

Mesi E. Bakari Walton, Ph.D.

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EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Howard University, Washington, DC, 2019

- Program: African Studies – Language, Culture and Development
- Concentration: Afro-Latinx Studies
- Dissertation: “Survival Through Memory: African Retentions in Diasporan Cultural Production of Venezuela’s Barlovento Region”

Master of Arts, Howard University, Washington, DC, 2012

- Program: Spanish – Language and Linguistics
- Thesis: “The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of AfroVenezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe and La Sabana.” Presented as: “La conexión étnica de África con Venezuela: El habla de los afrovenezolanos y la significación de sus instrumentos en los pueblos de Curiepe y La Sabana”

Master of Education, Howard University, Washington, DC, 2003 (Cum Laude)

- Concentration: Early Childhood Education
- Thesis: “Developing an Effective Community in the Classroom”

Bachelor of Science, Howard University, Washington, DC, 2002

- Concentration: Human Development

Certificate of Spanish, Middlebury Language School, Middlebury, VT, 2012

UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

2010 – Present	<i>Howard University, Department of World Languages and Cultures</i>
2019-Present	Adjunct Professor
2012-2019	Lecturer
2010-2012	Graduate Teaching Assistant
	Courses: Spanish 001, 002, 003, Hispanic Peoples and Cultures
2021	<i>University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)</i> Lecturer, Department of Spanish and Portuguese Courses: Spanish 001, 002, 003
2019-2020	<i>University of the District of Columbia Community College</i> Adjunct Professor, Division of Humanities and Criminology Courses Spanish: I and II

OTHER PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

English Teacher, Inlingua, Caracas, Venezuela, 2008

- Taught English to members of upper-level management in various corporations.
- Earned reputation of being one of the most highly sought-after professors.

Preschool Director, New Concept School, Chicago, Illinois, 2006 – 2008

- Instituted a new curriculum and enrichment program that included foreign language, art, music, dance, and fitness to meet state and national standards.
- Increased parent involvement in the school by 40%; improved staff morale, refined organizational operations.
- Maintained institutional standards for national (NAEYC) and state accreditations.

Kindergarten Teacher, Betty Shabazz International Charter School & Octavio Paz Charter School, Chicago, Illinois, 2003 – 2005

- Instructed student in Direct Reading curriculum, math, and science programs
- Created lesson plans for cultural and language enrichment

AP Spanish Exam Reader, Educational Testing Service, 2015 – 2021

- Graded AP Spanish Listening and Writing Exams with a team of professionals.
- Received high-performance evaluations and have been invited back consecutively.
- Attended professional development workshops/presentations on teaching language & culture.

Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Intern, 2012

- Researched and organized international and local performers for the upcoming Smithsonian Folklife Festival.
- Assisted with translation between Spanish and English and prepared biographies of the artists for publicity materials.

TEACHING INTERESTS

Cultural Memory and Survival in the African Diaspora

Race and Identity in Latin America

Afro-Latinx Cultures

Dance and Performance in Afro-Latin America

African Spiritualities in the African Diaspora

GRANTS & AWARDS

Fulbright US Scholar Grant - Colombia (2021-2022)

- Research Title: “Ancestral Identity - Afro-Colombian Cultural Traditions of the Atlantic Coast”
- Academic Discipline: Interdisciplinary Studies
- Areas of Specialization: Latin American Studies, Africana Studies, Cultural Studies, Identity, Ethnicity and Race Studies
- Type of Activity: Teaching/Research
- Host Institutions: The University of Cartagena, Kusuto Association of Maria La Baja

Non-Senate Faculty Professional Development Award (2021)

University of California Los Angeles

Purpose: research, publishing, teaching, and course development.

Humanitini Grant – Grantee and Curator (2020)

Washington, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities to organize “Experiencing the African Diaspora,” a film showing of *Scattered Africa* and panel discussion. Online. Sept. 14, 2020.

Pending Fellowship Applications

- ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) Fellowship
- NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities) Summer Stipend
- SHEAR (Society for Historians of the Early American Republic) DEI Fellowship
- American University Postdoctoral Fellowship for Academic Diversity

SCHOLARSHIP

In Print

“Afro-Venezuelan Cultural Survival: Invoking Ancestral Memory”

Middle Atlantic Review of Latin American Studies (MARLAS). Vol. 4, No. 2, 235-260. December 2020. Peer-reviewed article.

