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Ama Oforiwaa Aduonum to Perform 'Walking with My Ancestors'

Jan. 23, 2023

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Performative artist Ama Oforiwaa Aduonum will share the history, heartache and determination of her enslaved African ancestors during a visit to Illinois Wesleyan University on Thursday, Jan. 26.

Aduonum, an Illinois State University professor of ethnomusicology, will perform her theatrical work "Walking with My Ancestors: Cape Coast Castle" at 6:30 p.m. in Young Main Lounge at the Memorial Center.

"Walking with My Ancestors" is an ethnographic performance about the enslaved Africans of the former dungeons in Ghana and Senegal. Aduonum's performance focuses on a mother and her search for understanding through the spirits of her ancestors who were in these dungeons.

"I expect conversations around how people process pain and suffering," said Sharla Brown-Ajayi, Head of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. "Possibly conversations about how we as humans can treat each other so inhumanely. But I hope we also have conversations about family and connections and the determination of the human spirit."

Aduonum's research has been conducted first-hand, taking viewers through the last stop on the African continent before the middle passage to America. The performance is based on historical fact, while also telling the story of Aduonum's ancestors.

"It's important because these were real people," said Brown-Ajayi. "These were family members. They were people who had lives and meaning. They were artisans, farmers, soldiers, merchants, fishermen, hunters, craftspeople, leaders and more. Their lives cannot be forgotten. As an American and an African American, their stories are a part of our history.

Sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the performance will conclude with a "talk-back" in which Aduonum will have a dialogue with attendees. The event is free and open to the public.



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