



## Office of General Services

**For Immediate Release:** 07/26/2016

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### **SOUNDS OF BLACKNESS TO HEADLINE THE BLACK ARTS AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL PRESENTED BY MCDONALD'S**

New York State Office of General Services Commissioner RoAnn M. Destito today announced the lineup for New York State's 2016 Black Arts and Cultural Festival presented by McDonald's, formerly African American Family Day, which will be held from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday, August 6 at the Empire State Plaza in Albany.

"The Black Arts and Cultural Festival is our annual celebration of the history, art, culture, and entertainment of the people of the African Diaspora that offers a great variety of attractions for people to look at and listen to," Commissioner Destito said. "I want to thank McDonald's and all our generous sponsors for helping us to bring an exciting lineup of music, art, dance, and activities to the Empire State Plaza for this cultural event."

The festival will feature a special performance by Sounds of Blackness. The Grammy-winning ensemble performs and proclaims the music, culture, and history of African Americans to audiences all over the world. From jazz and blues to rock & roll, R&B, gospel, spirituals, hip hop, reggae and soul, the group colors each and every "Sound of Blackness" with uplifting messages of hope, unity, love and peace for all humankind.

"McDonald's is proud to be a longtime sponsor of this event," said Renee Reardon, local McDonald's owner/operator and president of the McDonald's Operators of the Capital District. "We have a commitment to giving back to the communities where we do business, and the Black Arts and Cultural Festival – which provides outstanding entertainment and terrific educational opportunities for people in the greater Albany area – is a wonderful event that we are pleased to support each year."

The festival will kick off at 2 p.m. with an opening parade on the Plaza that will feature the sounds of The Ragtime Windjammers, a Dixieland band, accompanied by the African Percussionists of Operation Unite Education and Cultural Arts Center in Hudson and other local musicians. The parade will showcase the partnership of history and culture that is the core of the community.

The day's lineup will also include the Jubilee Gospel Community Choir, Scholastic Talent Showcase winners, Wassa Pan Afrika dance, and a Def Poetry Jam Reunion with Danny Simmons, co-creator of the groundbreaking "Def Poetry Jam" television series that aired between 2002 and 2007.

In addition to an exciting lineup of talent on the main stage, the festival will feature five destination areas:

- **Destination Heritage**, where people can get access to information or find out about services available for learning about the black experience from the past to the present.
- **Destination Education sponsored by the University at Albany**, where information on everything education related can be found, from college admissions and student life to financial aid.
- **Destination Empowerment**, where people can access information and join interactive sessions on diversity, economics, spiritual leadership, community relations, and education, financial, and employment opportunities.
- **Destination Health and Fitness sponsored by the New York State of Health**, where there will be Zumba and yoga fitness demonstrations, healthy cooking demos by Mazzone Hospitality and Soul Fire Farms, and information on available insurance coverage and health services.
- **Destination Arts and Ideas**, with hands-on activities to expand participants' horizons in painting, music, film, tap, and theater.

Activities throughout the day include an expanded children's area with pony rides, face painting, arts and crafts, and bounce rides; Scratch Academy, where kids can learn the techniques practiced by hip hop DJs; Triple Threat All-Stars Cheerleading and Dance; and an Albany Center Gallery satellite exhibit with artists showcasing their work on black arts and culture, including an artist who will create a work of art on site specific to the festival theme.

One the biggest draws of the festival is the amazing food our vendors will be serving, including Jamaican and other Caribbean cuisine, chicken, fish, and ribs prepared by local churches, and desserts to satisfy everyone's sweet tooth.

### **Performance Schedule**

2:00 p.m.	Opening Parade
2:20 p.m.	Jubilee Choir
2:45 p.m.	McDonald's Moment
2:55 p.m.	Scholastic Talent Showcase Winners
3:30 p.m.	Wassa Pan Afrika Dance Ensemble
4:15 p.m.	Def Poetry Jam Reunion
5:15 p.m.	Young Noble Gentlemen
5:50 p.m.	Sounds of Blackness

Free parking will be available in the East Garage off Madison Avenue, and \$5 parking in the visitor or V-lot under the plaza. For event updates, people can follow @plazaevents on Twitter, visit Empire State Plaza on facebook, or call (518) 474-4759.

For event updates and additional information on opening acts, people can follow @plazaevents on Twitter, visit Empire State Plaza on facebook, or call (518) 474-4759. For additional information, including ground rules, visit our website at [www.empirestateplaza.org](http://www.empirestateplaza.org).

No alcoholic beverages, coolers (defined as rigid insulated containers), or glass containers of any kind; animals or pets (excludes ADA-defined service animals) will be allowed. Alcohol will be served by vendors to adults with proper identification.

Sponsors include McDonald's, NY State of Health, NY's 529 College Savings Program, New York State Homes and Community Renewal, NYSUT, CDTA, University at Albany, Price Chopper & Market 32, Mazzone Hospitality, Hot 99.1 FM, and Renaissance Albany Hotel.

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