling**

Nautica Jackson

### **Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology**

Veronique Eason

### **Master of Education in Educational Leadership**

Roc'Kell Delitoy

Maisha Massey

### **Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction**

Lisa Westbrooks

### **Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies**

Carlita Earl

Michelle Taylor

Anglesia Brown

---

## College of Engineering

---

### **Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering**

Ajah Stott-Holmes

# *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

## **Bachelor of Science in Computer Science**

Raigene Cook

Naje Safford

## **Master of Science in Electrical Engineering**

Adele Mekonnen

---

## **College of Fine, Performing & Communication Arts**

---

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art**

Mica Anderson  
Arielle Campbell  
Nia Moore

Kennedy Perkins  
Aubrea Toone  
Arthur Rushin

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Broadcast Journalism**

Ashley Harris

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Communication Studies**

Mark Teague

Cardien Stephens

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance**

Hunter Martin

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Design and Merchandising (Fashion)**

Nefertiti Luakabuanga

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design**

Melanie Horn

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Media Arts and Studies**

Trevor McConico

### **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Music**

Noelle Barker  
Putice Daniels

DaJa Nuckles - Pittman

# ***The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence***

## **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Public Relations**

Lauryn Spann-Smith

Rori Thomas

## **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre**

Jo Jackson

Dazjah Saunders

Michael Joseph

## **Master of Fine Arts in Communication**

Marcus Meade

Bre Wilson

---

## **College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**

---

## **Bachelor of Arts in African American Studies**

Jerel Cooper

Jasmine Brockman

David Douglass

## **Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology**

Rendia Smith

## **Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences**

Carissa Parks

## **Bachelor of Science in Chemistry**

Amanda York

## **Bachelor of Science in Chemistry**

Domonique Mitchell

## **Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice**

Jada Crawford

Jaida Mixon

Keriana Fair

Regina Riggins

Genise Gresham

Mikayla Williams

## **Bachelor of Arts in Economics**

Taylor James

## ***The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence***

### **Bachelor of Arts in Employment and Labor Relations**

Aisa Hayes  
Whittney Whittaker

Kenya Rouse

### **Bachelor of Arts in English**

Carmen Jackson

Anuri Mitchell

### **Bachelor of Arts in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies**

Breanna Walker

### **Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience**

Kourtney Robertson

Andrew Robinson

### **Bachelor of Arts in Political Science**

Sheare Hill  
Ashlyn Poole

Nelita Taplet

### **Bachelor of Science in Psychology**

India Bailey  
DeShawna Burse  
Dejohna Carter  
Maria Dickerson  
Atira Dotson  
Angel Ellerbee  
Mya Ellison  
Inari Gardner  
Kyra Harris  
Tracy Jackson  
Alayna Johnson  
Nikiya Jones  
Oluwatinuke Kuforiji

Tinuke Kuforiji  
Kaylah McGee  
Chloe Moore  
Christina Moore  
Brandy Murphy  
Deja Pitts  
Koi Rice-Cutts  
Jon'l Rimbart  
Shaqyna Ross  
Darshell Russell  
Amir Saeed  
Raegan Smith  
Destiny Staples

# ***The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence***

## **Bachelor of Science in Public Health**

Monique Alexander

Bethany Archer

Arlease Green

Ja'Niah Lake

Monet Legette

Dallaz Martin

Dariane Vesey

Marllis Whitt

## **Bachelor of Arts in Sociology**

Kaela Franklin

Lakiesha Hammond

Kaitlyn James

Wanda Johnson-Betts

Solomon Shorter

## **Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies**

Niquia Clark

Naji Wilson

## **Master of Arts in Anthropology**

Joy Barksdale

## **Master of Arts in English**

Marquita Davis

## **Master of Arts in Sociology**

Amber Anderson

Dionna Brown

Ebony Eason

## **Master of Science in Criminal Justice**

Christiana Dumas

Bria Morris-Johnson

Joshua Strode

## **Master of Public Administration**

Charlaine Stevenson

Eboni Williams

## **Master of Urban Planning**

Jaylyn King

## **Doctor of Philosophy Cancer Biology**

Ahmani Ashanti

## *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

---

### College of Nursing

---

#### **Bachelor of Science in Nursing**

Glory Amanze	Jacqueline Kramer
Dillon Glenn	Nennaya Lewis
Tiara Hernton	Tahitia Smith
Ivory-Lena Hinojosa	Annural Whitner

