

A.R.I.S.E.:
**African Americans Renewing
Interest in Spiritual Ensembles**



In 1988, the Kansas Committee for the Humanities (KCH) extended a grant to the Urban League of Kansas for the purpose of educating the public on the history and significance of the Negro Spiritual. The Urban League's program director, Prentiss Lewis enlisted the aid of Josephine Brown to develop a curriculum and an entourage that would travel throughout the state of Kansas to expose Kansans to the rich heritage of Spirituals. Mrs. Brown, in turn recruited other musicians, historians and educators (referred to as Scholars) to implement a series of seminars on Negro Spirituals. The scholars were: Drs. Evies and Sharon Cranford, Dr. John Gaston, Dr. William Harmon, Dr. John Poe, Cherrie Baldon and Rachel Norwood.

The Fruit: After the successful completion of the KCH grant, Mrs. Brown was convinced that sharing the message and music of the Negro Spiritual was a continuous journey, not a destination. She summoned the musicians and educators from the original scholars group who also believed that Spirituals provide a rear view of America's failures and triumphs; thereby providing a window to the understanding and tolerance needed for the future. After a series of meetings and work sessions, a new determination to educate and cultivate interest in Negro Spirituals emerged. Dr. Sharon Cranford advanced the name "ARISE" (African-Americans Renewing Interest in Spirituals Ensemble), to reflect the new Choral/Storytelling group that would "arise" and shine the light on Spirituals through words and music. This ensemble would be charged with encouraging and engaging all cultures in Spirituals, the original American art form.

For over twenty-two years, under the direction of Josephine Brown, ARISE has served as a cultural ambassador, exposing greater numbers of people to the legacy of the spirituals throughout the state of Kansas. Through live and televised performances, as well as recordings, ARISE continues to provide educational and cultural enrichment experiences regarding Spirituals. Currently a 501C3 educational agency, ARISE consists of a 7 member board of directors and a racially and culturally diverse, forty-voice ensemble, from which soloists and smaller representatives may be pulled to spread the message as needed. The purpose remains to ensure that the lessons contained in the lyrics, melodies and rhythms of these powerful songs are continued forever.

Mrs. Josephine Pace Brown, Founder/President, (316) 263-6363
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Dr. Sharon Hill Cranford, Secretary
Dr. Rachel Norwood, Corresponding Secretary
Clarence King, Treasurer

The Office of the Governor

KAAAC

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Black History Month Advocacy Days at the Capitol

African American Kansans and the Arts

**Thursday, February 18, 2010
10:00 a.m.—12:00 noon
142 South Capitol**

Kansas African American Affairs Commissioners

Curtis Whitten (4th District), Chairperson
James Barfield (4th District)
Latoria Chinn (3rd District)
Deborah Dandridge (2nd District)
Harriett Johnson (2nd District)
Jerome Williams (4th District)

Staff

Mildred Edwards, Ph.D., Executive Director

Prisca Barnes
Executive Director
The Kansas African
American Museum

Prisca N. Barnes is the Executive Director of The Kansas African American Museum. She is a young visionary with plans for the upcoming new museum on the river. In her short tenure she has created partnerships with key organizations in Kansas and opened the Museum's first gift shop incorporating her unique flair for quality books, gifts, and elegant presentation.



A native Kansan she has worked in both the corporate and non-profit sectors for several years. She graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication from Clark Atlanta University and holds a Masters of Arts in Communication from Wichita State University. Prisca is a connoisseur of the arts and incorporates music, theater, visual art, and dance in her lectures and presentations throughout the United States. A social activist concerned with the plight of children especially in the urban core she is the founder and director of Storytime Village a children's literacy program that motivates children to become lifelong readers. An artist in her own right, she is a published illustrator of a children's book entitled, The Magic Tooth. She has been active within the Wichita civic community in many organizations including The Junior League, The Urban League and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. In her spare time she enjoys reading, music, theater, interior design, and meeting new people.

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Donna Rae Pearson
Historian

Donna Rae Pearson is the Collection Development Specialist for the Kansas Historical Society (KHS) where she has the unique position of helping the organization pro-actively collect the material culture of Kansas for the permanent collection. She co-authored and developed the program

for an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant (IMLS) awarded to teach select Kansas museums how to work with community organizations and individuals to tell their stories. One goal of this grant project is to increase resource sharing amongst the state's cultural institutions.

Prior to joining the staff of KHS, Donna Rae spent over nine years with Girl Scouts of Kaw Valley on the executive leadership team developing innovative outreach strategies to increase access to Girl Scouts for girls in underserved communities. In addition, she managed over 2,000 adult volunteers and ensured girl membership numbers were reflective of the population in a thirteen counties in northeast Kansas. She has a degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing from Kansas State University. After obtaining an Art degree with a minor in history at Washburn University, she entered the Public History Masters program at Wichita State University.

Donna Rae's firm belief is that everyone should participate in the creation and preservation of history and toward that end she works with community organizations such as the N.A.A.C.P, Research on Black Wichita, Kansas, Aaron Douglass Mural Project and Art Fair, and Nicodemus Historical Society to preserve local African American history. She specializes in working with local history museums and individuals implementing history community-collecting projects. She is the owner of the newly formed non-profit Kitchen Table History.

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