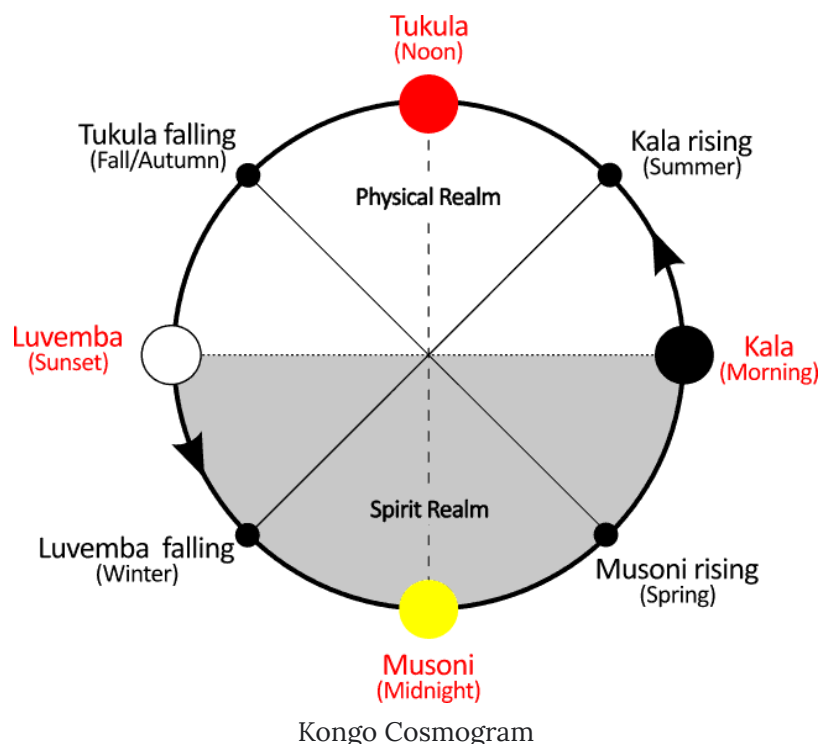




NICOLE ANGELA  
PEARSON

THEATER ARTIST, WRITER

## Summer 2024 Newsletter



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The Afro-diasporic experience can be described as a series of ongoing ruptures that began with the Maafa or Great Diaster in Kiswahili. The Maafa refers to trans-Atlantic enslavement and the current legal, social, and economic structures of exploitation and violence that arise from it. The Berlin Conference mapping was one of the many ruptures the Maafa set in motion. This rupture tore many communities apart while sewing the seeds of present-day conflict on the continent (Congo, Sudan) and in the diaspora (most notably Haiti).

It would be a mistake to consider the genocide in Palestine, Western border regimes and other wars like Ukraine as separate from the Conference. It is the

same logic and (international) relation and legal template that makes these situations possible.

But I digress.

African/Afro-diasporic culture is born out of continual *displacement* so our expression involves continual replacement in time and space.

Afro-diasporic expression is concerned with:

Reinscribing the self in space and time through gesture, movement, and sound, grounding the physical and spiritual self through food, and using all of these practices for connection to ancestors, home, and the current or present environment (the physical location-including the seen and unseen inhabitants, as well as acknowledging and commenting on social, political and economic position.

Afro-diasporic expression creates relations wherever it goes, and through whatever it does.

The foundation of this practice stems from an Afroindigenous understanding of the body as agent of a series of relations--to the self, community, and the material and spiritual worlds. There are no fixed categories, they are ever-changing and always dependent on context.

Afro-German Enlightenment philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo introduced this dynamic embodied relation to Western philosophy through his refinement of Descartes' "I think therefore I am." statement. While he understood the mind and body to be separate he argued that the body was the site of sensation the mind interprets. In other words, the body is a living sensing being whose existence in and interactions with the world are interpreted by the mind.

We have always countered violence with embodiment and connection. We heal and repair ourselves through connection.

We do it consciously with our eyes on freedom and liberation for all beings.

The Counter-mapping Days Event is the first of two events of the [Amo Collective](#) Berlin Conference commemoration. This is the first iteration of a long term project to use Afro-diasporic expression as a counter-mapping practice for personal and collective healing and transformation. More to come!!

Freedom is a place! Where are you and how will you get there?

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## Stardust From Tomorrow, Sun Ra featuring June Tyson

Life could be most enchanting  
Stardust from tomorrow all belong to you  
Magic is the future  
Full of dreams to come true

The world is in outer space  
It's such a lovely place  
All spic and span  
Lovely and grand

\*So step into my space saucer of sound  
You'll find that you have found  
A way to tomorrow where pleasures are free  
So come take a ride with me

The words I'm telling you  
Life could be most enchanting  
Stardust from tomorrow all belong to you  
Magic is the future  
Full of dreams to come true

The world is in outer space

It's such a lovely place  
All spic and span  
Lovely and grand

So step into my space saucer of sound  
You'll find that you have found  
A way to tomorrow where pleasures are free  
So come take a ride with me

If you should desire so folks I am telling you life could be most enchanting

\*Repeat bridge and chorus

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## O-Platz Familienfest This Saturday 27.7.24

**O-PLATZ FamFest**  
WIR KÄMPFEN SPIELERISCH und SPIELEN KÄMPFERISCH  
Intergenerational, Intercultural, United

**27** July 2024 | **ORANIENPLATZ** | Start At **1PM** 10PM

**BARrierefrei**  
Die nächstgelegenen U-Bahnhof mit einem Aufzug ist U1, U5 & U8 Kotbusser Tor. Für die Anreise mit dem Auto gibt es ausgewiesene Behindertenparkplätze, die gut zugänglich sind. Die Gehwege rund um den Oranienplatz sind überwiegend eben und gut befahrbar. An den meisten Kreuzungen gibt es abgesenkte Bordsteine. Einige Straßen haben Kopfsteinpflaster, es gibt jedoch meist glatte, gepflasterte Bereiche. Der Oranienplatz selbst ist weitläufig und bietet genügend Platz zum Manövrieren. Auf der Veranstaltung gibt es eine Behindertentafel (ohne Dusche) und einen Babubereich. Vor Ort gibt es ein Awareness Team.

