

# DUMBO BOOKS OF BROOKLYN

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Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Wednesday Night in Brooklyn Heights: "Rites and Ceremonies of the Brooklyn African Disapora" at the Brooklyn Historical Society



This evening we attended an interesting panel discussion, "Rites and Ceremonies of the Brooklyn African Diaspora" at the Brooklyn Historical Society in the Heights.



Part of the Brooklyn Arts Council's yearlong Black Brooklyn Renaissance extravaganza of countless programs (presented in partnership with the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoraion

Corporation) - performances, exhibitions, screenings, symposia and more - celebrating the last fifty years of African-American arts and culture in Brooklyn.



The large panel included Dance Africa Elder Rahkiah Abdurahman, who discussed her work and that of Dr. Chuck Davis and the evolution of DanceAfrica from its 1958 origins; Doris Green, one of the premier historians of African dance and one of the first teachers of it in Brooklyn - a Fulbright scholar, an innovative Brooklyn College instructor we remember from back in the day, she talked about her pioneering work in notating African dance and traditional-instrument music; Pam Green of the Weeksville Heritage Center; Peggy Alston, the longtime theater actress and director of performing arts at Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, who discussed the annual Pre-Opening Ceremonies for DanceAfrica; Baba Mpho of the annual Tribute to the Ancestors of the Middle Passage at Coney Island, which takes place by the Atlantic, "the world's biggest burial ground of Africans," the second Saturday in June;



Jeff King of the annual Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium and Brooklyn Jazz Festival; Brenda Greene of Medgar Evers College's Center for Black Literature and National

Black Writers Conference, who announced that Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison (our teacher at the 1977 Bread Loaf Writers Conference) will be Honorary Chair for the Tenth National Black Writers Conference from March 26-28, and its theme, taken from the WWII novel by founder John Oliver Killens, is "And Then We Heard the Thunder: Black Writers Reconstructing Memories and Lighting the Way"; Segun Shabaka of the International African Arts Festival; Jean Alexander of the West Indian-American Day Carnival Association, Inc, which presents the spectacular, word-famous annual West Indian American Day Parade; and Joy Patel of 227 Abolitionist Place, and the annual Juneteenth Celebration.



We learned an incredible amount about the traditions of the event from these accomplished people and are looking forward to attending more Black Brooklyn Renaissance events.