

AfroSolo Theatre Company presents...

AfroSolo ARTS FESTIVAL 31 - LET FREEDOM RING! PART 2

Fri., and Sat., March 28, 29, 2025 at 7:00 pm;

Sun., March 20, 2025 at 3:00 pm

Limited Engagement - 3 Performances Only!

Potrero Stage - 1695 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94107

PERFORMER BIOS

Douglass Haynes – vocalist; **Dr. Carl Blake** - Piano:

Douglass Haynes - vocalist, will perform “Songs That Feed My Soul,” a mini-concert of Black Gospel Hymns and Negro Spirituals. Haynes comes from an environment of legendary Gospel and Negro Spiritual singers. He was influenced by his mother, Charlie Mae Haynes, who sang with the Sallie Martin Singers. Martin was referred to as the “Mother of Gospel” music. Haynes participated in the SF Boys Chorus and was a member of the Morehouse College Glee Club and Quartet, where he was a student of Wendall Whalum and Uzee Brown. He served as a choir director for over 10 years at the Pilgrim Baptist Church, then located in San Mateo. He has been, from his childhood, a member of the Third Baptist Church Choir in SF, where, for many years, he has been a soloist on various special occasions. One of his noble characteristics is to be a helper to those in need, regardless of race or creed. With Dr. Carl Blake on piano.

Augustene Phillips - writer

Augustene Phillips Will read her short story, “*Let America Be America Again*”.

Using the story of her father, Phillips writes a cautionary story about what life will be like for many people if the onslaught of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs (DEI), the erasure of, or a sanitized version of Black History in education, the banning of books, etc., is a success. Growing up in rural Arkansas, Phillips witnessed the lack of opportunity, and the power to control her father had on his destiny. Phillips explores what the impact of the diminished rights gained over the last 60 years would mean to her generation and those to come. She provides a “canary in the coal mine” view of what America could become. She cautions, “Don’t let *that* American become America again”.

Augustene Phillips is enjoying life as a senior citizen. She is a widow, mother, and grandmother. Augustene attends church regularly and sings in two choirs. She is a writer, avid cyclist, swimmer, bowler, and golfer. She loves gardening, reading, being with friends, and helping others. She is retired and lives in SF. Recently, she has become an avid writer. Her upcoming book is an anthology of stories focused on her life and her family’s history. The book will be titled “*The Life and Times of Augustene Phillips*.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDdYsgpnR70>

Libah Sheppard - writer

Libah Sheppard will read from her story "*I Do Love You*" - the story of a young Black girl's love for her older brother. Despite his faults, he could do no wrong. The result of her brother's encounter with a policeman sent Sheppard spiraling out of control, which led to almost a decade of drug addiction. "*I Do Love You*" is a story of personal redemption over adversity. She only recently has been able to talk or write about the incident. The story is a reclamation of her life as she recently completed a Bachelor's Degree and is presently working on a Master's Degree, both at SF State University. **I Only Wanted to Play with My Dolls - by Libah Sheppard** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDZm1tKASmo>

Libah currently attends SF State University studying for her Masters in marriage and family therapy, and received her Bachelor's Degree in Communication Studies in 2022. She's a published author, life-long learner, Mother of three, Life Coach, and is spiritually centered. She attended the Million Family March and Barack Obama's inauguration in Washington, DC.

Libah is actively involved in community platforms which have addressed housing discrimination, economic disparities, and the displacement of children. She has performed many years with the Madea Project Theater for Incarcerated Women and is passionate about helping people heal from various traumas in life. She dreams of opening a welcoming Group Home for Teen Moms and their children. She honors the work of the generations who have gone before her, never forgetting the injustices that are still here to fight.

I Only Wanted to Play with My Dolls - by Libah Sheppard
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDZm1tKASmo>

Thomas Robert Simpson, actor, director, producer, and writer, is the founder and artistic director of AfroSolo Arts Festival. Since 1991 he has concentrated on presenting African American and African Diasporan art and culture through solo performances and the visual and literary arts. For the past 17 years Mr. Simpson has produced the award-winning and critically acclaimed AfroSolo Arts Festival in SF, presenting over seventy-five artists. He has also showcased celebrity artists such as award-winning actor Ruby Dee, comedian and political activist Dick Gregory, beloved teacher, poet and social activist June Jordan, sensational black gospel singer Emmitt Powell, and many others.

In 2006 Mr. Simpson won a coveted Bay Area Jefferson Award for Public Service. In 2009 he was awarded a prestigious Certificate of Honor from the SF Board of Supervisor, as well as award from SF AIDS Foundation's Black Brothers Esteem Program, The Reggie Williams Achievement Award and the Oakland Supper Club for his contributions to our community.

Since 1999 Mr. Simpson has also used the AfroSolo Arts Festival to focus on the health of African Americans, he has collaborating with the medical community to present health fairs as well as sat on committees charged with decreasing the health disparity in the African American community https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRjRs_Rthq0

Hugh Leeman – filmmaker

Hugh Leeman is an artist and lecturer. He lectures regularly at Johns Hopkins University and Duke University in English and at Colorado State University in Spanish. Through art and

technology, Leeman created micro-entrepreneurial platforms connecting unhoused individuals and those who could buy the first iPhone. He is collaborating with diverse communities using storytelling, artificial intelligence, and narrative art-making to preserve cultural knowledge and foster human connection. His artworks have been shown in museums in the USA and Mexico. More recently, using his art and community activism, he co-founded aetatribes.org

Dr. Carl Blake (piano for Douglass Haynes)

Dr. Carl Blake holds three degrees in piano performance: Bachelor of Music (magna cum laude) from Boston University, Master of Arts from San Jose State University, and Doctor of Musical Arts from Cornell University. Dr. Blake has performed to critical acclaim three times in Weill Recital Hall (formerly, Carnegie Recital Hall), Wigmore Hall (London) and L'Hermitage (Winter Palace of the Czars, St. Petersburg, Russia). In addition, he has toured in France, England, Central and South America, and the Caribbean Islands as Artistic Ambassador for the US Department of State. Currently, he serves as Director of Music of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in SF. Mr. Blake serves on the Board of Directors for Noontime Concerts SF.

###