#### **Master of Science in Nursing**

Bianca Clarke

#### **Doctor of Nursing Practice**

Carolyn Ibe

---

### Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

---

#### **Master of Science Physician Assistant Studies**

Latoya Allen

---

### Law School

---

#### **Master of Studies in Law Human Resources**

Brandi Richards	Monique Williams
-----------------	------------------

#### **Juris Doctorate in Law**

Jah'juan Bess	Alexandria Moore
Alysson Combest	Alysa Wiggins
Zia Felder	Micah Wright
Amia Jackson	

---

### Mike Ilitch School of Business

---

#### **Business Administration (Graduate Certificate)**

Raymond Chambliss	Taya Stewart
Monisha Harris	

# *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

## **Bachelor of Arts in Accounting**

Dellonda Bryant  
Ebony Marcum

Krystal Sturgis

## **Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration**

Nyana Allen  
Rodney Banks  
Jeremy Colbert  
Paris Colin  
Jermaine Green

Lacey Jackson  
Julia Lambkin  
JoAnn McClurkin  
Ryan Reddick  
Jordyn Sims

## **Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Management**

Ayanna Craig  
Devonne Davis  
Jalen Fields

Scolen Fullen  
Destiny Hill  
Maya Wright

## **Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Marketing**

Amari Hampton  
Maraya Lockett

Connor Robinson

## **Master of Business Administration**

Ashley Dowe  
D.J. Strong

Shay Wright

---

## **School of Information Sciences**

---

### **Information Management (Graduate Certificate)**

Imani Beard

### **Master of Library and Information Science**

Tori Robinson

---

## **School of Medicine**

---

### **Master of Science Physiology**

Dorah Stephen



# *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

## **Master of Public Health**

Tamera Burnett  
Ja'Lea Echols

Asiimwe Najjuma

---

## **School of Social Work**

---

### **Bachelor of Social Work**

Sparkle Berry  
Tina Boyd-beale  
Jasmine Brown  
Ashley Falls  
Danielle Hill  
Alexander Mays  
Alaunna McKeithen

Marcia Moten  
Kenya Pitts  
Chelsea Ross  
Alexis Stevenson  
Da'jia Walton  
Crystal White

### **Master of Social Work**

RhondaAdams  
AndrewBrooks  
Rickeysha Brown  
Jasmine Bynum  
Teairre Embery  
Deja Fields  
Ov'Var'Shia Gray-Woods  
Tanya Harris  
Ka'Terra Horne  
Aramide Iposu  
Alma Johnson-Baker  
Talise Lewis

Cornel Lynch  
Danielle Merritt  
Destiny Peterson  
Sherrion Peyton  
Ashlynn Price  
Carlie Robinson  
Bonika Singleton  
Destini Sylvester  
Chavon Tiggs  
Alisa Turner  
Aliana Warren  
Jaylia White

# ***The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence***

**History of the Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence (BGCE)**  
*(Formerly the African American Graduation Celebration [AAGC] and The Black Convocation Committee)*

## ***Honoring Those Who Persevere***

In the fall of 1993, a small group of African American seniors deviated from their late night study session to contemplate the spring completion of their undergraduate degrees. Among the group was Laurence A. Stewart, a transfer student from USC. He spoke of his former school's longstanding graduation ceremony held especially for African-American students. The discussion quickly went from admiration to pondering the reasons why Wayne State, right smack in the middle of Detroit, with its track record for graduating excellent black scholars, had no such ceremony honoring them.

