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VOLUME 1

# THE PURPLE CARPET

AN ALUMNI AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER



## A CELEBRATION OF TERRENCE SPIVEY'S ART & ACTIVISM



Photographed by Ransom Phelps

By Johari Wiley

Terrence Spivey wants you to know who your people are. Where did they come from? How did they pray—dance—love?... These questions are posed throughout Spivey's stage productions, which he deems "intersections between social justice and the performing arts." Consider *An Ocean in My Bones* ("AOIMB")—the origin story of the Black community living in the Africatown neighborhood of Mobile, Alabama. Africatown is special because many of its community members can trace their lineage to the arrival of *Clotilda*—the last known slave ship to dock in the U.S.

Completing its trek in 1860, *Clotilda*'s mission was commenced in defiance of the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves, which took effect in 1808. *Clotilda* transported roughly 110 West Africans to Mobile. Among those aboard *Clotilda* was the celebrated Cudjoe Lewis, whose life was chronicled in Zora Neale Hurston's *Barracoon*.

After the 2019 discovery of *Clotilda*'s wreckage, the Clotilda Descendants Association ("CDA") commissioned Spivey to write and direct *AOIMB*—an illustration of their ancestors' transcontinental odyssey and their early days in Africatown. Premiering in 2022 to critical acclaim, *AOIMB* returned in early 2023 for a series of encores. *AOIMB* will return to Africatown in February of 2024 and has been invited to the Borderlight Fringe Festival during the Summer of 2024.





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So, why did the CDA ask Spivey to tell their story? First, he is a graduate of Prairie View A&M University, receiving his Bachelor of Arts in Theater in 1984. While at PV, he was a member of the Charles Gilpin Players and performed under the tutelage of noted thespians Dr. Ted Shine and C. Lee Turner. A native of small-town Kountze, Texas, Spivey's ambition led him beyond the Lone Star state to New York City to begin his career as an actor and director. Fast forward to 2003 and Spivey is stepping into his role as Artistic Director of the historic Karamu House based in Cleveland, Ohio. Karamu House is the oldest African-American theater in the U.S. and was home to talents such as Langston Hughes, Ron O'Neal (*Super Fly*) and Vanessa Bell Calloway (*Coming to America*).

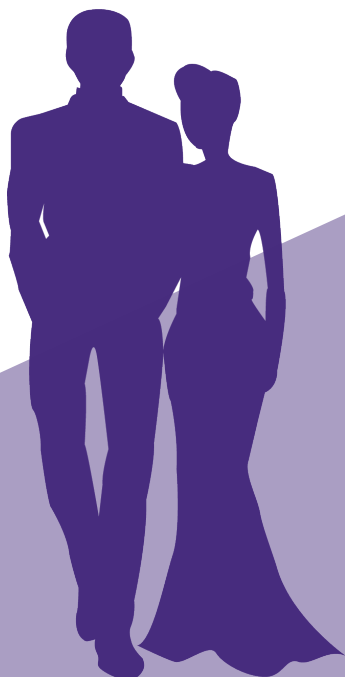
In 2016 Spivey departed Karamu House and continued producing works that merged community activism with performance. Notably, the production titled *Objectively Reasonable*, which documented the impact of Tamir Rice's death on the Cleveland community. *Objectively Reasonable* has since been highlighted on NPR's program, *Going There*. Spivey has been invited to speak at Tamir Rice's 21st Birthday Anniversary on June 25th at the historic Stony Island Arts Bank in Chicago. A testament to his activism, Spivey became a member of *TheHistoryMakers* in 2018 and received the *Color of Change* 2023 Preserving Truth in Education Award.

*Terrence Spivey is founding Artistic Director of Powerful Long Ladder, a Cleveland based nonprofit which showcases "classics and new works reflecting Black experiences unapologetically."*

## OFFICE of ALUMNI AFFAIRS

Questions about upcoming events?  
Suggestions for alumni recognition?

E-mail [alumni@pvamu.edu](mailto:alumni@pvamu.edu)



## COMING UP NEXT!

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In Depth Profile of  
Adaeze Cadet

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The Purple Carpet with  
Mitchell Reece

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Panther Legacy

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