“Dance, rhythm, and ritual: Afro-Venezuelans in resistance”

Fire Under My Feet: History, Race, and Agency in African Diaspora Dance, Routledge, 2021. Chapter in edited book.

In Progress

“Afro-Colombian Cultural Traditions of the Atlantic Coast”, peer-reviewed article 2022.

“Art as a Tool of Agency in Maria La Baja, Colombia” publication for PALARA Issue 22 on "Protestas Afro-Diaspóricas: Resistencias de mujeres y LGBTQIA+ negras en Cali y el Pacífico Negro." Peer-reviewed article 2022.

“Ritual and Resistance”. IRB approval in progress. Slated for 2023 completion and publication.

Translations

Walton, Mesi, translator. Biographical material and poems by Shirley Campbell Barr from Spanish to English: “Return” / “Regresar,” “I Dreamt” / “Soñé,” “A World Without Fear” / “Un mundo sin miedo,” “My Grandmother Didn’t Talk to Me”/ “Mi abuela a mí no me habló.” *Women Poets of Costa Rica / Mujeres poetas de Costa Rica, 1980-2020 (Bilingual Anthology)*. Arabella Salaverry, editor. María Roof, translation coordinator. San José: Atabal Editores, 2020. Washington, DC: Casasola Editores, 2020.

Walton, Mesi, translator. Biographical material and poems by Xiomara Cacho Caballero from Spanish to English: “Unequals” / “Desiguales,” “License to

Commit Crime” / “Licencia para delinquir,” “Demand Punishment Screaming” / “Pide a gritos el castigo.” *Women's Poems of Protest and Resistance. Honduras (2009–2014)*. Lety Elvir, editor. Translation editor, María Roof. Pp. 96–101. Washington, DC: MACLAS / Casasola Editores / Siguanaba, 2015.

RESEARCH, ONGOING

Africana Culture as a symbol of Identity and a tool for Resistance in the Atlantic Coast of Colombia.

Afro-Venezuelans: Exploring the ways in which cultural expressions have been used actively and passively among Afro-Venezuelans as measures to deal with the inheritance of slavery and the institutionalization of racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression.

Afro-Hispanic Cultural Fieldwork and Research in Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, Panamá, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Peru. 2008 – Present.

Initiated independent research on traditional Afro-Hispanic and Afro-Caribbean dance in the Americas. Established a network with key dance companies while taking dance classes and teaching dance in various national and local schools. Conducted interviews, archival research, recording of dances, festivals, classes, and other cultural manifestations for ongoing research.

INVITED LECTURES

“The Caribbean of South America: Afro-Venezuelan and Afro-Colombian Cultural Survivals”

- Featured Scholar
- The Cycle of Conferences on African and the African Diaspora Studies (CEADA)
- September 12, 2021

“Afro Hispanic Heritage in the US — Raíces”

- Keynote Address
- Latinx Student Alliance and Dr. Sarah Soanirina Ohmer, “Somos Hispanxs! Black Latinx & Queer Theory, Literature & Culture,” Hispanic Heritage Event. CUNY New York. Sept. 18, 2020.

“Exploring African Roots in South & Central America”

- Featured Scholar
- Appeal Inc., Historical/Cultural Literacy Series, Thurgood Marshall Center, Washington, DC. Feb. 11, 2017.

“The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of Afro-Venezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe and La Sabana”

- Presenter & Event Curator
- An Exploration of Traditional Afro-Venezuelan Music and Dance in Celebration of Venezuela's Afro-Descendent Month, Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Busboys & Poets, Washington, DC. May 20, 2013.

“Did Africans Lose their Africanity?”

- Lecture and Discussion, Saint Augustine's University, Raleigh, NC. Nov. 17, 2012.

“Malembe y Mondongo”

- Presentation and Photo Exhibit from U.S. Delegation Tour in Venezuela, Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Washington, DC. May 24, 2012.

“Afro-Venezuelan Traditions”

- IKG Cultural Resource Center, Washington, DC. Aug. 25, 2010.

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

“Cultural Memory and Survival in Colombia”

- Conference on Race, Ethnicity, and Social Justice, Rochester Institute of Technology. Online. Sept. 23, 2021.

“We Are Still Here: Cultural Resistance Among Afro-Venezuelans from Slavery to Today”

- Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies (MACLAS). Online. Sept. 12, 2020.

“From Kongo to Venezuela”

- Nankama African Dance Conference, Howard University, Washington, DC. Feb. 9, 2019.

