



Sisters of St. Joseph  
OF SPRINGFIELD

8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

# BLACK

## EXPERIENCE SUMMIT

*Harambee: A History of Cultivating Black  
Togetherness through Food Justice*

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025 | 12:30 - 4:30 PM  
VERITAS AUDITORIUM | ELMS COLLEGE



Laureate Crystal Wilkinson,  
M.F.A



Karen Washington



Liv O'Gilvie



Cynthia Feliciano, M.S.



Tyra Good, Ed.D.



Jennifer Shoaff, Ph.D.



## 8th Annual Black Experience Summit

### ***Harambee: A History of Cultivating Black Togetherness through Food Justice***

Centuries-old traditions surrounding food—its nourishment, production, and consumption—are central to community-building within Black communities in the United States and across the Diaspora. This includes cherished recipes passed down through generations, cultural celebrations, kitchen gardens, community farms, free breakfast programs, and advocacy for food sovereignty. Each of these practices reflects the importance of cultivation as an intentional and sustainable effort. Inspired by the Kenyan concept of Harambee, a Swahili word for “all pull together,” the 8th Annual Black Experience Summit focuses on the theme of “togetherness” within the food justice movement, whereby Black communities worldwide actively cultivate an ethic of equitable care. Harambee also distinguishes the professional learning community of educators that comprise Elms College’s Center for Equity in Urban Education (CEUE) of which we celebrate the 5th Anniversary. Planting the seeds of culturally responsive knowledge production and cultivating minds are shared commitments of both the CEUE and the annual Black Experience Summit.

Elms College welcomes Kentucky Poet Laureate Crystal Wilkinson, the award-winning author of *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts*—a lyrical culinary journey that explores the hidden legacy of Black Appalachians, through powerful storytelling and recipes from five generations of country cooks. Wilkinson is the Bush-Holbrook Endowed Professor and Director of the Division of Creative Writing at the University of Kentucky. Headlining the Summit’s distinguished panel is Bronx-based advocate Karen Washington, founder of and farmer at Rise & Root Farm, board member of the New York Botanical Gardens, former president of the New York City Community Garden Coalition, and co-founder of Black Urban Growers (BUGS) and La Familia Verde Garden Coalition.

*In keeping with their mission, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield is co-sponsoring the 8th Annual Black Experience Summit with Elms College. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield are joined together in the spirit of their mission, “that all may be one.” They strive to unite neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God without distinction, to live simply, and act for justice.*





### **Dr. Harry Dumay, Ph.D., MBA**

is President of the College of Our Lady of the Elms. Prior to joining Elms College, Dr. Dumay was Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer at Saint Anselm College; Chief Financial Officer, Associate Dean for Finance and Information Technology at the Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Harvard University; and has also held leadership positions in

finance and administration at Boston College and Boston University. Dr. Dumay received a BS degree magna cum laude in Mechanical Technology from Lincoln University, Missouri; a MA degree in Public Administration from Framingham State University; a MBA and graduate certificate in Corporate Finance from Boston University; and a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Boston College.

Dr. Dumay has consulted internationally on projects related to international higher education and economic development with organizations in Europe and in the Caribbean. Dr. Dumay is chair of the Board for the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). He is a Commissioner for the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) and a member of NECHE's Annual Report on Finance and Enrollment committee. Dr. Dumay also serves as a Board member, Treasurer, and Member of the Executive Committee for the Association of Colleges of St. Joseph. He serves on several other boards including Endicott College, the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, Build Health International, Health Equity International, and the Haiti Development Institute at the Boston Foundation.



### **Sister Elizabeth Sullivan, SSJ**

is the President of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield, previously serving as their Vice-President from 2011-2017. Sr. Betsy served three years as a patient advocate at the Sister Caritas Cancer Center, following her three decades of experience as Administrator of the Mont Marie Health Care Center, Inc. She was also the Principal of Sacred Heart Elementary School in Holyoke,

MA. Sr. Betsy received a Master's of Health-Care Administration from St. Louis University, an M.A. in Human Relations and Community Affairs from American International College, a Certificate in Elementary School Administration from Catholic University of America and a B.A. in History and Education from College of Our Lady of the Elms.

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## Event Schedule

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- 12:30 - 12:33 p.m. **Welcome and Introduction of Elms College President**  
Jennifer Shoaff, Ph.D.  
Chief Diversity Officer, Elms College
- 12:33 - 12:39 p.m. **President's Welcome and Remarks**  
Harry Dumay Ph.D., MBA, President, Elms College
- 12:39 - 12:42 p.m. **Co-Sponsor Remarks**  
Elizabeth T. (Betsy) Sullivan, SSJ  
President, Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield

### **Part I: Harambee ("All Pull Together"): A History of Cultivating Community through Food**

- 12:42 - 1:20 p.m. **Documentary Series Screening**  
*High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*: Episode 1, Season 2 "Rice Kingdom" (2023)
- 1:20 - 2:05 p.m. **Moderated Discussion with Keynote Speaker**  
Keynote Speaker:  
Crystal Wilkinson, M.F.A.  
Kentucky's Poet Laureate and Bush-Holbrook Endowed Chair of English at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY  
Moderated by Jennifer Shoaff, Ph.D., Elms College
- 2:05 - 2:20 p.m. **Q&A**
- 2:20 - 2:40 p.m. **Intermission**

### **Part II: Feeding the Culture: Collective Advocacy and Food Justice**

- 2:40 - 3:25 p.m. **Documentary Series Screening**  
*High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*: Episode 4, Season 2 "Feeding the Culture" (2023)
- 3:25 - 4:10 p.m. **Moderated Panel Discussion**  
Karen Washington, Founder, Rise & Root Farm, Chester, NY  
Liz O'Gilvie, Director, Springfield Food Policy Council, Springfield, MA  
Cynthia Feliciano, M.S. Senior Manager of Health and Racial Equity, Health Resources in Action, Boston, MA  
Moderated by Tyra Good, Ed.D., Elms College
- 4:10 - 4:25 p.m. **Q&A**
- 4:25 - 4:30 p.m. **Call to Action**

Book signing to follow featuring Crystal Wilkinson's work *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts: Stories and Recipes from Five Generations of Black Country Cooks* (Clarkson Potter, 2024) and *Perfectly Black* (University Press of Kentucky, 2021).

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## Keynote Speaker

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**Crystal Wilkinson, Poet Laureate and Kentucky Novelist**, a recent fellowship recipient of the Academy of American Poets, is the award-winning author of *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts*, a culinary memoir, “Perfect Black”, a collection of poems, and three works of fiction—*The Birds of Opulence*, *Water Street* and *Blackberries, Blackberries*. She was inducted into the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame in 2025. Crystal is the recipient of an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Poetry, an O. Henry Prize, a USA Artists Fellowship, and an Ernest J.

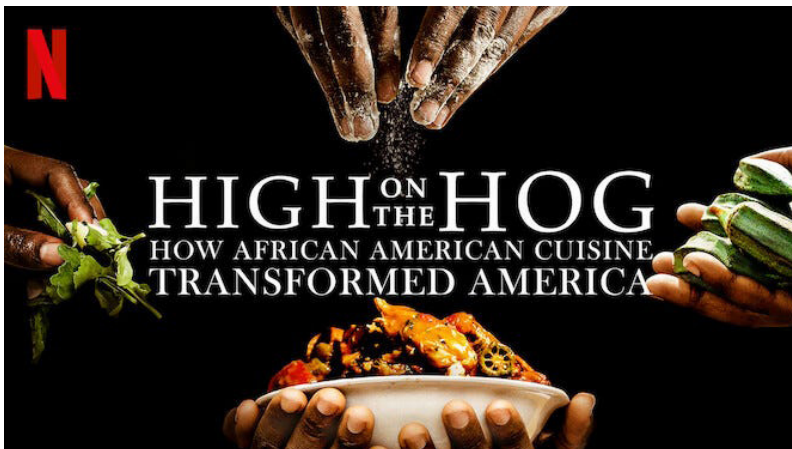
Gaines Prize for Literary Excellence. Named Kentucky’s Poet Laureate from 2021 to 2023, she has received recognition from the Yaddo Foundation, Hedgebrook, The Vermont Studio Center for the Arts, The Hermitage Foundation and others. Her short stories, poems and essays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies including most recently in *The Atlantic*, *The Kenyon Review*, *STORY*, *Agni Literary Journal*, *Emergence*, *Oxford American* and *Southern Cultures*. She currently teaches at the University of Kentucky where she is Bush-Holbrook Professor in Creative Writing.

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## Featured Documentary

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The Summit program includes a viewing of the documentary ***High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America***. Black food is American food. Chef and writer Stephen Satterfield traces the delicious, moving through lines from Africa to Texas in this docuseries.



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## Distinguished Guest Panelists

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**Karen Washington, Rise and Root Farm, Chester, New York**, is a farmer and community activist, striving to make New York a better place to live. As a former community gardener and current board member of the New York Botanical Gardens, she worked with Bronx neighborhoods to turn empty lots into community gardens.

As an advocate, and former president of the New York City Community Garden Coalition, she stood up and spoke out for garden protection and preservation. As a member of the La Familia Verde

Garden Coalition, she helped launch a City Farms Market, bringing fresh vegetables to the community.

In 2010, Co-Founded Black Urban Growers (BUGS) an organization supporting growers in both urban and rural settings. Karen has received numerous awards most recently the co-recipient of the 2023 James Beard Humanitarian Award and the 2024 Emerson Collective Fellowship. She has been credited with the term food apartheid instead of food desert, to bring to the forefront the inequities seen in the food system. Mama K as she is known in the community, serves on the boards of the New York Botanical Gardens, Black Farmer.



