

# Reclaim Arts

PRESENTS

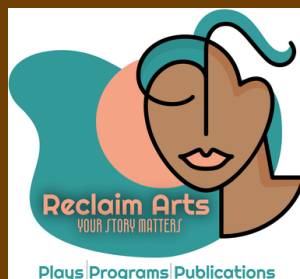
## Hairstory

Reclaiming Our Crown

The Multimedia Traveling  
Production coming to a  
Stage Near You



RAISING AWARENESS  
ABOUT HAIR TEXTURE  
BIAS & BULLYING ;  
PROMOTING SELF-LOVE,  
EQUITY, & SOCIAL JUSTICE



YOUR STORY MATTERS  
[RECLAIMARTS.COM](http://RECLAIMARTS.COM)







# About Us.

Reclaim Arts LLC was founded by Chief Creative Officer (CCO) Maria Thiaw (penname Maria James-Thiaw) in July of 2023. The original business, Reclaim Artist Collective, began in 2018 after the tremendous success of Maria's choreopoem, *Reclaiming My Time: An American Griot Project*. Today Reclaim Arts LLC is the home of the American Griot Project and several plays, programs, and publications. Our work includes:

- The American Griot Project Residency Program in schools
- Local Author "Book Tastings"
- The choreopoems, *Reclaiming My Time: An American Griot Project* and *HairStory: Reclaiming Our Crown*
- Creative Craft Workshops
- Creatives' Retreats
- School talks: Black Hair Matters
- Spoken Word Performances

The American Griot Project is an oral history project in which Maria interviews storytellers or "griots" (gree-oh) on a particular topic. She then translates their story into poetry, and weaves the poems she's written into one cohesive story. That story is called a choreopoem. She calls the process "historiographic poetics" because it brings history to life through poetry.



The topic for *Reclaiming My Time: An American Griot Project* (and its 2020 Zoom version, RMT 2.0) was "women of the Civil Rights era." Maria interviewed several women over the age of 65 and wrote 28 poems for the piece. *HairStory* was about women's experiences relating to their naturally kinky, coily hair and how it has impacted them in work, school, and social relationships. Although the original show had over 30 poems, our traveling version is much more compact and runs a tight 60 minutes.

*Pictured: 2023, HairStory: Reclaiming Our Crown, Kevin Williams plays "The Mighty Combbreaker"*

# MEET THE POET

## Maria

JAMES-THIAW



Known for her dynamic spoken word performances, Maria James-Thiaw bridges the gap between stage and page with her powerful poetry collections. Her fourth book is Count Each Breath, published by Wild Ink Publishing. Count Each Breath was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2022. It recounts her life as a Black mother whose husband is trapped overseas, while she's dealing with chronic illness and the Covid19 pandemic. It explores issues of racial disparities in healthcare, sexism, mental health, and Black lives.

In 2018, Maria wrote *Reclaiming My Time: The American Griot Project* using oral histories of women who lived through the Civil Rights Movement as inspiration for her poetry. She coined the phrase "historiographic poetics," meaning "a form of poetry that sheds light on historical events and raises consciousness about social justice issues." In 2020 she released *RMT 2.0*, a Zoom version of the play under the direction of Janet Bixler. Her 2023 choreopoem *HairStory: Reclaiming Our Crown* was performed at Gamut Theatre in Harrisburg, PA and was called "An immensely moving and powerful work of art..." by Andrea Stephenson of BroadwayWorld.com.

In her 20th year as an educator in both higher education and k-12 schools, Maria became the Assistant Director of the Popel-Shaw Center for Race and Ethnicity at Dickinson College. She is a member of the Pennsylvania Poetry Society, AWP, the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, the Cumberland County Commission for Women, and the poetry board of *Philadelphia Stories Magazine*. She and her husband, a native of West Africa, are the proud parents of two brilliant boys. They reside in South Central Pennsylvania but dream of owning a home in Senegal one day that could be a respite for weary writers.

<http://www.mariathepoet.com>



# THE CAUSE.



*The cast of HairStory performed an excerpt at the capital building in Harrisburg, PA for the 2024 Juneteenth Celebration sponsored by YPOC and the Pennsylvania Black Caucus.*

Hair texture bias impacts Black and Afro-Latina women and girls from childhood, through their teens, and on through adulthood. Boys have felt the impact of hair bias on the field of play. They've been given the ultimatum - cut your locks, undo your braids, shave the afro, or you are off the team. Men with long, well-kept dreadlocks have been told they must cut them to be employed or remain in good standing in their private school. If a person's hair grows out of their head in a kinky, coily way, it may very well impact their ability to earn an income.

While natural hair is considered unprofessional in many corporate circles, the alternative is to spend money on chemical hair straighteners called perms. While this has become normalized, recent studies show that people who have permed their hair more than four times a year are at increased risk of cancer in their lifetime. Hair texture bias and discrimination tells people with African ancestry that, as *HairStory's* Aleyah says, "professionalism don't come naturally."





# Soul Sistas'

## Meet Aleyah...

*HairStory* follows the journey of a young, ambitious, Black woman, Aleyah, who is working all the angles to make a name for herself as a hard-hitting journalist. Imagine her surprise when her editor assigns her a “fluff” story about Black-owned beauty salons! Her journey takes her back to ancient stories and rituals woven into African people. Aleyah encounters many deep-rooted stories of how Black and Brown people have been ostracized and objectified for their hair. She is pulled into memories of sisters, mothers, grandmothers, and aunties who lovingly and sternly braided traditions, demands, and power into each other’s hair. Will Aleyah accept the Ancestor’s guidance to take her out of trauma and into Truth?