“Africana Freedom Struggles in the Diaspora through Music”

- The Benjamin A. Quarles Humanities and Social Science Institute Conference on African American and African Diaspora Studies, Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD. Nov. 8, 2018.

“Why Kwanzaa”

- Festival of the Caribbean / Festival of Fire Conference, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba. July 6, 2018.

"Multiculturalism and Unique Historical / Cultural Voices: Several Approaches to Developing Interactive Foreign Language Content Modules in Spanish"

- GWATFL—Greater Washington Association for Teachers of Foreign Languages Spring Conference for Foreign Educators, Washington, DC. Apr. 29, 2017.

"Rituals and African Retentions in Diasporan Cultural Production of Language, Literature, and Songs of the Barlovento Region of Venezuela"

- GESA—Graduate English Student Colloquium, “Rooted: Legacies of Recovery and (Re)Memory in the Cultural Production of the Black Diaspora,” Howard University, Washington, DC. Mar. 31, 2017.

“Language and Identity of African People”

- ISAPS—The International Society for African Philosophy and Studies Conference, Howard University, Washington, DC. Nov. 13, 2015.

“In Curiepe and La Sabana as in the Caribbean: Analyzing the Ethnic and Ancestral Retentions of African Language and Instruments in Venezuela”

- College Language Association (CLA) Conference, New Orleans, LA. Mar. 28, 2014.

"The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of AfroVenezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe and La Sabana/La conexión étnica de África con Venezuela: El habla de los afrovenezolanos y la significación de sus instrumentos en los pueblos de Curiepe y La Sabana"

- Fundación Bigott, Caracas, Venezuela. Jun. 21, 2013.

“The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of Afrovenezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe and La Sabana”

- The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington, DC. Jun. 7, 2012.

“The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of AfroVenezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe, La Sabana and La Vela”

- Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies (MACLAS), American University, Washington, DC. May 23, 2012.

“The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of Afrovenezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe, La Sabana and La Vela”

- Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) Conference, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA. Nov. 3, 2011.

“Language and African Instruments in the Venezuelan towns of Curiepe, La Sabana and La Vela”

- International Conference—Africa and People of African Descent: Issues and Actions to Re-envision the Future, Howard University, Washington, DC. Sept. 14–16, 2011.

Panel discussion on the documentary, “*Water drums: An ancestral encounter/Tambores de agua: Un encuentro ancestral*”

- Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Washington, DC. May 26, 2011.

“The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of AfroVenezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe, La Sabana and La Vela”

- Howard University, Graduate Research Symposium, Washington, DC. Apr. 28, 2011.

“Afro-Venezuelan Music & Dance from Curiepe, La Sabana, Guatire, and Tapipa”

- College Language Association (CLA) Conference, University of South Carolina Upstate, Spartanburg, SC. Apr. 8, 2011.

“The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of AfroVenezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe, La Sabana & La Vela”

- Graduate Portuguese & Hispanic Symposium, Georgetown University, Washington, DC. Mar. 26, 2011.

“The Ethnic Connection of Africa with Venezuela: The Language of AfroVenezuelans and the Significance of the Instruments in Curiepe, La Sabana & La Vela”

- Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC) Conference, Howard University, Washington, DC. Mar. 18, 2011.

“Afro-Venezuelan Drums in European Religion: Hidden Expression of Self Identity?”

- Department of World Languages and Cultures Mini-Conference, Howard University, Washington, DC. Mar. 2, 2011.

“African Culture in Venezuela”

- Jacob Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern University, Chicago, IL. Sept. 14, 2009.

“Afro-Venezuelan Traditions/Tradiciones Afro-Venezolanas”

- Fundación Bigott, Caracas, Venezuela. Dec. 18, 2008.

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

- Manuscript peer-review for journal. *MARLAS* 4.2 (Dec. 2020), “Poesía de la pandemia.” November 2020.
- Chair, Session of Scholarly Papers, "Contemporary Political, Social, and Cultural Movements in Latin America". 40th Conference of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies (MACLAS). Online. Sept. 12, 2020.
- Planning and Logistics Lead, International Conference-Africa & People of African Descent: Issues & Actions to Re-Envision the Future, Howard University, Washington, DC. Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2019.
- Logistics Lead, International Conference: "Africa and People of African Descent: Issues and Actions to (Re)-Envision the Future," Howard University, Washington, DC. Sept. 14-16, 2011.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEPARTMENT & INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

2010-Present Howard University, Department of World Languages

- Developed new undergraduate course: “Art, Music, and Dance in the Hispanic World.” Approved, 2018.

