



BLACK DOCUMENTS

JAMEL SHABAZZ ★ FREEDOM

BLACK DO JAMEL SHABAZZ

Black Documents: Mosaic Literary Conference explores historical and contemporary presentations of black identity in literature and photography; and how self-affirming imagery and text can counter negative stereotypes. The conference consists of workshops, panels, talks, and screenings.

To this end, the conference will also present photography exhibits *Jamel Shabazz: Black Documents* and *Black Documents: Freedom*.

This event is made possible with donations and public funds from Humanities New York, Citizens Committee for New York City. In-kind support is provided by The Bronx Museum of the Arts and The Andrew Freedman Home.

Additional support has been provided by community partners AALBC.com, BxArts Factory, Bronx Cultural Collective, The Center for Black Literature, En Foco, The Laundromat Project, The Roew, WideVision Photography, and Word Up Bookstore. The Literary Freedom Project is a member of the Urban Arts Cooperative -supporting artists in underserved communities.

Black Documents Mosaic Literary Conference

Saturday, November 25, 2017, 11-6pm
Bronx Museum of the Arts
1040 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NYC

www.BlackDocuments.com

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE.

DOCUMENTS ★ FREEDOM

Jamel Shabazz: Black Documents

Photography exhibition
November 25 to December 15, 2017
Andrew Freedman Home

Black Documents: Freedom

Photography exhibition
November 25 to December 15, 2017
Photographers: Laylah Amatullah Barrayn,
Lola Flash, Danny Ramon Peralta,
Edwin Torres, and Michael Young
Andrew Freedman Home

Black Documents Opening Reception

November 25, 6-9pm
Andrew Freedman Home
1125 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NYC

Artist Talks

Andrew Freedman Home
1125 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NYC

Thursday, November 30, 6-8pm
Photographers from *Black Documents:
Freedom*. Coreen Simpson, facilitator

Thursday, December 7, 6-8pm
Jamel Shabazz and Laura James, curator

Jamel Shabazz: Black Documents: Freedom

This publication accompanies the exhibitions *Jamel Shabazz: Black Documents* and *Black Documents: Freedom*, organized by Laura James and Ron Kavanaugh. On view November 25 through December 15, 2017 at the Andrew Freedman Home, 1125 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY.

Curator: Laura James

These exhibitions complement Black Documents: Mosaic Literary Conference, held on November 25, 2017 at the Bronx Museum of the Arts and presented by the Literary Freedom Project.

The Mosaic Literary Conference and exhibitions are made possible in part by donations, Humanities New York, and Citizens Committee For New York City.



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Literary Freedom Project is a Bronx-based 501c3 tax-exempt nonprofit arts organization that seeks to restore the importance of social and cultural identity through reading. Towards this goal, LFP publishes *Mosaic*; develops literature-based lesson plans; presents One Book One Bronx and Mosaic Literary Conference; and co-hosts the Bronx Book Fair.

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Cover photos: Jamel Shabazz, *The Gathering*, Back photo: *Each one must reach one*

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A Black Document

Now, leaving aside all the physical factors one can quote--leaving aside the rape or murder, leaving aside the bloody catalogue of oppression which we are too familiar with any way--what the system does to the subjugated is to destroy his sense of reality. It destroys his father's authority over him. His father can no longer tell him anything because his past has disappeared.

— James Baldwin

Historically, the Mosaic Literary Conference has focused on presenting literary voices that reflect social and contemporary issues that affect society and education experiences of our Bronx community. This year, in the wake of the death of Kalief Browder, #SayHerName, and other travesties we sought ways to gird the Black psyche —offer reflective narratives that amplify truth. We complemented the conference with two exhibitions that present black and brown bodies, which have been framed in the media as instruments of wealth-building and frivolity, with stolid bravery.

Jamel Shabazz: Black Documents and *Black Documents: Freedom* are presented as evidence against contemporary media narratives that often place blackness as culprit. Curated by Laura James and presented at the Andrew Freedman Home —November 25 through December 15—

Black Documents serve as counterbalances to the piecemeal aggregation of public images that frequently misrepresent large sections of the American population. Initially, when thinking of ways to counter this consistently inaccurate narrative, I planned to stay tried and true to literature and examine how contemporary writers are exploring race and gender. As I reviewed my library for inspiration Jamel Shabazz's first book *Back in the Day* popped out at me. Relentlessly positive images of blackness was what my post-Philando Castillo spirit needed.

Jamel's work renders blackness not as eroticized mythology or criminal aftermath, but as heroic iconography that pushes diasporic Africans toward the center of the American photographic aesthetic. Shabazz affirms pride of place in an activist's purposeful way. He uses anonymity as uniform and badge instilling a stolid bravery and love of humanity. Each photo demonstrates spiritual ownership of the land on which the subject stands. The photographs in *Jamel Shabazz: Black Documents* are crucial documents of Black New York from the turbulent decades of the 80s to the present.

Shabazz's exhibit is complemented by *Black Documents: Freedom*, photography by Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Lola Flash, Danny Peralta, Edwin Torres, and Michael Young. Their work offers a contemplative appraisal of contemporary conversations between lens and subject,

and gives further agency to black and brown lives. These photographers share a similar aesthetic path as Shabazz while exploring a variety of social and global geographies.

Identity is malleable, often shaped by external inputs and media representations that amplify specific agendas. *Black Documents* will present ways in which the fluidity of racial and gender representations can inform literature, visual art, education, and media.

Together, *Jamel Shabazz: Black Documents* and *Black Documents: Freedom* work to frame marginalized identities while accessing the influential cultural vibrancy that is found in the Bronx and beyond.

These exhibitions are presented as part of the Mosaic Literary Conference, an annual event that presents panels, workshops, and film focused on black identity and literary representation. The planning of this year's conference was equally informed by the spiraling currency of black lives and the complex identity narratives related to race, gender, sexual identity, and media representation. As well as how the literary portrait shape text, how presenting one's humanity can be corrupted by negative imagery, and how literature can be used as a counterbalance to reaffirm positive identity and truthfulness in the wake of visual slander. The conference seeks to provide a place to explore

what W.E.B. DuBois referred to as "unforgivable blackness" and how recent social movements, such as BlackLivesMatter, can be used to connect and strengthen all communities.

Please keep this black document close. My goal was to provide a small place of comfort, a place to include when you're seeking images of affirmation. If you're looking to forget about the burdens this society places on blackness this document is not the answer but it may be a starting point. View the images, read the poetry, and create your personal space to resolve and explore issues of race, gender, and community.

Ron Kavanaugh, Executive Director, Literary Freedom Project, October 2017