



PERFORMING ARTIST · AUTHOR EDU-CULTURAL SPEAKER · CONSULTANT

Dr. Marguerite Mariama is an internationally recognized performing artist, educator, activist, cultural strategist, transformational speaker and bestselling author whose work resides at the nexus of artistic excellence, social justice, education, and human development. A lifelong practitioner of the term **artivism** – the integration of artistic expression and social transformation – her career spans more than five decades of leadership in the performing arts, higher education, international cultural diplomacy, and community engagement.

FORMATIVE YEARS: ART, ACTIVISM, AND CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Dr. Mariama's commitment to civic engagement began in adolescence. At thirteen, she participated in Chicago's historic school desegregation **protests against the Willis Wagons**, an experience later documented in the Academy Award-shortlisted film *'63 Boycott*. Her activism continued through the **Civil Rights and Black Power eras**, including **participation in the 1966 Soldier Field rally and march led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

Her artistic and intellectual formation was equally consequential. Among her early mentors were distinguished educator **Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore** and composer and educator **Lena McLin**. She studied French horn and dance while attending Harlan High School and trained at **Mayfair Academy where alums include former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama**. At Southern Illinois University, where she attended as a scholarship student, she continued her dance studies with W. Grant Gray, a former **Martha Graham dancer**, and co-founded the dance ensemble **MUWARA DADA**.

A defining moment in her artistic development came when the ensemble traveled to East St. Louis to study with legendary dancer, choreographer, anthropologist, and cultural theorist **Katherine Dunham**, whose teachings profoundly influenced Dr. Mariama's understanding of the artist's social responsibility. That encounter helped crystallize a principle that would become foundational to her life's work: artistic excellence and social consciousness are not separate pursuits; they are mutually reinforcing dimensions of cultural leadership.

Emerging from the cultural renaissance of the **Black Arts Movement**, Dr. Mariama belongs to a generation of artists who understood creative expression as an instrument of liberation, identity formation, education, cultural affirmation, and social change. Her practice is deeply informed by the cultural nationalism and Black consciousness movements of the 1960s and 1970s and by the conviction that the arts can transform both the individual and the social imagination.

PERFORMANCE PEDAGOGY®: THE ARTS AS A TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Dr. Mariama's scholarly and professional contributions culminated in **Performance Pedagogy®**, an interdisciplinary methodology through which performance becomes both a vehicle for learning and a framework for measuring transformation.

Applied across educational, community, nonprofit, and corporate settings, **Performance Pedagogy®** has been used to strengthen student engagement, attendance, academic achievement, communication, self efficacy, creativity, and organizational innovation while reducing behavioral conflict. Her programs have included initiatives for public schools, higher education institutions, cultural organizations, nonprofit agencies, and private-sector enterprises in **Chicago** and **New York**.

Among her notable projects are the development of a **Performing Arts Strand at King College Prepatory High School in Chicago**; a twelve-month empowerment and technology initiative at **LaGuardia Community College**; a twenty-four-month educational intervention serving underperforming Black students through the **Institute for Student Achievement (funder: Gates Foundation)** and innovative cultural programming that revitalized the **Garfield Park Conservatory** as a destination for national culture and music.

Her work also extends to international cultural exchange. As a **U.S. Department of State Arts Envoy (cultural ambassador)**, she designed and performed transformational master workshops that used music, movement, dialogue, and cultural storytelling to create spaces for creative expression and cross-cultural understanding.

Transformation and Impact – Testimonials:

- Created, curated and performed in her 90-minute transformational master workshops that built a cultural bridge, and a permission structure for love-filled creative expression – **U.S. Department of State, Arts Envoy Tour, Republic of Moldova**. *“I can’t tell you how much we do need this dose of inspiration, the educational lessons... this is the healing power of music, this is what kept us going through wars, starvation and other bad situations. People here are kinda’ afraid to express themselves...people who come to such events and see other people do that they’re like – I can be like that, I always wanted to be like that, but I was afraid, but I can be like that. There’s nothing wrong with being like that.”* **Audience Member, ArtCor**
- Performing and presenting her signature keynote/concert – **The Art of Becoming: Embracing Your Highest Self – at a Multicultural Women’s Conference** designed to inspire audiences to acknowledge and love their authentic self: *“I could feel the energy in the room shift as you spoke and moved. You didn’t just speak and perform, you elevated, empowered and inspired every person fortunate enough to witness it.”* **Audience Member**
- Created, curated and performed in a transformational 2-hour program celebrating women in jazz with a presentation, interview, performance and exhibit, as a member of the **Ravinia Festival Education Institute, in collaboration with the Ravinia/Woodlawn Partnership**. *“We were mesmerized and uplifted by this inspirational program, and the exhibit was the icing on the cake!”* **Ravinia Staff Member**
- Venerated icons such as **Nelson Mandela, Coretta Scott King, Harry Belafonte**, and others were the foundational members of the **Global Citizens Circle (GCC)**, a 50-year-old civil rights organization, where she serves as an advisor, co-producer and performer. *“We’re thankful for voices like performance artist Marguerite Mariama who help keep dialogue honest, human, and grounded in hope and action.”* **Board Member**
- The transformational power of the arts exemplified in her role as the chief consultant responsible for the 2-year development of the **Performing Arts Strand at King College Preparatory High School, Chicago, Illinois (CPS)** *“Dr. Mariama, thank you! You changed my son’s life.”* **Freshman Parent**
- The creation of a transformational 12-month program that unlocked self-esteem and upgraded the technology skills in a Women’s Center cohort at **LaGuardia Community College, Long Island City, New York (funder: New York City Partnership)**. *“I am worth more than this job pays me. I know I can do better; and now I know how!”* **Adult Student**
- Transforming underperforming, low self-esteem Black students from gangbangers into family and community leaders in a 24-month educational program at the **Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) (funder: Gates Foundation)**. *“I didn’t know...now that I have changed how I act I can see a different future for myself and my brothers.”* **Senior Student**
- In the year leading up to its centennial celebration, transformed a struggling community-based institution into a magnet for national culture and music, **Garfield Park Conservatory**. *“Marguerite’s innovative programming brought life and bodies back to this institution and expanded our vision.”* **Board Member**

THE ART OF BECOMING

At the center of Dr. Mariama’s contemporary work is a transformational philosophy grounded in the premise that there is more within us than the identities, limitations, and circumstances we have inherited and or created. Her signature keynote concert, **The Art of Becoming: Embracing Your Highest Self**, integrates music, movement, storytelling, cultural history, and reflective dialogue that invites audiences to recognize and honor their authentic selves.