- Co-organized Hispanic Heritage Festival of the department and subsequent festivals. 2017 – 2018.
- Organized and led 10 students and 4 adults on a 10-day cultural exchange in Havana, Cuba, May 15, 2017 – May 25, 2017.
- Selected as a faculty member to teach ESL courses to a group of 13 Brazilian students through the Brazilian Scientific Mobility Program (BSMP), 2014. Created courses for Basic and Intermediate English including exams, activities, homework, and discussions. Created content to prepare students to pass the TOEFL exam.
- Led 16 students and 3 adults on a 1-month cultural exchange in Costa Rica, July 1 – 31, 2013.
- Implemented the highly successful “Spanish Café,” a student-led conversational language activity to assist peers in using the language in a natural setting, January – April 2013.
- Co-founder, Leader, and Campus Advisor of Nsaa Dance Ensemble, 2001 – Present. A company at Howard University committed to educating its members and audiences about the culture and history of Africa and the African Diaspora through dance, song, and music.
- Campus Advisor of Ubiquity Inc. 2001-Present. A co-educational, non-profit, community outreach social organization.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH LEADERSHIP

Founder of Diaspora Dance (Tour Coordinator, Instructor, Performer, Speaker)

- Afro-Cuban Tour—2017, 2018. Organized and led a delegation of university students and adults on a cultural exchange with artists and locals in Havana, Matanzas, and Santiago.
- Afro-Colombian Tour—2012, 2014, 2015. Organized and led a delegation of artists and journalists to the Festival of Drums in Palenque de San Basilio and Cartagena, Colombia, for study, interviews, and participation. Organized and led a group to the highly popular Petronio Álvarez Festival in the Pacific City of Cali for cultural exchange.
- Afro-Venezuelan Tour—2011. Organized and led a delegation of professionals and students on cultural exchanges in various towns throughout the Barlovento region.
- Conducted Spanish-English interpretation between members of the delegations and the communities. Choreographed and performed dance and music shows for events at embassies, festivals, conferences, etc. Presented research at numerous conferences on African cultural survivals in the Diaspora.

Presenter at the Venezuelan Embassy, 2011, 2013

- Participated in panels to discuss the cultural connections between Africans and Afro-Venezuelans following film screenings.
- Presented thesis research on the African connection in Venezuela, performed several dances, and involved the audience in dance workshops.

Venezuelan Embassy Resident Dance Instructor, 2010 – 2013

- Conducted regular community dance lessons promoting Venezuelan cultural awareness.
- Passport DC: Led Venezuelan dance workshops for over 100 attendees.

Cultural Consultant, Colombia, 2008 – 2010

- Coordinated dance workshops for several Colombian dance companies.
- Performed West African song and dance at regional and national festivals.

Fundraiser, 2011

- Colombian Education and movie screening of “Tambores de Agua,” Chicago, Illinois.
- Raised funds for the education of Colombian students active in Afro Colombian issues and activities.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Future Faculty Career Exploration Program - Rochester Institute of Technology, 2021
- Lumen Circles Fellowships for Faculty - Online Teaching Foundation, 2021
- Open Textbook Library Workshop and Textbook Reviewer – Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC) 2020
- Social Justice in World Languages Education: Where Do I Start? - The Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL) 2020
- Remember Who You Are Identity Summit - African Ancestry, 2020
- The ALARI First Continental Conference on Afro-Latin American Studies- Harvard University, 2019
- Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) biennial conference, 2011, 2019
- Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies (MACLAS), 2020, 2012
- College Language Association (CLA), 2011, 2014, 2018

SKILLS AND ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- Fluent in Spanish
- Certified in Blackboard and Distance Learning for Hybrid and Asynchronous courses
- TEFL Certificate (Teaching English as a Foreign Language)
- Experienced in show production, stage management, emcee, and booking agent
- Professional dancer, singer, musician (African, Latin, Urban styles)
- Confident in cross-cultural communication, drawing on resourcefulness, resilience
- Web design, Multimedia editing, iMovie

ACADEMIC & PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD), Member
- College Language Association (CLA), Member
- Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies (MACLAS), Member
- Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC), Member
- Howard University Interdisciplinary Research Group on African and African Diaspora Studies
- Howard University Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence (IC CAE), Associate Scholar