

AKILA WORKSONGS **SPEAKERS BUREAU**

presents

SHORT BIO: **Toni Blackman** is a poet, rap lyricist and actress. She was the first Hip Hop artist selected to work as a Cultural Ambassador traveling with the US Department of State. Toni has traveled throughout Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia, often working in some of the world's most war-torn nation states to help bring reconciliation and rehabilitation to those regions. An Echoing Green Fellow and a former Soros Fellow, her work promotes diplomacy and self-expression through the use of cutting-edge personal development techniques. Toni founded **Lyrical Embassy™** to serve as the umbrella organization for her projects *Freestyle Union™* and *Rhyme Like A Girl™* (RLAG). Program partners include *Black Girls Rock*, *Hip Hop Culture Center*, *Girl Scouts* and *NBA Basketball Without Borders Africa*.



An award-winning artist, Blackman has shared the stage with everyone from **Erykah Badu**, **Mos Def**, **The Roots**, **Wyclef**, **Wu Tang**, **Sara McLachlan**, to **Rickie Lee Jones**. Toni has appeared on albums for Universal Records France, BMG/Novus, RadioNova, and Big Dada. Her first book “Inner-Course” (Villard/Random House) was released in late 2003 and recently appeared in the 2008 anthology “Live Through This.” Featured in VH1’s “Future of Black History” campaign and on BETJ’s *Parallel Paths* with **Sonia Sanchez**, Toni is on the advisory board for SEED Academy in Senegal and was recently honored by NIKE for her work as a social entrepreneur. Toni recently finished her latest book “Wisdom of the Cipher.” She is currently working on a creative memoir and her musical stage show, “Travels of a Lyrical Ambassador” (directed by **Kamilah Forbes**) is in development. She continues to work as a performance coach for artists, and as a Hip Hop consultant and strategic advisor for various business ventures.

SELECT LECTURE TOPICS

- I Rhyme Like A Girl: Why Hip Hop Needs Women
- Freestyle: Improvisation and the Oral Tradition
- Hip Hop Worldwide: The International Impact of the Culture
- The Intersection of Hip Hop, Education, and Activism
- Poetry, Spoken Word, and the Literary Arts
- The Wisdom of the Cipher: An Inspirational Talk

For complete descriptions, the full bio, or to book Toni Blackman, contact Drake R. Holliday at AKILA WORKSONGS Speakers Bureau: speakers@akilaworksongs.com or 718.756.8501.

Last Updated: Sept 2009 / Photo: Doug Aronson