Dr. Neal Lester
Willson Center Visiting Fellow
Young Black Men’s Forum
Fear of a Black Planet:
Representations of Black Males, Past & Present
Special Collections Library
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Sponsored by
The Willson Center
The DIG Fellowship
The English Department
The Linguistics Society at UGA (LSUGA)
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The Panhellenic Council
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with special thanks to
Drs. Barbara McCaskill & John Lowe
Dr. Valerie Babb
Dr. Francys Johnson,
State President, Georgia NAACP

Life the Griot

Broderick Flanigan

Fred Smith

Mansur Buffins

GTwin the General
Panel Members

Dr. Neal Lester is a Foundation Professor of English and Founding Director of Project Humanities at Arizona State University. He has been a Professor of English at Arizona State University since 1997, having taught previously at the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa) and the University of Montevallo (AL). His areas of specialization are African American literature and cultural studies. Dr. Lester earned his B.A. in English and was Valedictorian at the State University of West Georgia (Carrollton). He took his M.A. and Ph.D. in English at Vanderbilt University (Nashville, TN) and is the first African American to receive the doctorate degree in English at Vanderbilt. Dr. Lester is a native of Jefferson, Georgia and a graduate of Jefferson High School.

Mr. Fred Smith, retired district director of the state labor department, volunteers with the Athens Area Black History Committee, Boy Scout Troop 372, Oconee River Conservation District, East Athens Development Corporation, and Athens Area Paine College Club. He is a member of the NAACP and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. A Watkinsville native, he attended Oconee and Clarke County public schools, earned an undergraduate degree in 1975 from Paine College in Augusta and a Master’s degree in Journalism from the University of Georgia in 1978.

Life the Griot (Lemuel LaRoche), poet, author, community organizer, was named one of Athens’ exceptional community leaders in 2013. He is the founder and executive director of Chess and Community Conference, Inc., a nonprofit youth empowerment organization dedicated to developing strategic leadership skills in young people and was featured in Georgia Magazine. Life fuses chess with conventional therapeutic methods to curb impulsive behavior amongst youth with delinquent pasts. With over fifteen years’ experience in adolescent and community development, he brings an innovative approach to counseling. He is the subject of the 2014 documentary, Life the Griot, and the recent recipient of the UGA President’s Fulfilling the Dream Award honoring those in the Athens and University of Georgia community who have dedicated their lives to carrying out the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He holds a Master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Georgia.

GTwin the General (Jamar Price) is half of The Terror Twins. Originally from Los Angeles, California, he now resides in Macon, Georgia.

Mr. Broderick Flanigan, local visual artist, entrepreneur, mentor, activist, specializes in bringing people’s personal narratives to life using art as a vehicle to heal the community around him. As owner of Flanigan’s Portrait Studio in the Triangle Plaza, a developing sustainable minority community, Flanigan believes in investing in the youth and that they are the future of our community, nation, and world. Flanigan creates art and uses art as a vehicle to inspire change. He believes in the therapeutic power of art. Nowadays, our youth are at a pivotal time in their lives where they have a choice between excelling or, falling into a vicious cycle of poverty. As community leaders, it is up to us to give them opportunities to succeed.

Mr. Mansur Buffins, a native of Snellville, Georgia, is a third year undergraduate student at the University of Georgia. He is double majoring in Social Studies Education and African American Studies, with the intention of becoming a Social Studies educator at a middle or high school in an underprivileged community. He currently serves as the president of the University of Georgia chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), through which he works to engage the campus in meaningful discussions and to provide students with avenues for activism in the local community. He is also the director of the Young Black Kings mentoring program at Clarke Middle School, which he launched during his sophomore year to assist Black boys at Clarke Middle School on their journey to success.

Event Organizer

Kim Waters, is an alumna of the Georgia Institute of Technology (BSIM), Georgia State University (MBA, MHA) and the University of Georgia (MA), where she is currently a doctoral student in the Linguistics Program. Her research interests include endangered languages and creoles, especially those indigenous to her home state of Georgia, Cherokee and Gullah-Geechee. Kim was also a member of the first cohort of Diversity & Inclusion Graduate (DIG) Fellows at UGA in 2015 and has organized the events of Dr. Neal Lester’s Willson Center Fellowship as her final project for that fellowship with invaluable assistance from organizing committee members, Mariah Parker, Ricky Roberts and Mansur Buffins. Kim is a native of Jefferson, Georgia and a graduate of Jefferson High School. She and Neal met in fifth grade when their elementary schools were integrated.