

# Brown University



## 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual ONYX Rites of Passage Ceremony

Rhode Island Convention Center  
May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009

### Acknowledgements

Terry Addison  
Dr. Brenda Allen  
Andrea Barnes  
Natalie Basil  
Katherine Bergeron  
Barrymore Bogues  
Richard Bova  
Russell Carey '91, MA '06  
Divine Rhythm

Maria Duarte  
Richard Gray '85  
Dr. Margaret Klawunn  
Melissa Mosunic  
Bobby Liley  
Myra Lirwanag  
Sidy Maiga  
Gaye Massey  
Shades of Brown

Marylou McMillan  
Karen McLaurin-Chesson '74  
Rosario Navarro  
Roland Laird '82  
President Ruth Simmons  
Rev. William L. Mathis  
Diane Chouinard  
Valerie Cordeiro  
RPM Gospel Choir

\*Family and friends who have donated to this year's Rites of Passage and who have supported us throughout our time at Brown.

### ONYX Executive Board

Jennifer Evora

Randi Roberts

Rebecca Williams

### Seniors

Akosua A. Badunkansah  
Alan B. Johnson  
Allison K. Watson  
Ama Y. Misa  
Amal Y Hassan  
Anyia L. Brown  
Ashley N. Gray  
Ashley N. Jackson  
Ashley R. Greene  
Ashley W. Harris  
Austin J. Freeman  
Bamidele Odueyungbo  
Bernice L. Fedestin  
Bria C. Selhorst  
Camila A. Hawthorne  
Caroline H. Washington  
Cassie D. Owens  
Chantal N. Tape  
Christian S. Tookes  
Christopher W. Mitchell  
Clayton G. Nelson  
Curtis J. Harris  
Daliso N. Leslie  
Danielle N. Wright  
Siobhan T. Little John  
Stephanie M. Pottinger  
Yaa Serwah Frimpong

Darrell Harrison  
Dianna L. Anderson  
Eddie Blay  
Erin E. Adams  
Francis E. Ugowe  
Gregory N. Thompson  
Hilary M. Johnson  
Ijeoma N. Njaka  
Isa H. Abdur-Rahman  
Jakiya R. Debnam  
James E. Reed  
Jasmine L. Leonard  
Jasmine O. Obioha  
Jeanine D. Pollard  
Jennifer K. Evora  
Jeremy R. Meacham  
Jonathan J. Edwards  
Jonathan L. Dent  
Joshua D. Unseth  
Justin A. Coleman  
Kristin R. Jordan  
Laura B. Evans  
Lauren A. Williams  
Lauren V. Huckaby  
Spencer M. Trice  
Tahirah Z. Nicholls

Lindsay J. Joseph  
Lydia D. Sharlow  
Malika Y. Ali  
Marcus L. Potts  
Mark D. Hazel  
Matthew O. Terrell  
Matthew R. Jasmin  
Melissa M. Cranford  
Michelle S. Jackson  
Naima C. Brown  
Nicholas A. Melvin  
Nicole E. Burns  
Nkosi K. Still  
Oludare A. Adedokun  
Quentin R. Youmans  
Rakim H. Brooks  
Randi E. Roberts  
Rebecca L. Williams  
Robert J. Smith  
Roukiatou Aboubacar  
Samantha S. Riley  
Sarah A. Eaton  
Sara K. Walter  
Shansa K. Barrow  
Stefan A. Smith  
Vijou F. Bryant

WELCOME

Dean Terry H. Addison  
ONYX Advisor

MUSICAL SELECTION

Shades of Brown

INVOCATION

Rev. William L. Mathis  
Office of the Chaplains, Brown University

DINNER

RICC

PERFORMING ARTS SELECTION

Divine Rhythm

ALUMNI SPEAKER

Roland Laird '82  
Author,  
30<sup>th</sup> Senate District

MUSICAL SELECTION

RPM Gospel Singers

SENIOR REFLECTION

Stefan Smith

### SENIOR PROCESSION

Led by Grand Elder Dean Karen McLaurin-Chesson '74  
West African Drumming: Sidy Maiga

### STOLE PRESENTATION

Provided by the Inman Page Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dean Terry H. Addison

BENEDICTION

Rev. William L. Mathis

### Richard Laird '82

#### Author, Founder and CEO Posro Media

Roland Laird is the celebrated co-author of *Still I Rise: A Graphic History of African Americans*, with a passion for his culture and his community.

Written with his wife Taneshia, *Still I Rise* is a critically acclaimed work with an impressive scope: the entire history of Black America told in an accessible 216 page graphic-novel form. Originally published in 1997, it was recently updated and now extends from the arrival of the first Africans in 1619 right through to Senator Barack Obama's groundbreaking presidential campaign. Compared by many to Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, *Still I Rise* is a breathtaking achievement that celebrates the collective African-American memory, imagination, and spirit and the book has been embraced by colleges and schools throughout the country.

In addition to being an author, Roland is the founder and CEO of Posro Media, an entertainment production company that explores African American history and culture in a variety of formats including comics, books, radio, video, and film. Posro projects' positive imagery is designed to stand in sharp contrast to the mass media's often unrealistic and misleading portraits of the African American community. The company's fresh and historically accurate perspective on topics ranging from slavery to sports, politics, and superheroes have garnered praise from national media including *The Today Show* and *MTV*.

In the early 1990s Posro was one of the first black-owned independent comic book companies publishing the hip hop-infused series *MC Squared*. Based in Harlem, *MC Squared* chronicled the life of Earl Terrel, a brilliant young barber who designs computer games on the side. Three issues were published between 1991-94. Issue #3 was archived in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown for its focus on the Negro leagues.

From 1993-1994, Posro syndicated the comic strip "The Griots" to black-owned newspapers. Offering insights about black history and culture with the use of witty lines and catch-phrases, "The Griots" received acclaimed from media outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Source*, and *Entertainment Weekly*.

Adding to his many titles, Roland is also the co-founder and managing director of *My Image Studios (MIST)*, a ten million dollar entertainment venue based in Harlem and scheduled to open in late 2009. This multifaceted 20,000 square foot venue will feature the art and culture of the African, Latino Diaspora and include 3 screening rooms, a restaurant, cafe and post-production facility. *MIST* is located in the *Kalahari Condominiums*, a 250 unit mixed income LEED certified "green" building. *MIST* will be the first green convergent entertainment complex in the United States.

Roland has been featured on *NBC Philadelphia's 10! Show*, *CBS3's Speak Up!*, *6ABC's Perspective New Jersey*, along with a host of national print and online media outlets. He has been a guest speaker at such institutions as Brown University and Dominican College, and has been a writer-in-residence at Miami Dade College, was selected as a *Winner-of-the-Week* by Tavis Smiley, and in 2004, the US Mission to the United Nations recognized Roland as a global ambassador for his tireless devotion to his world community and heritage.

A graduate of Brown University, Roland lives in Trenton, NJ with his wife Taneshia Nashi Laird and their daughter Imani Fasarah Laird.