**"WHETHER YOU IDENTIFY WITH THESE STORIES PERSONALLY OR YOU ARE VIEWING THIS AS AN ALLY, I WANT YOU TO LEAVE THIS THEATRE WALKING A LITTLE TALLER, KNOWING THAT YOU ARE ENOUGH JUST AS YOU ARE."**

~ MARIA JAMES-THIAW, PLAYWRIGHT



“I have to change my hair from its natural state to fit in at the office.”

BLACK WOMEN ARE  
**80%**

MORE LIKELY TO AGREE  
WITH THIS STATEMENT.



**70%**

OF 14 YEAR OLDS  
REPORTED THAT PEOPLE  
HAVE TOUCHED THEIR  
HAIR WITHOUT THEIR  
CONSENT.



BLACK WOMEN'S  
NATURAL HAIRSTYLES  
ARE 2.5X MORE LIKELY  
TO BE VIEWED AS  
UNPROFESSIONAL IN  
THE WORKPLACE.



**100%**

OF BLACK GIRLS THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED HAIR  
TEXTURE DISCRIMINATION, FIRST EXPERIENCED  
IT BEFORE THE AGE OF 10.

# News & Reviews

**“THIS PRODUCTION IS A POWERFUL PIECE OF VISUAL AND PERFORMANCE ART THAT TELLS A STORY THAT IS FILLED WITH PASSION, EMOTION, AND THE CONVERGENCE OF PAST, PRESENT, & HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.”**

**~ ANDREA STEPHENSON, BROADWAYWORLD.COM**

**“THE ROYAL ANCESTORS DEMONSTRATED THE INTRINSIC IMPORTANCE OF HAIR IN AFRICAN CULTURE. THE WOMEN WERE EMPOWERED AND STRONG BECAUSE OF THEIR HAIRSTYLES.”**

**~ ROSALYN TRUAX, THE SLATE**

**“IT IS A REMINDER THAT, AS THE CAST SAYS IN THE PLAY, ‘BLACK HAIR IS GOOD HAIR.’”**

**~ SANIKA BHARGAW, ABC27**



# Book Now!



The cost to bring our multimedia infused, stylized production of *HairStory: Reclaiming Our Crown* to your campus is approximately \$6000 if you can provide the following:

- 6 head mics
- projection and screen
- Pre-show rehearsal space (day of)
- space for merch/book table and photobooth
- Lodging if 3 hours or more from Harrisburg, PA
- 1 - 2 responsible student leaders to assist guests with digital tools and photos

## We Provide

- FREE Access to our Digital Playbill
- FREE Access to the HairStory Digital Study Guide
- FREE post-show talkback with playwright & cast
- Pre-show entertainment which includes
  - Soul Sistas Salon Photobooth or
  - Selfies with the Ancestors and
  - A Black Hair Educational Poster Exhibit

## Add ons!

### Expert Talkback

A talkback featuring off or on-campus experts in The CROWN Act, Law, dermatology, mental health, women's health, psychology, sociology, and/or history (\$1250)

### Pre-Show Presentation

Earlier in the day, Maria James-Thiaw will speak to your class(es), leading them through a relevant guided discussion about hair texture bias called "Black Hair Matters" (\$1500)

### Writing Workshops

- *Writing Revolution*, a spoken word writing workshop inspired by Black Arts poet, Gil Scott-Herron.
- *We Wear the Mask*, a Paul Lawrence Dunbar-inspired workshop that encourages introspection and writing.
- *Your Story Matters*, A story-telling workshop that teaches elements of story telling and raises awareness about the book banning in the U.S. (\$800)



**30% DOWNPAYMENT IS EXPECTED 30 DAYS PRIOR TO THE PERFORMANCE.**



# Fundraising ideas

We all want your students to grow in their understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion, to gain empathy, and to broaden their horizons. A moving and powerful performance of *HairStory: Reclaiming Our Crown* can start that much needed conversation. Here are some creative ways to get the funds you need to bring us to your campus or venue.

## TEAM UP!

Another student club, office, or organization on campus may want to collaborate with you to bring our show to campus. Set up a meeting. Let us know if you need to show them the value of this project. Community organizations could be interested as well. Think about African American sororities and fraternities or other groups impacted by hair texture discrimination.

## WRITE ON!

As an educational institution, if you give yourself enough time, you may be able to write a grant to pay for the event. Past shows have gotten grants from Highmark, TFEC, and Dauphin County Commissioners. We are happy to help with any data you need to provide.

## GET SPONSORS!

Corporations, hair care businesses, your college marketing department and other organizations that are interested in reaching college students and/or the African American demographic, will be excited to be affiliated with this project as a sponsor. Reclaim Arts will list them in the digital playbill for the show, which all audience members will have access to. In the past, our shows have been sponsored by M&T Bank, Central Penn College, Lead PA Foundation, and The Harrisburg (PA) Chapter of the Links, incorporated.

Contact us to schedule your event today!

[info@reclaimarts.com](mailto:info@reclaimarts.com)  
[www.ReclaimArts.com](http://www.ReclaimArts.com)







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