

April R. Silver: *social entrepreneur • activist • writer/editor*



April R. Silver is a social entrepreneur, activist, and writer/editor. She is also Founder and President of **AKILA WORKSONGS, Inc.** (AW), a leading communications and management agency headquartered in New York. AW specializes in public relations, marketing, and programming for the "arts and activism" field (a phrase that Silver is credited with popularizing). The former talk show host of *My Two Cents* (on Centric TV, previously known as BETJ), is also editor of "*Be A Father to Your Child: Real Talk from Black Men on Family, Love, and Fatherhood*" (Soft Skull/Counterpoint Press), a critically acclaimed anthology. Silver's life/work is powered by the belief that regardless of the endeavor, working with respect, integrity, and excellence matters most.

Ms. Silver's achievements in the fields of social justice and entrepreneurship have been widely documented for over twenty years. **Susan L. Taylor**, Editor-in-Chief Emeritus of *Essence* magazine and Founder of National CARES Mentoring Movement (CARES) calls April "a spirited and visionary leader." Past and present clients of Silver's company reflect her relationships to all kinds of people and projects. She has come to work closely with and/or provide services for artists and authors **Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Sonia Sanchez, Sister Souljah, Kevin Powell; The Ford Foundation, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**, and countless others.

In 1997 she founded **Put On BLAST!**® The popular online marketing service includes a network of tens of thousands of email list subscribers, Facebook fans and friends, Twitter followers, and other connections and has helped place Silver as a respected voice in new media communications. In 2009, she was the keynote speaker for the **Cool Twitter Conference** in New York and continues to conduct communications workshops.

HOWARD UNIVERSITY YEARS / Silver received her English degree from Howard University (HU) in Washington, DC. She co-led the historic student protest of 1989 and then began speaking nationwide on student empowerment issues. She was later elected as president of HU's student government (the second woman to hold that position). While there, Silver was also founding president of The Cultural Initiative, Inc. (CI) and co-produced the nation's first hip hop conference – helping to originate the hip hop education movement that is now embraced by academia. In its inaugural year (1991), CI showcased then newcomers **Common, Busta Rhymes**, and other hip hop artists. Many HU and CI conference alumni, including **Sean "Diddy" Combs**, credit CI as having played an essential role in the development of their entertainment business careers.

AS EDUCATOR and VOLUNTEER / After college graduation, Silver worked as an assistant for hip hop artist **Doug E. Fresh**. She later pursued a childhood dream to teach and became an English teacher in some of New York City's most neglected communities. She established extra-curricular literary programs that distinguished her as an effective educator. Silver has also served as the project director of a high school literary-arts program for the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College. While there, she also served as a professional development consultant for faculty and staff.

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In 1998, Silver became a member of the **New York Chapter of the Recording Academy** (aka **The GRAMMYS**). In 2000, she conceived and chaired the chapter's first hip hop and R&B conference. In 2004, she conceived the hugely popular showcase and discussion *PoetrySpeaks!* (featuring Mos Def and **Miguel Algarin**). She has served intermittently on the Board of Governors, served as a 2nd Vice President, and chairs the spoken word committee.

April's work is anchored in service. This is demonstrated in her frequent pro bono offerings to artists, new entrepreneurs, and grassroots organizations. She has and continues to serve on countless boards, honorary committees, and social justice projects. In 1999, she founded the artist-activist led organization *Co-Motion* (in response to the tragic killing of **Amadou Diallo** by NYPD) and co-founded, with Kevin Powell, *HipHop Speaks!* Since 2001, Silver has also volunteered as a funding panelist for the Brooklyn Arts Council. In 2005, she dedicated most of her volunteer work toward the Hurricane Katrina relief movement and founded a non-profit dedicated to supporting Black artists in crisis. In January 2010, Silver turned her service to the Haiti relief movement, helping to organize and/or promote various relief activities. She and Powell conceived and co-founded the resource website HelpHaitiOnline.org just two days after the devastating earthquakes began.

WRITINGS | As a writer, April's essays on hip hop and popular culture, women, personal development, and social justice issues have been published in the *New York Daily News*, *Word.Beats.Life (The Global Journal of Hip Hop Culture)*, AllHipHop.com, DaveyD.com, and throughout the blogosphere. Her writings and commentaries are also referenced in *Brainwashed: Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority* by **Tom Burrell** and in *Put Your Dreams First: Handle Your Entertainment Business* by **Thembisa Mshaka**. Her own blog is at www.aprilRsilver.com.

Of her first book, *Be a Father, AOL Black Voices* cited it as a "powerful and groundbreaking anthology." *Foreword Magazine* claims "Editor April R. Silver has turned her first book into a must-read for anyone involved in the black community." *Mothering Magazine* says *Be a Father* is an "artfully designed anthology that addresses the intersection of hip-hop with issues of black masculinity and parenting..." and describes its content as "moving and authentic..."

Silver is also the Managing Editor of *A New Way Forward: Healing What's Hurting Black America*, a manual for CARES' initiative on mentor recruitment, led by Susan L. Taylor (**asha bandele**, Executive Editor).

MEDIA and OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS | Once a month, April hosts *Arts and Activism on the Air* on BlogTalkRadio.com. She is also a founding panelist on *The Spin*, a weekly all-women panel on *Wake Up Call* on WBAI Radio in New York. And for her 20+ years of service, April has received many awards and has been featured, profiled, or quoted in *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, *Network Journal*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Ms.*, *NY1 News*, *CNN*, and many other local, national, and international outlets (including in London, Japan, and The Netherlands).

In 2002, Silver served as Interim Executive Director of the **Nkiru Center for Education and Culture, Inc.**, a non-profit literary arts organization and community bookstore founded by hip hop artists Talib Kweli, Mos Def, and their parents.

Ms. Silver is frequently called upon to speak publicly and has lectured at hundreds of campuses, conferences, and community events nationwide - from the University of Wisconsin to the NAACP National Convention. She has been honored to share the podium with **Bill Cosby**, **Ras Baraka**, **Terrie M. Williams**, **Nana Camille Yarbrough**, and many others.

April was born in Queens, New York and reared as a teenager in Los Angeles. She currently resides in Brooklyn, proudly.