Her broader body of work challenges conventional distinctions between performance and pedagogy, entertainment and education, and artistic expression and personal transformation. Her signature master performance/workshop series, **OurStories in the Music®**, similarly uses African American musical culture as a lens through which audiences encounter the American story – illuminating themes of democracy, identity, resilience, cultural memory, social justice, and cross-cultural understanding.

A DISTINGUISHED PERFORMING ARTS CAREER

Following her graduation from Southern Illinois University with a master’s degree as a **HUD Fellow**, Dr. Mariama continued her artistic training in New York, studying with **Charles Moore, a former Katherine Dunham dancer**, and guest performing with his **Drums and Dancers of Africa Dance Troupe**. She also trained with **Dunham dancers Lavinia Williams** and Ms. Dunham’s most famous protégé, **Alvin Ailey**.

Her performance career encompasses music, dance, theatre, film, television, voice, and documentary work. As a jazz and blues vocalist, she has performed with accomplished musicians internationally, including her longtime mentor Jimmy Sigler, former music director for jazz legend Dinah Washington. Their fourteen-year artistic collaboration culminated in her recording, **Wild Women Never Get the Blues...Well, Not Anymore, which became Sigler's final recording.**

Her acting career has included film, television, commercials, print, and theatre, including an eight-week Chicago engagement as **Madame Armfeldt in Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's A Little Night Music.** She narrated the award-winning documentary **70 Acres in Chicago: Cabrini Green** and contributed to **Martin Scorsese's landmark PBS documentary series The Blues**, including the Chicago segment, Godfathers and Sons. Still performing, Dr. Mariama is in her ninth season as a member of the **Chicago Bulls Swingin' Seniors Dancers.**

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

In 2023, the **United States Department of State appointed Dr. Mariama as an Arts Envoy**, recognizing her capacity to use artistic practice as an instrument of cultural diplomacy and international dialogue. In this role, she represented the United States through multimedia performance-dialogues and cultural exchange initiatives, including a **cultural diplomacy tour in the Republic of Moldova.**

Her international artistic career has also included **music residencies and cultural presentations in Singapore, Taiwan, Shanghai, and Bali.** Her work has reached audiences connected to the **United Nations, the Bureaus of International Organization Affairs, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.**

In the lineage of American cultural ambassadors such as **Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Katherine Dunham,** Dr. Mariama advances a distinctly contemporary model of arts diplomacy – one that places **African American musical culture at the center of conversations about American identity, democracy, resilience, and global understanding.**

GLOBAL CITIZENS CIRCLE AND CIVIC LEADERSHIP

Dr. Mariama currently serves as an advisor, co-producer, and performer with the **Global Citizens Circle (GCC),** an international organization dedicated to advancing peaceful and just responses to global challenges. Over its history, **GCC has engaged an extraordinary constellation of civic and human rights leaders, including Coretta Scott King, Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, President Jimmy Carter, Harry Belafonte, Nobel Peace Prize laureate John Hume, and Ambassador Andrew Young.** She also co-authored and narrated **What the World Needs Now,** a documentary-short commemorating the organization's fiftieth anniversary.

AUTHOR AND CULTURAL HISTORIAN

Dr. Mariama is the co-author of three Amazon bestselling books, including **Book on Love, The Art of Connection: 365 Days of Resilience,** and **The Heart of Success,** written in collaboration with **Jack Canfield, co-creator of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series.**

Her forthcoming **historical memoir, Artivism: The Spirit of the 60s, Lessons for Today,** scheduled for spring 2027, chronicles a life shaped by the cultural, political, and artistic upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s and examines their continuing relevance to contemporary questions of civic responsibility, cultural consciousness, and social transformation.

Her work as an artist-scholar is ultimately concerned with preserving cultural memory while activating it as a resource for the present and future.

EDUCATION, HONORS, AND PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Dr. Mariama holds a Ph.D. in Performance Education with a specialization in African American Musical Culture. She is a Distinguished Alumna of Southern Illinois University's College of Liberal Arts and a former Illinois Humanities Road Scholar. Her professional affiliations include the International Dance Council (CID), American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), and the Smithsonian Regional Council. She is also a member of SAG-AFTRA and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Professionally, she is represented by Stewart Talent and SMG Speakers.

LEGACY AND MISSION

At the heart of Dr. Mariama's life's work is a singular conviction: **the arts are not merely a reflection of society; they are a transformative force capable of cultivating consciousness, restoring humanity, and inspiring individuals and communities to become their highest selves.**

Her legacy mission is to empower people to recognize, trust, and honor the wisdom of their inner voice; cultivate the courage to heed its call; and consciously transform into the most expansive and authentic expression of who they are – thereby fulfilling their highest potential in service to the greater good.

Through performance, scholarship, cultural diplomacy, education, and activism, Dr. Marguerite Mariama continues to demonstrate what it means to make art not simply about transformation, but an instrument of transformation itself.

For more information:

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