There were no reasons, simply never a vision, or perhaps never a vision realized. Well, this particular group of seniors did not want their vision to be a temporary twinkle in their eyes. The next phase was how? The group took the necessary steps to become a registered student organization on campus, and thus gain all the rights and privileges thereof. Various administrators were contacted, and numerous fellow students queried.

Despite some skepticism and confusion as to why, the overwhelming response was yes, some sort of special ceremony honoring African & African American seniors (undergraduate & graduate) was long overdue. President David Adamany offered his well wishes and off we were. So, let us briefly discuss why. The matriculation rate and subsequent retention of African American Students in colleges and universities across the country is alarmingly low. The circumstances and conditions that prevent us firstly from attending institutions of "higher-learning" and secondly, graduating at all (not to mention in a timely fashion) are multifaceted and *numerous*.

In the larger society, seldom are there functions which acknowledge our intellect, scholastic abilities, and academic achievements. Instead, we are bombarded with either unbalanced, negative and/or stereotypical self-images, or those of wealthy entertainers, many whose accomplishments we applauded, however, nonetheless whose realities are not our own.

It is the teachers, engineers, doctors, social workers, scientists, etc. who our children need to see society validate and affirm: for reasons we hope are obvious. This is just what the Black Convocation Committee (BCC) aims to do in a way that also incorporates the splendor and creativity that is our culture. Universal love begins with love of self and the BCC attempts to help facilitate this unity by providing our graduates an opportunity to outwardly, culturally and ethnically love themselves. Only from here can we all go forward. So (naysayers, cynics, etc.) *Let us do this (we will regardless), and fellow brothers and sisters (of Afrikan descent) help us do this.*

## ***The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence***

In 1994, The Organization of Black Alumni (OBA) were approached by Laurence A. Stewart to support the African American Graduation Celebration and immediately became partners for the event. OBA has been a strong supporter of the African American Graduation Celebration since then and is committed to honoring Black graduates during this special celebration. The Organization of Black Alumni has dedicated itself to being a champion for Black graduates and advocating for their involvement and celebration on campus. OBA continues to salute and congratulate graduates in this 31st year of distinctive celebration and welcomes them into the organization as new alumni upon their convocation.

Around 2005, students from the Department of Africana Studies formed a committee of students and several faculty members to host a smaller celebration. Their goals were to:

1. To encourage African and African American descendant students to enroll in classes, seek the African American Studies majors and graduate with a degree from the African American Studies Department (formerly Africana Studies Department).
2. Highlight the success and achievements of African and African American descendant graduates at Wayne State University.
3. Provide a time and space for honoring the support and contributions of family, friends, mentors, and the community.
4. Motivate future African and African American descendant students to reach degree attainment at the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral level.

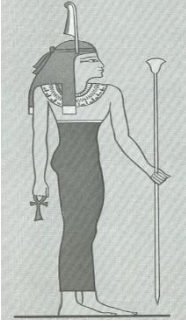
Later in spring of 2009, the Office of Federal TRIO, under the leadership of Henry Robinson became the sponsor for African American Graduation Celebration (AGGC). Maxine Hudgins, a TRIO staff with the Office of Federal TRIO was identified as the coordinator for the event because of her interest in student life. She always acknowledges how this celebration was most memorable from the university's traditional commencement because of the "historical and cultural aspect discussed. We had an opportunity to interact and network with other African American graduates throughout each discipline of the university and each graduate's name was called at the ceremony. When I graduated in May 1999, the university did not call each graduate's name; however, that has since changed. This intimate setting did not have limited seating; therefore, all my friends and family attended." In many African American families and culture, education is highly encouraged and valued."

The Black Student Union (BSU), Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), Student African American Sisterhood (SAAS), Department of African American Studies and the Organization of Black Alumni (OBA) became sponsors and supporters for the event. With the creation of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Office of Multicultural Student Engagement (OMSE) developed in 2015, came increased support and sponsorship so that the Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence was able to grow into the grand event we know and love today.