Durchgängige Aktivitäten	Workshops mit festen Startzeiten	Stage Performances
13:00 - 18:00	14:00 Radical Imagination 17:00 through Creative Storytelling	All day DJ BONGO BONGO ab 18:00 Turgay Ivan Txaparro Zeyo Mann RCSE L'ile + politische Redebeiträge
Mitmachzirkus	15:00 Storytelling - Geschichte des O-Platzes kreativ entdecken	
Marital Arts	18:30 Afro Dance für Kids	
Ideenwerkstatt	17:30	
Siebdruck		

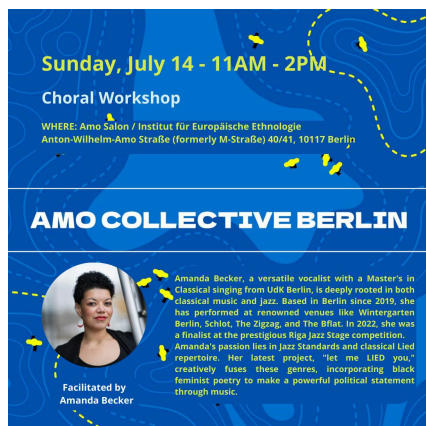
Ein Teil von DRAUSSENSTADT. Das Projekt wird gefördert vom Berliner Projektfonds Urbane Praxis sowie von der Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt.

The O-Platz Familienfest celebrates the vibrant community and families that came out of the 2012 migrant resistance struggle. Oranienplatz is the unofficial headquarters for the movement. It is the place where as many as 200 refugees from camps throughout Germany set up a resistance camp to call attention to their plight. That action sparked a broad political movement that continues to this day. The story of Oranienplatz is one of mutual struggle and solidarity. We gather to celebrate the successes of the movement as we continue to fight for justice.

The festivities kick off at 1pm and end at 10pm. There will be workshops, music and speeches. I will be leading a collective storytelling workshop at 15.

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# Bernice Johnson Reagon: To Wrap Yourself in Song



Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon

Counter-mapping Days Choral Workshop

I want to talk about the Counter-mapping Choral workshop by remembering activist, musician and scholar Bernice Johnson Reagon. Her life and work speaks to the transformative power of the voice.

As a student leader and activist, Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon discovered the power of community singing first hand. She joined the Civil Rights movement as a young girl in Albany, GA. Encouraged to sing during a major protest she said, *“I sang and stood in the sound of the congregational singing of the freedom songs charging the air we breathed. For the first time, I understood how the singing not only pulled us together, but became our articulate collective testimony to all who stood within the sound.”*

Dr. Reagon later became an academic who specialized in African-American oral history, performance and protest traditions. She founded the all female acapella group Sweet Honey in the Rock, a group dedicated to continuing the fight for human rights through the transformative power of the human voice. Sweet Honey was the soundtrack of my early activism. Through their songs seemingly disparate struggles for human rights in Latin America, South Africa and other places were united in one glorious song. They taught me these movements are all one movement for freedom and justice for all. In addition to attending several concerts, while a student at Howard University I was lucky enough to attend a music seminar led by Dr. Reagon, it remains one of my most treasured memories.

A voice for the “voiceless”

"As a singer and activist in the [Albany movement](#)," Reagon once wrote, "I sang and heard the freedom songs and saw them pull together sections of the black community at times when other means of communication were ineffective. It was the first time I knew the power of song to be an instrument for the articulation of our community concerns,".

The Civil Rights Movement was not just a political expression but an empowerment project born out of the Afro-diasporic freedom struggle. Singing is beautiful evidence of collective will. Songs empower, mobilize and give voice to the longing for freedom. Singing brought unity and courage to people who faced down baton wielding cops, attack dogs and power hoses. They learned through experience how their presence, their voices transformed charged spaces into sanctuaries of justice, freedom and hope. Creating islands of hope in hostile, unfree spaces forever transforming them and all who heard them.

African American enslavement songs Gospel, Blues and Spirituals are the sonic map of the Civil rights freedom songs. A change of lyric transformed the songs from an old time Biblical story, code for finding a way to hold on in the face of horrific circumstance, to a present day struggle for freedom and justice.

Thanks to our fearless workshop leader Amanda Becker, we celebrated and expanded on these traditions. Through her guidance each participant stepped beyond their perceived limits and into a space of expansive possibility. We laughed, we cried and we sang our way to collective power. It is a feeling like no other.

Your voice is the truest expression of who you are. When you connect to it you are touching the very core of your being. African/Afro-diasporic cultural practice that creates space for us to gather in song. In that space there is nothing you cannot do, nothing that cannot be faced and eventually overcome.



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