**Liz O'Gilvie** serves as the convenor/director of the Springfield Food Policy Council and the interim director of the Urban Agriculture Youth Focused Organization Gardening the Community (GTC), also based in Springfield. GTC is a food justice organization centered in urban agriculture and youth development with one owned farm site, several leased sites and the only farm store in Massachusetts 3rd largest city.

A produce farmer in her own right, Liz is working with an advisory group to develop 40 Acres and a Mule Farm and Justice which began operating on scattered ¼ acre sites across Springfield and

was recently awarded a lease contract by the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture for 16 Acres of farmland located on land owned by the State's carceral system for the development of an incubator farm for new farmers who were formerly incarcerated.

Supported by Liz's leadership, the Springfield Food Policy Council serves as a partner, advisor and driving force behind efforts to build a healthier food system in Springfield, Hampden County and statewide. In the broader policy world, Liz serves on the Statewide Advisory Boards of the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative, the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, and as a member of the Union of Concerned Scientists.

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## Distinguished Guest Panelists

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**Cynthia Feliciano (she/they)** is passionate about making invisible systems visible, to be able to shift power dynamics to communities who have been historically left out of power. This passion was seeded with her family and neighbors in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, where they grew up connected to land, community and activism. The deep connection to land has lead Cynthia to learn more about themselves, the visible and invisible structures put in place to deter, hinder and leave out communities. Cynthia found power and voice in community engagement and racial & equity advocacy both in their personal and professional life. Their areas of interest include: race & equity,

sustainability education, Indigenous knowledge, postcolonial theory; place, and culture; decolonizing methodologies; participatory forms of community engagement, education and research; and cross-cultural education and research. Cynthia holds a B.A. in Sustainable Food Management from UMass Amherst and a M.S. in Environmental Science from Antioch University New England.

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## Moderators

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**Tyra Good, Ed.D.** is the inaugural executive director of the Center for Equity in Urban Education and an associate professor of education at Elms College. She is also the founder of GOOD Knowledge Connections LLC.

Dr. Good has received a myriad of award recognitions for her dedication in preparing teachers and school leaders to transform learning ecosystems by influencing policies that expand equitable practices in global education. Good is a co-author in three International Best-Selling Books in which she writes about reimagining urban education. She is also the co-editor of *Black Women Navigating Historically White Higher Education*

*Institutions and the Journey Toward Liberation*. Dr. Good received her bachelor's in business management from Howard University, a master of arts in teaching from Chatham University, and a doctorate in educational leadership and evaluation from Duquesne University.



**Jennifer Shoaff, Ph.D.** is the Chief Diversity Officer and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Elms College. Her highly acclaimed book, *Borders of Visibility: Haitian Migrant Women and the Dominican Nation-State*, is the first comprehensive ethnography of Haitian migrant women's racialized experiences of mobility and containment within the Dominican Republic. Dr. Shoaff's scholarship is also featured in *Feminist Studies*, *the Journal of Haitian Studies* and *Transatlantic Feminisms: Women and Gender Studies in Africa and the Diaspora*, edited by Cheryl R. Rodriguez, Dzodzi Tsikata, and Akosua Adomako Ampofo. An educator first and foremost, Dr. Shoaff's interdisciplinary teaching expertise

draws from postcolonial, feminist, antiracist and critical ethnographic theory, pedagogy and methodology. She has developed university curricula for Anthropology, Border Studies, Gender and Race Studies, Africana Studies, Latinx Studies, and Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Dr. Shoaff received her Ph.D. and M.A. in Anthropology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, an M.A. in Latin American Studies from San Diego State University, and a B.S. in Biology from Creighton University in Omaha, NE.

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## We Thank Our Sponsors

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## Special Thanks to Community Participation

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**Chef Sonya Yelder** is the owner at Souper Sweet Sandwich Shop in Springfield, MA.

“I have been classically trained in Europe at *Le Cordon Bleu*. But my work, my mission, and my passion are to share with you the legacy left by my granny and mom, along with that training. I am still growing, please feel free to come and grow with me” (Yelder).



**Olive Tree Books-n-Voices** is a local independent bookstore in Springfield, MA., which has existed since 2005. This year we will celebrate our 20th anniversary with the support of Springfield residents and its surrounding communities.

In 2005, Olive Tree Books-n-Voices was created as a means of recognizing the many contributions of African Americans through literature and other “expressions of greatness”. We offer African American books and literature, children’s books, religious books, journals, magnets, multicultural book, cards, one of a kind specialty items and much more.

Although the owner, Zee Johnson is the sole proprietor, the “community truly owns this bookstore”.

Visit us on facebook: *Olive Tree Books-n-Voices*

Shop online: <https://bookshop.org/shop/olivetreebooksonline>

Email: [Olivetreebooks@msn.com](mailto:Olivetreebooks@msn.com); telephone: 413-737-6400

## **Special Thanks to the Black Experience Summit Planning Committee**

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