# The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence

## African Principles Maát, Sankofa, and Harambee

### Maát



Maát, often pronounced as “Muh-ah”, was the Kemetic (Ancient Egyptian) concept of ethical principles collectively embraced as the values (Cardinal Virtues) of truth, justice, harmony, balance, cosmological order, reciprocity and propriety.

Maát was deified as a goddess. After creating order out of chaos in the universe at the moment of creation, she was responsible for regulating the stars, seasons, and the actions of both mortals and the deities. In the Kemetic pantheon most goddesses were paired with a male aspect whose attributes were the same. Her masculine counterpart was Thoth (or Tehuti). After the rise of Ra, Maát and Troth were depicted as guiding his boat, one on either side. After her role in creation and continuously preventing the universe from returning to chaos, her primary role dealt with the weighing of souls that

that took place in the underworld, Duat.

Maát was central to funerary practices in the underworld. The heart of the deceased was weighed against the feather of Maat by the god Anubis. If the heart was heavy with wicked deeds, it would outweigh the feather, and the soul would be fed to the god Ammit. However, if the scales balanced, indicating that the deceased had been a just and honorable person in life, he would be welcomed by Osiris into the Blessed Land.

Maat's presence in all worlds was universal, and all the gods deferred to her. She is typically pictured wearing a crown with a huge ostrich feather. The feather was the measure that determined whether the departed souls (considered to reside in the heart, the center of intellect and memory) would reach the paradise of after life successfully. Her totem symbol is a stone platform or foundation, representing the stable base upon which universal order is built.

Maát was the personification of the fundamental order of the universe, without which all of creation would perish. At any event in which something would be judged, Maat was said to be present, and her name would be invoked so that the judge involved would rule correctly and impartially. If Kemetians (Egyptians) were to live in a happy, prosperous and peaceful environment, they had to live within the order established by Maát. The primary duty of the Pharaoh was to uphold this order by maintaining the law and administering justice. To reflect this, many Pharaohs took the title "Beloved of Maat," emphasizing their focus on justice and truth.

In life, the Pharaoh was the absolute ruler, and through all his actions was the individual most responsible to manifest the entire concept of Maát. Deviation from the tenets of Maát could prove disastrous for the Pharaoh. This symbolic weighing of the heart against the feather of truth (Maát) was performed to establish the righteousness of the deceased. The scale of Maát was balanced after the recitation of the 42 Declarations of Innocence or Admonitions of Maát from the Book of the Dead. *(This was said before the Forty-two gods upon reaching Duat and the Hall of the Two Truths so as to purge (name) any sins committed and to see the face of every god).*

Hail to you, great God, Lord of the Two Truths!  
I have come to you, my Lord,  
I was brought to see your beauty.

I know you, I know the names of the forty-two gods,

# *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

Who are with you in the Hall of the Two Truths,  
Who live by warding off evildoers,  
Who drink of their blood,  
On that day of judging characters before Wennofer.

Lo, your name is "He-of-Two-Daughters,"  
(And) "He-of-Maat's-Two-Eyes."  
Lo, I come before you,  
Bringing Maat to you,  
Having repelled evil for you.

1. I have not committed sin.
2. I have not committed robbery with violence.
3. I have not stolen.
4. I have not slain men and women.
5. I have not stolen grain.
6. I have not purloined offerings.
7. I have not stolen the property of God.
8. I have not uttered lies.
9. I have not carried away food.
10. I have not uttered curses.
11. I have not committed adultery, I have not lain with men.
12. I have made none to weep.
13. I have not eaten the heart.
14. I have not attacked any man.
15. I am not a man of deceit.
16. I have not stolen cultivated land.
17. I have not been an eavesdropper.
18. I have not slandered [no man].
19. I have not been angry without just cause.
20. I have not debauched the wife of any man.
21. I have not debauched the wife of [any] man.
22. I have not polluted myself.

