

Ofosuwa M. Abiola, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the department of theater arts at the Chadwick A. Boseman College of Fine Arts. She is an africanist historian specializing in the history of the dances and cultures of Africa and the diaspora. She received her Ph.D. from Howard University.

Abiola has served in numerous administrative positions including inaugural Associate Dean of Research and Creative Endeavors, interim Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts, Coordinator of the Dance program, Coordinator of the Honors Program, and coordinator of the Theatre Arts Minor program. Abiola's research interests include the history of traditional dance in Africa; research paradigms in Africana dance history; the African dance aesthetic; and the intersection of history, dance, identity and activism. Her research seeks to underscore Africana dance narratives and their capacity to immerse all who engage them in the worldview of peoples of African descent, and their global collective experiences.

Abiola's latest publication, *Afrikinesis: A Paradigm for Research on African and African Diaspora Dance*, won the 2024 Ruth Lovell Murray Honorable Mention book award. Additional publications include, *Fire Under My Feet: History, Race & Agency in African Diaspora Dance*; *History Dances: Chronicling the History of Traditional Mandinka Dance*; a short-form documentary visual companion to it titled, *History Dances: African Dance Systems as Methodologies*; and an introductory textbook for undergraduate students, *Historical Perspectives on Dance in Africa*. Publication works in progress include, *Unwitting Witnesses, Pivotal Moments, and the Invisible Field of African Dance History*; *Voiceless Shouts: Danced Conversations on Women, Identity, and Activism in Africa and her Diaspora*; and the forthcoming digital peer-reviewed journal *At the Cutting Edge*.

Abiola received numerous grants, awards, and fellowships from national and international institutions including: the Outstanding Dance Education Researcher Award from the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO); a National Trust for Historic Preservation Grant (\$150,000.00), the Mary Ellen Multi-Country Research Award; a Council of American Overseas Research Centers Fellowship (CAORC); Department of Education grant; a U.S. Department of State grant; and a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship (NEH); among others. In addition to the NEH fellowship, Abiola was also awarded a grant from NEH (\$100,000.00) to establish an Africana Theatre and Dance Collection in Howard University's historic Founder's Library. During her tenure as Archivist for the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, Abiola established their first archival system.

Abiola was invited to Recife, Brazil, by the U.S. State Department to mount her African dance ballet, *RITES*, and to be a speaker in the International Cultural Summit in Brazil, hosted by a joint venture of the U.S. Consulate in Brazil and the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC, to facilitate the launch of the Smithsonian's first International Engagement Program.

Abiola founded and served as Director of the international conference, *The Nankama African Dance Conference*, where participants and presenters from Africa, the African Diaspora, the US, and representatives from the US State Department attended.

Prior to her academic career, Abiola garnered three decades of performance and choreography experience. When Abiola founded the traditional African dance company, Suwabi African Ballet, in Newport News, VA, she specialized in African dance ballets. She served as Artistic Director for 15 years until she relocated to Washington, DC to pursue her Ph.D. at Howard University. During her tenure as Artistic Director, in addition to 1000+ performances, presentations, and choreographic works, Abiola researched, wrote, directed, choreographed, and produced historical African dance ballets. Abiola's artistic awards include: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (VFH) *Master Folk Artist Award*, SeVAA *Excellence in the Arts Award*, VMEA *Outstanding Contribution to Music Award*, among others.

Abiola performed nationally and internationally. She received numerous grants and awards, and was consistently featured on radio and TV broadcast stations including PBS, NBC, CBS, and WHRO.