

# AKILA WORKSONGS **SPEAKERS BUREAU**

presents



**SHORT BIO:** **Camille Yarbrough** is an award-winning performance artist, author, and cultural activist. More profoundly, Nana Camille (as she is affectionately called) embodies an eternal energy that understands the power of sacred love, and that love is manifested in her many artistic expressions. As a legendary and highly awarded dancer, soul singer, actress, educator, television host, lecturer, and award-winning author of the classic book *Cornrows*, Nana Camille has come here to bring forth the beauty of African people, wherever they are in the world. In a layered career that spans over five decades, she continues to inspire new generations of artists and activists.

In many pop culture circles, Nana Camille is best known as the singer whose song and vocals were sampled on the international mega-hit, *Praise You*, by techno-musician **Fatboy Slim**. To others, she is known as the gifted film, stage, theater actress who played and toured (on and off Broadway) with luminaries such as **Morgan Freeman, James Earl Jones**, and many others; or as the featured dancer in the legendary company *Katherine Dunham Company of Dancers, Singers and Musician*. And to some, she is best known as the author of *Cornrows*, the family book that ESSENCE Magazine called “a gem!” No matter what point Nana Camille

enters your consciousness, you are likely to be transformed by the experience.

Nana Camille’s first solo musical recording, *The Iron Pot Cooker* (1975) is where the hit song *Praise You* was sampled from. Writer and activist **Kevin Powell** makes note of the original album, “Without question, *The Iron Pot Cooker* is a precursor to **Lauryn Hill**’s best-seller *The Mis-Education of Lauryn Hill*.” A few other high reviews: **Billboard Magazine**: “...Yarbrough has stylish traces of Nina Simone and Gil Scott-Heron but her own style of singing and recitation ... are outstanding. Her songs are all thought provoking.” **SPIN Magazine**: Nana Camille is a “hip-hop foremother.” **CDNOW**: “The most important rediscovery of the year...”

As an extension of her creative and activist self, Yarbrough turned to writing in the 1970’s. Her published works have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Black Collegian Magazine*, and *The Journal of African Civilization*. In 1979 her first book, *Cornrows*, was published. Three more family books followed, including *The Shimmershine Queens*.

Quite naturally, Nana Camille is also an educator. After 12 years as a faculty member at City College of New York, she now presents at colleges across the country, ranging from Howard University to the University of Wisconsin.

One can’t help but ask why Nana Camille remains so active at this stage of her life. She explains “Being a griot or storyteller is what I was born to do. What fuels me is the richness of African/African-American culture. I come from a kinship line that was re-born to re-tell our story over and over again. *We must tell it to the young, tell it to the old...everyone grows when our family story is told!*”

---

## **SELECT LECTURE TOPICS**

- *African American Dance: The History, The Relevance, The Pride*
- *Cornrows: African and African American Hair*
- *Family Forever: A Journey into 500 Years of Tradition*
- *Tell It: The Role and Responsibility of the African American Artist*

**For complete descriptions, the full bio, or to book Nana Camille Yarbrough, contact Drake R. Holliday at AKILA WORKSONGS Speakers Bureau: [speakers@akilaworksongs.com](mailto:speakers@akilaworksongs.com) or 718.756.8501.**

*Last Updated: September 2009 / Photo: michael scott jones*