23. I have terrorized none.
24. I have not transgressed [the law].
25. I have not been wrath.
26. I have not shut my ears to the words of truth.
27. I have not blasphemed.
28. I am not a man of violence.
29. I have not been a stirrer up of strife.
30. I have not acted with undue haste.
31. I have not pried into matters.
32. I have not multiplied my words in speaking.
33. I have wronged none, I have done no evil.
34. I have not worked witchcraft against the king.
35. I have never stopped [the flow of] water.
36. I have never raised my voice.
37. I have not cursed God.
38. I have not acted with arrogance.
39. I have not stolen the bread of the gods.
40. I have not carried away the khenfu cakes from the Spirits of the dead.
41. I have not snatched away the bread of the child, nor treated with contempt the god of my city.
42. I have not slain the cattle belonging to the god.

# *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

## African Principles Maát, Sankofa, and Harambee

### Sankofa



The Asante people of Ghana use various Adinkra symbols to represent Sankofa. Sankofa is an Akan word meaning go back and take [San- (return) ko- (go back), fa- (look, seek and take)]. The **literal** translation for Sankofa is: **“There is nothing wrong with learning from hindsight,”** or **“It is no taboo to return and fetch it when you forget. You can always undo your mistakes”.**

The Sankofa symbol represents the idea that one must take from the past what is good and bring it into the present in order to make positive progress through the benevolent use of knowledge. It also symbolizes the Akan's quest for knowledge with the implication that the quest is based on critical examination, and intelligent and patient investigation. Adinkra symbols are used to express proverbs and other philosophical ideas. Other tribes in the area and other cultures around the world have adopted this idea.

One visual representation of Sankofa is a mythical bird that flies forwards with its head turned backwards. Another is the bird with its head turned backwards taking an egg off its back. This reflects the Akan belief that the past serves as a guide for planning the future, or the wisdom in learning from the past in building the future. The Akan believe that there must be movement with times but as the forward march proceeds, the gems must be picked from behind and carried forward on the march.

In the Akan military system, this symbol signified the rearguard, the section on which the survival of the society and the defense of its heritage depended.

## African Principles Maát, Sankofa, and Harambee

### Harambee

Harambee is a Bantu (or Kiswahili) word, which has its origins in the word Halambee, and was originally used by porters throughout the coastal parts of Kenya like Mombasa, Lamu, Malindi and later throughout the entire country. It is normally pronounced as haa-

## *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

raam-bay and literally means, "Let us all pull together." Various, it is described as a way of life in Kenya and a traditional custom of Kenyans. Harambee may range from informal affairs lasting a few hours in which invitations are spread by word of mouth, to formal, multi-day events advertised in newspapers. In East Africa, such events have long been important as ways to build and maintain communities and are based on four major principles:

- Individuals at the community and grassroots level participate actively in planning and implementation through a bottom up development strategy.
- Participation is guided by the principles of collective good rather than personal gain, and the end product benefits the public rather than an individual.
- Choice is guided by felt needs of the majority, not some other change agents whose priorities may not be those of the ultimate beneficiaries, the collective.
- Maximize the utilization of resources that might otherwise remain unmobilized or expensive.

To capture the spirit and mood of Harambee since its inception, one needs to understand the philosophy behind Kenya's struggle for independence that gave birth to and pushed the spirit of Harambee forward. Following Kenya's independence in 1963, the first Prime Minister and later first President of Kenya, Jomo ("Burning Spear") Kenyatta adopted "Harambee" as a concept of pulling the country together to build a new nation. Kenya had many social and economic projects it wanted to undertake. Given limited government resources, and the speed at which they wanted to move forward, Kenyans needed to identify a driving force towards their desired economic goals.

On Madaraka (Independence) Day, June 1, 1963, Kenyatta cautioned Kenyans saying, "... as we participate in the pomp and circumstance, and as we make merry at this time, remember this: we are relaxing before the tall that is to come. We must work harder to fight our enemies - ignorance, sickness and poverty. Therefore give you the call **HARAMBEE**. Let us all work harder together for our country, Kenya."

He encouraged communities to work together to raise funds for all sorts of local projects, pledging that the government would provide their startup costs. Under this system, wealthy individuals wishing to gain legitimacy and get into politics donated large amounts of money to local harambee drives. However, such practices were never institutionalized during Kenyatta's presidency.

**Cheikh Ahmadou Banba Mbacke'**

### **History of the Kente Cloth**

#### **Historical Background**

Although Kente, as we know it was developed in the 17th Century A.D. by the Ashanti people, it has its roots in a long tradition of weaving in Africa dating back to about 3000 B.C. The origin of Kente is explained with both a legend and historical accounts. A legend has it that a man named Ota Karaban and his friend Kwaku Ameyaw from the town of Bonwire (now the leading Kente



## ***The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence***

weaving center in Ashanti), learned the art of weaving by observing a spider weaving its web. Taking a cue from the spider, they wove a strip of raffia fabric and later improved upon their skill. They reported their discovery to their chief Nana Bobie, who in turn reported it to the Asantehene (The Ashanti Chief) at that time. The Asantehene adopted it as a royal cloth and encouraged its development as a cloth of prestige reserved for special occasions.

Historical accounts trace the origin of Kente weaving to early weaving traditions in ancient West African Kingdoms that flourished between 300 A.D. and 1600 A.D. Some historians maintain that Kente is an outgrowth of various weaving traditions that existed in West Africa prior to the formation of the Ashanti Kingdom in the 17th Century. Archaeological research has dated examples of narrow-strip cloths woven in West Africa as early as the 11th Century A.D. and perhaps earlier. Some examples of woven fabrics have been found in the caves of the Bandiagara cliffs in Mali. These cloths used in burial ceremonies, probably, during the medieval Ghana, Mali and Soghai Empires, have technical and aesthetic features similar to many of the narrow-strip cloths in many parts of West Africa. Such cloths, which the Akans call "Nsaa", are important components of sacred royal paraphernalia in most Akan royal courts today and are known to have been traded with articles of prestige by Akan Kings and chiefs early in the 17th Century. Many features of such cloths appear in the early and later narrow-strip cloths woven in Ashanti. Given these historical accounts, it is believed that the Ashanti craftsmen might have learned weaving skills from other peoples living North and West of them and later developed their unique style of cloth.

While Kente Cloth may have its roots in 11th Century West African weaving traditions, weaving in Africa as a whole was developed earlier. Elsewhere in Africa, archaeological excavations have produced such weaving instruments as spindle whorls and loom weights in ancient Meroe Empire which flourished between 500 B.C. and 300 A.D. in other African Civilizations in the Nile Valley such as Kemte (Egypt) and Nubia or Kush, there is an abundance of

pictorial and archaeological evidence proving the existence of a weaving industry as early as 3200 B.C.

### **Kente Symbolism**

Kente is used not only for its beauty but also for its symbolic significance. Each cloth has a name and a meaning; and each of the numerous patterns and motifs has a name and a meaning. Names and meanings are derived from historical events, individual achievements, proverbs,

## *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

philosophical concepts, oral literature, moral values, social code of conduct of conduct, human behavior and certain attributes of plant and animal life. Patterns and motifs are rendered in geometric abstractions of objects associated with the intended meaning. Some of such patterns and motifs are arbitrarily determined, and their forms have no direct structural similarities with the concepts or objects symbolized. Also, their relationship is primarily conceptual rather than representational.

Patterns and motifs are generally created by weavers who also assign names and meanings to them. Forms, names and means of such patterns and motifs are sometimes given by weavers who may obtain them through dreams and during contemplative moments when they are said to be in communion with the spiritual world. Sometimes, kings and elders may ascribe names to cloths that they specially commission. Generally, names are based on the warp arrangements of the cloth, however, in some instances, both warp and weft arrangements determine a name of a cloth.

There are over 300 different types of cloth designs, each with its name. Each cloth design comes with numerous variations-in color and distribution of motifs. This chart presents names of 54 different cloth designs, and 42 motifs, their literal meanings and their symbolic significance. Symbolism are given interpretations on the basis of the general Akan culture.

Color symbolism within the Akan culture affects the aesthetics of Kente. Colors are chosen for both their visual effect and their symbolic meanings. A weaver's choice of colors for both weft and warp designs, may be dictated either by tradition or by individual aesthetic taste. There are gender differences in color preferences, dictated by tradition, individual aesthetic taste and by spirit of the occasion. As a convention rather than a strict code of dress, women tend to prefer cloths with background or dominant colors that are lighter or tinted, such as white, light yellow, pink, purple, light blue, light green and turquoise. Generally, men tend to prefer cloths with background or dominant colors that are on the shaded side, such as black, dark blue, dark green, maroon, dark yellow, orange and red. Social changes and modern living have, however, led some people to ignore these traditional norms, resulting in color choice based on individual taste.

### **Symbolic Meanings of Colors**

**GREEN** is associated with vegetation, planting, harvesting and herbal medicine. Tender green leaves are usually used to sprinkle water during purification rituals. It symbolizes growth, vitality, fertility, prosperity, fruitfulness, abundant health and spiritual rejuvenation.

## *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

**GOLD** derives its significance from the commercial value and social prestige associated with the precious mineral. Gold dust and gold nuggets were used as medium of exchange and for making valuable royal ornaments. It symbolizes royalty, wealth, elegance, high status, supreme quality, glory and spiritual purity.

**BLACK** derives its significance from the notion that new things get darker as they mature; and physical aging comes with spiritual maturity. The Akans blacken most of their ritual objects to increase their spiritual potency. Black symbolizes an intensified spiritual energy, communion with the ancestral spirits, antiquity, spiritual maturity and spiritual potency.

**RED** is associated with blood, sacrificial rites and the shedding of blood. Red-eyed mood means a sense of seriousness, readiness for a serious spiritual or political encounter. Red is therefore used as a symbol of heightened spiritual and political mood, sacrifice and struggle.

Kwaku Ofori-Ansa, 120033. All Rights Reserved

# *The 2024 Black Graduation Celebration of Excellence*

## **Acknowledgements**

### **Event Planning Committee**

---

J Allen	Veronica Killebrew
Blair Baker	Lauren Lepowski
Kadesha Baker	Akelah Reese
Jordan Berman	Keanu Respress
Eddie Dickson	Dr. Lauren Scott
Rachel Dupree	Katherine Svisco
Nailah Hall	Brittany Thomas
Dr. Stephanie Hawkes	Jacqueline Williams

### **Entertainment**

---

Nanou Djiapo African Drumming under the leadership of Baba Shomari (Roland Matthews)

Vocalists: Ashley Baylor, Claudia Mitchell, Dalas Stuart, Noelle Barker and Carlean Walls

Department of Music, College of Fine Performing and Communication Arts

### **A Very Special Thank You To:**

---

Black Faculty & Staff Association (BFSA)

Wayne State University Organization of Black Alumni (OBA) Founders (Elders), Advisors, and Members

Wayne State University Board of Governors

The President's Office | Dr. Kimberly Andrews Espy, President

Provost Office | Dr. Laurie Lauzon Clabo, Provost & Dr. Donyale Padgett,

Interim Associate Provost, DEI/Chief Diversity Officer

Wayne State University Special Events

Wayne State Department of Athletics

Wayne State Facilities Operations & Maintenance

### **Sponsors**

---

- Office of Multicultural Student Engagement (OMSE)
- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI)
- Department of African American Studies (AFS)
- Wayne State University Organization of Black Alumni (OBA)/Alumni Association

*The function of the university is not simply to teach bread-winning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools or to be a center of polite society; it is above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization. – Unknown Author*



